



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

10.2.2015

B8-0145/2015

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on Saudi Arabia, the case of Raif Badawi
(2015/2550(RSP))

on behalf of the ECR Group

B8-0145/2015

European Parliament resolution on Saudi Arabia, the case of Raif Badawi (2015/2550(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the sentence passed by Mr Raif Badawi on 9 January 2015
- having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- having regard to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2014 on Saudi Arabia, its relations with the EU and its role in the Middle East and North Africa (P7_TA-PROV(2014)0207)
- having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2006 on the freedom of expression on the Internet

A. whereas Saudi blog activist Mr. Raif Badawi was subjected on 9 January 2015 to public lashing in Jeddah, as part of the sentence condemning him to 10 years of imprisonment and 1000 lashes last September for having called, as a blogger, for an open debate about interpretations of Islam with blog posts sometimes satirical and sometimes irreverent;

B. whereas the first 50 lashes were administered on January 9, 2015, and the second set has been postponed twice due to Badawi's poor health;

C. whereas the case of Raif Badawi has sparked an international outcry and raised fresh concerns about Saudi Arabia's human rights policy;

D. whereas UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein appealed to the KSA to halt the punishment of Raif Badawi

E. whereas the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is an influential political, economic, cultural and religious actor in the Middle East and the Islamic world, and a founder and leading member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and of the G-20 group;

F. whereas the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important partner for the EU;

G. whereas the death penalty is carried out in KSA for a variety of crimes and is one of the rare countries to still carry out public executions;

H. whereas freedom of expression and freedom of the press and media, both online and offline, are crucial preconditions and catalysts for democratisation and reform and are essential checks on power;

I. whereas KSA has a lively community of online activists and the highest number of Twitter users in the Middle East;

J. whereas KSA needs to commit to the full implementation of the freedom of religion, particularly regarding public practice and religious minorities, in line with the important role that KSA plays as custodian of the Two Holy Mosques of Islam in Mecca and Medina;

K. whereas the criminal justice system of KSA violates the most basic international standards with detainees routinely facing systematic violations of due process, because there is no written penal code which clearly defines what constitutes a criminal offence and judges are free to rule according to their interpretations of Islamic law and local traditions;

L. whereas the opening of a dialogue between KSA and the EU on human rights could provide a very useful opportunity to enhance mutual understanding and promote further reforms in the country;

1. calls on the Saudi authorities to suspend any further corporal punishment for Mr Badawi and to consider, in the context of the reform of the judicial system of KSA, putting an end to the use of lashing, a punishment that is not in conformity with the relevant international conventions on human rights, including the Convention against Torture, which Saudi Arabia has ratified;

2. recalls that severe corporal punishment is unacceptable and contrary to the principle of human dignity; recalls the recent commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments or punishments; reiterates its strong objection to any such treatment or punishment;

3. recalls the contrast between what Raif Badawi did and the punishment meted out to him;

4. welcomes therefore the process of judicial reform undertaken by the KSA with a view to strengthen the possibility for improved protection of individual rights;

5. calls on the KSA authorities to allow independent press and media and ensure freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly for all inhabitants of KSA; regrets the repression of activists and protesters when they demonstrate peacefully; stresses that the peaceful advocacy of basic legal rights or making critical remarks using social media are expressions of an indispensable right;

6. emphasises that a true understanding and implementation of the Human right to freedom of the press and media is essential in a free society and forms a necessary for checks and balances;

7. emphasises that the right to freedom of expression comes with the obligation to speak for the common good without voluntarily insulting or provoking;

8. calls on the EU and the Member States to implement the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief;

9. calls on its President to transmit the resolution to the authorities of KSA, the EEAS and the Member States.

