



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

---

*Plenary sitting*

---

10.2.2015

B8-0143/2015

## 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 Mr Raif Badawi  
(2015/2550(RSP))

**Barbara Lochbihler, Alyn Smith, Yannick Jadot, Ernest Urtasun, Helga Trüpel, Bart Staes, Ulrike Lunacek, Igor Šoltes, Jean Lambert, José Bové, Bodil Ceballos, Margrete Auken, Reinhard Bütikofer, Pascal Durand, Molly Scott Cato, Karima Delli, Ernest Maragall, Tamás Meszerics, Davor Škrlec**

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

**B8-0143/2015**

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

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Saudi Arabia, notably of 11 March 2014 and of 12 December 2007,
  - having regard to the statement by the Spokesperson of the High Representative/Vice President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, on 9 January 2015,
  - having regard to the statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, appealing to the Saudi authorities to halt the punishment of Raif Badawi,
  - having regard to the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights,
  - having regard to UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
  - having regard to the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, on Torture and Ill-Treatment, and on Human Rights Defenders,
  - having regard to the Arab Charter on Human Rights, whose article 32 guarantees the right to information and freedom of opinion and expression, and article 8 which prohibits physical or psychological torture or cruel, degrading, humiliating or inhuman treatment,
  - having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas Raif Badawi, a blogger and human rights activist from Saudi Arabia, was sentenced by the Criminal Court of Jeddah to ten years in prison, a fine of 1 million Saudi Arabian riyals (around 230.000 EUR) and 1,000 lashes, to be meted out 50 at a time, for setting up a liberal website and for insulting Islam; whereas the judgement also bans Mr Badawi from using any media outlets, as well as from travelling abroad for 10 years after his release from prison;
- B. Whereas on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2015, the Saudi authorities administered the first set of 50 lashes in front of the Al-Jafali mosque in Jeddah, in the presence of a large crowd; whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> set of lashes was postponed on medical grounds owing to the seriousness of his wounds; whereas this 2<sup>nd</sup> round of flogging was subsequently foreseen for 30 January but postponed for unknown reasons; whereas his case was reportedly referred from the Supreme Court back to the Criminal Court in Jeddah on 3 February;

- C. Whereas the wife and children of Raif Badawi have fled the country and received political asylum in Canada; whereas Raif Badawi's lawyer and prominent human rights activist Waleed Abu al-Khair was sentenced by the Specialized Criminal Court to 15 years in prison, to be followed by a 15-year travel ban, on charges that include offending the judiciary;
- D. Whereas Raif Badawi's blog, the "Free Saudi Liberals Network" website, founded in 2008, encouraged open debate about religious and political issues in the country; whereas Mr Badawi was initially arrested on charges of apostasy in 2012;
- E. Whereas the conviction of Mr Badawi has been met with condemnation worldwide and a global solidarity campaign in support of his release;
- F. Whereas in spite of the introduction of some cautious reforms during the rule of late King Abdullah, the Saudi political and social system remains profoundly undemocratic, makes women and Shia Muslims second-class citizens, seriously discriminates against the country's large foreign workforce and severely represses all voices of dissent;
- G. Whereas a large number of Saudi human rights activists and other reform advocates have been convicted to long prison sentences since 2012 on account of their peaceful activities, including Fadhil al-Manasif who was sentenced to 14 years in prison and a 15 year travel ban for "breaking allegiance with the king" and "being in contact with foreign news agencies in order to exaggerate news and harm the reputation of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its people"; whereas human rights defenders face a wide range of repressive measures, including intimidation, arrests, prolonged detention without charges, travel bans, prosecutions and lengthy prison sentences; whereas other imprisoned human rights defenders include members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) such as former judge Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, Mohammad al-Qahtani, Dr Abdulaziz al-Khoder, Mohammed al-Bajadi, Fowzan al-Harbi, Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, Saleh al-Ashwan and Omar al-Sa'id; whereas the two human rights defenders Omar al-Sa'id and Mikhlif al-Shammari were sentenced to respectively 300 and 200 lashes in relation to their activities;
- H. whereas on 27 October 2014 the Specialised Security Court sentenced three lawyers, Abdulrahman al-Subaihi, Bander al-Nogaithan, and Abdulrahman al-Rumaih, to between five and eight years each in prison and travel bans of seven to 10 years for criticizing the judiciary and the Justice Minister;
- I. Whereas in September 2014, Saudi human rights defender Samar Badawi made an oral intervention at the UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva, where representatives of Saudi Arabia attempted to silence her by interrupting her talk a number of times; whereas on 3 December, she was prevented from travelling to Brussels to attend the 16<sup>th</sup> EU-NGO forum on human rights, by security officers at the King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah telling her that the Ministry of Interior had issued a travel ban for an undetermined amount of time;
- J. Whereas women who support the Women2Drive campaign, launched in 2011 to challenge the prohibition on women driving vehicles, face harassment and intimidation by the

authorities, and are threatened with arrest and detention; whereas in early December 2014, Loujain al-Hathloul and Mayssa al-Amoudi, two supporters of the campaign, were arrested at the border with the United Arab Emirates for driving their cars and were later charged with terrorism-related offences and remain behind bars;

- K. Whereas Saudi Arabia ranks 164 out of 180 on the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index 2014 and is listed among the NGO's "Enemies of the Internet" list; whereas although internet is widely used and Saudi Arabia has the highest number of active Twitter users in the region, internet is heavily censored with thousands of websites being blocked and new blogs and websites needing a license from the Ministry of Information;
- L. Whereas Saudi Arabia sent a high ranking representative to attend the Charlie Hebdo march in support of freedom of speech in Paris on 11 January;
- M. Whereas a new counter-terrorism law adopted in January 2014 includes provisions which allow turning any dissenting expression or independent association into a crime of terrorism;
- N. Whereas judicial verdicts imposing corporal punishment, including flogging, are prohibited under international human rights law, in particular the Convention against Torture, which Saudi Arabia has ratified; whereas the UN Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee have repeatedly voiced concerns about States' use of flogging and have called for its abolition;
- O. Whereas over 87 persons were executed in 2014, mostly by public beheading; whereas at least 21 persons have been executed since the beginning of the year; whereas the death penalty can be imposed for a wide range of offenses, including drug crimes, apostasy, adultery, homosexuality and sorcery;
- P. Whereas the public practice of any religion other than Islam is prohibited; whereas the authorities have detained individuals for engaging in non-Muslim religious services and people have been sentenced to imprisonment and flogging for "facilitating conversion" to Christianity;
- Q. Whereas in July 2014, a 24 year-old Saudi national was arrested and sentenced to 3 years of prison and 450 lashes for using his twitter account to connect with gay men and for tweeting "immoral" pictures;
- R. Whereas Saudi Arabia was elected as a 3-year member of the UN Human Rights Council in November 2013;
- 1. Condemns the conviction and flogging of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi for merely exercising his right to freedom of expression, and calls on the authorities of Saudi Arabia to immediately and unconditionally release him and to quash his abusive sentence, including his travel ban;

2. Denounces the utmost cruelty and inhumanity of the penalty consisting in public flogging; calls on the Saudi Authorities to cease handing down and carrying out sentences involving any form of corporal punishment, in compliance with the absolute prohibition of torture under international law, including the UN Convention against Torture to which Saudi Arabia is a party;
3. Calls on the Saudi authorities to unconditionally release Raif Badawi's lawyer, as well as all human rights defenders and other prisoners of conscience detained and sentenced for merely expressing their right to freedom of expression; includes among these activists to be released: Loujain al-Hathloul, Mayssa al-Amoudi, Waleed Abu al-Khair, Fadhil al-Manasif, Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, Dr Mohammed al-Qahtani, Dr Abdulkareem al-Khodr, Mohammed al-Bajadi, Fowzan al-Harbi, Saleh al-Ashwan, Omar al-Sa'id, Abdulrahman al-Subaihi, Bander al-Nogaithan, and Abdulrahman al-Rumaih
4. Remains gravely concerned by the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, which continues to rank among the most repressive countries worldwide; considers the case of Raif Badawi as a symbol of the relentless assault on freedom of expression and peaceful dissent in the country, and more broadly of the Kingdom's characteristic policies of intolerance and extremist interpretation of Islamic law;
5. Reminds the Saudi Arabia leadership of its pledge to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" when it applied successfully for membership to the UN Human Rights Council in 2013;
6. Deplores the fact that the EU VP/HR Frederica Mogherini has so far shun from calling publicly for the release of Raif Badawi, but only calling instead on the Saudi authorities to suspend his punishment and to put an end to the use of lashing; calls on the HR/VP to explicitly appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of Raif Badawi and of his lawyer, Waleed Abu al-Khair, alongside all other prisoners of conscience in Saudi Arabia,
7. Calls on the EEAS and the EU Member States to identify the Saudi officials responsible for the arrest and sentencing of Raif Badawi and for carrying out the first round of lashes, and to consider introducing a visa ban on these persons; in this context, reminds each EU Member State of its obligation under the UN Convention against Torture to establish its jurisdiction over persons found in its territory who are alleged to have committed the crime of torture, irrespective of whether the crime was committed outside its borders and regardless of the alleged perpetrator's nationality or absence of any other relationship with the country;
8. Considers that the persistently demure response by the EU and its Member States to the abusive prosecutions and odious punishments in Saudi Arabia undermines its credibility, notably in contrast to its sharp and public denunciation of comparable, anachronistic and extremist practices, such as public beheadings, stoning and other forms of torture committed by ISIS;
9. Deplores the self-defeating rhetoric of praise by European leaders, including most recently of European Council President Donald Tusk, of the illusory and imaginary reforms of the

Saudi leadership; calls on the EU and its Member States to reconsider their relationship with Saudi Arabia, in a way that allows it to pursue its economic, energy and security interests, whilst not undermining the credibility of its core human rights commitments;

10. Calls on the EU Foreign Affairs Council to adopt conclusions on Saudi Arabia, with strong human rights language, ahead of the next EU-Gulf Cooperation Council ministerial meeting, foreseen in the spring of 2015;
11. Calls on the EEAS and the Commission to support, in an active and creative manner, civil society groups and individuals defending human rights in Saudi Arabia, including through arranging prison visits, trial monitoring and public statements;
12. Calls on the EU to adopt a list of Saudi prisoners of conscience, whose fate will serve as factual elements against which to determine the future of EU-Saudi Arabia relations;
13. Calls on the EU to table a resolution on the situation in Saudi Arabia at the next session of the UN Human Rights Council, which would, inter alia, request the launch of an international investigation into the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in Saudi Arabia; calls on the EU to take an initiative at the next Human Rights Council which would raise the issue of membership of the UN Human Rights Council by States with questionable human rights records;
14. Regrets that the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAIICID) in Vienna, co-founded by the governments of Austria, Spain and Saudi Arabia and financed by the latter, has not condemned Raif Badawi's sentence;
15. Instructs its Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula to raise the issue of Raif Badawi and the other prisoners of conscience raised in this resolution during the course of its forthcoming visit to Saudi Arabia and to report back to its Subcommittee on Human Rights;
16. Deplores the significant arms deals by EU Member States, among others France, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom, with Saudi Arabia, which run counter to the EU Common Position on Arms exports; calls for an EU-wide ban on export, sale, update and maintenance of any form of security equipment to Saudi Arabia which can be or is used for internal repression, including Internet surveillance technology; calls on the High Representative to report on the current state of military and security cooperation by EU Member States with the Saudi regime;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative/Vice-President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Arab Human Rights Committee, and the King and the Government of Saudi Arabia.