



February 2, 2015

Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz al-Saud
Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
P.O. Box 2933
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
11134

Your Highness,

We write to you regarding Waleed Abu al-Khair, a Saudi citizen, human rights lawyer and founder of the Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (MHRSA). On Monday 12 January, the appellate court extended his prison sentence from 10 to 15 years. During this proceeding, the court upheld the charges over which Mr. Abu al-Khair had been convicted previously, including “founding an unlicensed organization” and “making international organizations hostile to the kingdom.”

We are particularly concerned because courts used the anti-terrorism law to convict Abu al-Khair, a longtime advocate of peaceful reform. On 6 July 2014, the Specialized Criminal Court sentenced him to 10 years in prison, a 15-year travel ban, and a fine of 200,000 Saudi riyals based on the aforementioned charges. Furthermore, his sentencing and its subsequent appeal subverts the purpose of the Specialized Criminal Court, which was established by royal decree in 2008 to better equip the Ministry of Interior in its fight against terrorism. The willingness of the courts to convict Abu al-Khair multiple times over the same charges, and to try him as a terrorist when he has only pursued peaceful activity, represents a departure from the fair application of justice. On these grounds we urge you, in your capacity as Minister of Interior, to vacate his sentence and release him immediately.

We are also concerned about one of Waleed Abu al-Khair’s clients, Raif Badawi. Several days before Abu al-Khair’s appellate hearing, Mr. Badawi received the first set of 1,000 total lashes, a cruel and unusual punishment. Like his former attorney Abu al-Khair, Mr. Badawi is a peaceful advocate on behalf of the rights of Saudi citizens, and the government must immediately cease his flogging and revoke the punishment. Their separate sentences, which punish peaceful activism, violate their freedom of expression, freedom of religious and political association, and freedom of assembly.

As a newly elected member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, it is more important than ever for Saudi Arabia to set an example for neighboring countries about human rights and impartial justice. By vacating the convictions of both men and ending the inhumane punishment currently being applied to Mr. Badawi, you will clearly demonstrate to the world Saudi Arabia's serious interest in promoting human rights.

We urge you to immediately release Waleed Abu al-Khair and Raif Badawi from prison and dismiss all charges against them. Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, ADHRB

Amnesty International

The American Humanist Association

American Islamic Congress

Avaaz

The Campaign for Peace and Democracy

Center for Inquiry

Coptic Solidarity

Dewany, Civil Office of the Ombudsman

Human Rights First

Human Rights Without Frontiers International

The Institute on Religion and Democracy

International Christian Concern

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network

MENA Solidarity Network-US

National Lawyers Guild

Peace Catalyst International

Project on Middle East Democracy, POMED

Universal Muslim Association of America

Individuals:

Amjad Mahmood Khan, National Director of Public Affairs, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

Greg Mitchell, The Mitchell Firm

Jeff King, President, International Christian Concern

Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director, The American Humanist Association

Scott Morgan, President, Red Eagle Enterprises