

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

May 3, 2017

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are writing this Open Letter to you today, World Press Freedom Day, to request that the Canadian government – and you personally – renew and intensify efforts to encourage Saudi Arabian authorities to free prisoner of conscience Raif Badawi, who is approaching the fifth anniversary of his June 17, 2012 arrest.

Mr. Badawi has been sentenced to a ten-year prison term, a prohibitive one million riyal fine, and a ten-year travel ban. He was also sentenced to a cruel punishment of 1,000 lashes, to be meted out 50 at a time in public flogging sessions. Mr. Badawi endured a first round of 50 lashes in January 2015, carried out in front of a mosque in Jeddah. All of this because Mr. Badawi is a strong champion of human rights and, in particular, free expression. He has been targeted because of his blogging and because he established a website that encouraged open discussion about issues related to human rights, equality and other important social issues.

Amnesty International, worldwide and certainly across Canada, has campaigned actively to ensure Mr. Badawi is not subject to any further flogging and that he is unconditionally and immediately released from prison. We have pressed the Canadian government to take a lead role in this effort, given that Mr. Badawi's wife Ensaf Haidar and their three young children were resettled to Canada as refugees 3 ½ years ago, live in Quebec and have permanent resident status. Canada is well positioned to urge Saudi officials to release Mr. Badawi on humanitarian grounds so that he can reunite with his family. In fact there is no other country with a stronger responsibility to champion Mr. Badawi's case.

We have appreciated your government's efforts to raise Mr. Badawi's case on a number of occasions with Saudi officials. But as the disheartening fifth anniversary of his arrest draws closer, we urge you to make this case an even higher priority, including through your own personal, public call in support of Mr. Badawi's release. It is crucial that there be a consistent effort across the government from all Ministers and other senior officials who have the opportunity to press actively for Mr. Badawi's release and reunion with his family in Canada.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss Raif Badawi's case further.

Sincerely,



Alex Neve
Secretary General
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(English branch)



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