Stortinget, 0026 Oslo

Tlf. 23 31

Faks 23 31



King and Prime Minister
King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Vår dato: 11.06.2015

Vår ref.:

Deres dato:

Deres ref.:

King Salman King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Your Majesty,

As Members of Parliament in Norway, representing all political affiliations, we write to Your Majesty in order to address a matter of greatest concern to all of us, namely the principle of freedom of expression.

We would like to stress that our countries share the values as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and subsequent human rights conventions.

Every person in Saudi Arabia, as well as in Norway, is entitled to exercise the freedoms in the UDHR without interference from the authorities. We would therefore like to express our concern about cases of arrest and judicial prosecution of Saudi citizens who have done nothing but peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly.

We kindly ask you to take action on these cases and secure the immediate and unconditional release of all the prisoners of conscience held solely for their exercise of these rights.

**Raif Badawi**, detained since 17 June 2012, sentenced by the Criminal Court of Jeddah in May 2014 to 10 years in prison, 1 000 lashes and a fine of SAR 1 million after creating the website ‘Free Saudi Liberals Network’ for social, political and religious debate. The sentence also bans Mr Badawi from using any media outlets and from travelling abroad for 10 years after his release. On 9 January 2015 Mr Badawi received a first set of 50 lashes in front of the al‑Jafali mosque in Jeddah. On 7 June 2015 the Supreme Court upheld the full sentence and we fear that he is at imminent risk of public flogging.

Judicial verdicts imposing corporal punishment, including flogging, are strictly prohibited under international human rights law, including the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which Saudi Arabia has ratified.

We strongly condemn the flogging of Raif Badawi as a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and call on Your Majesty to put a stop to any further flogging of Raif Badawi. Furthermore, we appeal for his immediate and unconditional release, as he is held solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Also, we call on the Saudi authorities to ensure that his conviction and sentence, including his travel ban, are quashed.

**Waleed Abu al-Khair**, Raif Badawi’s lawyer and prominent human rights defender, was on 6 July 2014 sentenced by the Specialised Criminal Court to 15 years in prison, to be followed by a 15-year travel ban, after setting up the human rights organisation ‘Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia’.

We urge you to release Mr Abu al-Khair immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and assembly.

The cases of Mr Badawi and Mr Abu al-Khair are among many in which harsh sentences and harassment have been used against Saudi human rights activists and other reform advocates persecuted for expressing their views, several of whom have been convicted under procedures which fall short of international fair trial standards.

We appeal to you to abolish the Specialised Criminal Court, set up in 2008 to try terrorism cases but increasingly used to prosecute peaceful dissidents on apparently politically motivated charges and in proceedings that violate the fundamental right to a fair trial.

Finally, we appeal to you to allow independent press and media and ensure freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly for all inhabitants of Saudi Arabia.

Elin Agdestein (Høyre) Heidi N Lunde (Høyre)

Frank Bakke-Jensen (Høyre) Øyvind Halleraker (Høyre)

Henrik Asheim (Høyre) Stefan Heggelund (Høyre)

Siri Meling (Høyre) Bente Thorsen Fremskrittspartiet)

Svein Roald Hansen (Arbeiderpartiet)

Marianne Marthinsen(Arbeiderpartiet) Iselin Nybø (Venstre)

Tore Hagebakken (Arbeiderpartiet) Pål Farstad (Venstre)

Helge Thorheim (fremskrittspartiet) André Skjelstad (Venstre)

Kjell Ingolf Robstad (Kristelig Folkeparti) Rasmus Hansson (Miljøpartiet De Grønne)

Sverre Valen, Sosialitisk Venstreparti Sylvi Graham (Høyre)