



19 May 2014 – Saudi online activist and blogger, [Raef Badawi](#), was convicted to 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes and 1 million Saudi riyal fine for his blogging activities.

UN human rights experts [expressed alarm](#) at this harsh conviction for “peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression” and recalled the right of all people to “freely manifest their views in matters of religion or belief and to write, issue and disseminate information and ideas in these areas through any media without interference.” “Mr. Badawi is a prisoner of conscience, who has been convicted for peacefully expressing his views on religious and other issues,” they added.

The UN Special Rapporteurs on freedom of religion, freedom of expression, torture, and the Chief-Rapporteur of the working Group on Arbitrary Detention labeled the conviction outrageous and demanded Mr. Badawi’s immediate release. The UN experts also urged the Government of Saudi Arabia to “embark on more comprehensive reforms to bring their judicial system in compliance with international standards.”

Mr. Badawi expressed dissenting religious views in his blog and founded a website called the Liberal Saudi Network. He was detained in June 2012 on charges of “founding a liberal website,” “adopting liberal thought” and for “insulting Islam”, after publishing a number of articles on his blog site and social media. His original conviction in 2013 called for seven years incarceration and 600 lashes, yet his lawyers contested the impartiality of the judicial process in

the case. Mr. Badawi's conviction was overturned and sent by the appeals court to the Jeddah Criminal Court for review. In May 2014 the Criminal Court ruled to drastically toughen the sentence.

The UN experts condemned the cruelty of the punishment and recalled that such attacks against the physical and psychological integrity of a person represent an affront to the dignity inherent to all human beings. "Corporal punishment, such as flogging, violates international law, which prohibits torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," said the experts.

Mr. Badawi plans to appeal this new Court decision. However, his attorney may not be present at the trial as he was recently detained and prosecuted for "undermining the image of the kingdom" and "breaking allegiance with the King." This case comes not long after the UN observed [World Press Freedom Day](#) on 3 May, and its importance of this freedom was underlined by the recent murder of photojournalist [Camille Lepage](#)

in the CAR. This case underlines the continued danger to journalists, bloggers and other members of the press and social media around the world.