Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them
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Thursday, May 26, 2016

The Honourable Stéphane Dion
Minister of Foreign Affairs
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2
Email: stephane.dion@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Dion;
Re: Release of Waleed Abu al-Khair and Raif Badawi

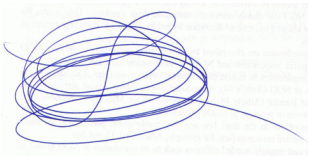
Lawyer's Rights Watch Canada is writing to ask that you request the immediate release of human rights defenders Waleed Abu al-Khair and Raif Badawi during your visit to Saudi Arabia this week. We join the calls of Amnesty International Canada, who also believe Mr. Badawi and Mr. Abu al-Khair have been wrongly imprisoned for supporting human rights.

Mr. Badawi was been sentenced to 10-years in prison and 1,000 lashes, for writing blogs that the Saudi government characterized as "apostasy." His wife and three children have found refuge in Canada. His lawyer, Waleed Abu al-Khair, is currently serving a 15 year prison term for engaging in peaceful human rights activities, one of which was the registration of a non-profit society (Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia) in Ontario after registration in Saudi Arabia was refused. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded in 2015 that Saudi Arabia's detention of Waleed Abu al-Khair was arbitrary and in contravention of Articles 9, 10, 19 and 20 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and recommended his immediate release.[1] In May 2016 the UN Committee Against Torture noted that 2014 reports of in-custody torture of Mr. al-Khair have not been investigated and remedied. [2]

The excellence of Waleed Abu al-Khair's human rights advocacy was recognized prior to his wrongful conviction when he received the Olof Palme Prize in 2012.[3] After his imprisonment in April 2014, he was awarded the prestigious Ludovic-Trarieux Human Rights International Prize in 2015.[4]

LRWC urges you to use your influence to secure the immediate release of Waleed Abu al-Khair and Raif Badawi as recommended by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and required by international law.

Sincerely,



Gail Davidson, Executive Director, LRWC

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[1] Opinions of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its seventy-third Session, 31 August – 4 September 2015, No. 38/2015 (Saudi Arabia), Advance Unedited Version, A/HRC/WGAD/2015, 26 October 2015 at paras 82 to 84.
[2] Committee Against Torture, Concluding Observations on the second periodic review of Saudi Arabia, Advance Unedited Version, Adopted by the Committee at its fifty-seventh Session 18 April – 13 May 2016 at paras. 6 and 7.
[3] Olof Palmes Minnesfond, 2012, online: http://www.palmefonden.se/2012-radhia-nasraoui-och-waleed-sami-abu-alkhair-2/.
[4] The XXth "Ludovic-Trarieux" Human Rights International Prize 2015, online: http://www.ludovictrarieux.org/uk-page3.callplt2015.htm.

Copied to:

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