

His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court
Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Your Majesty:

We write to you on behalf of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent U.S. government advisory body.

We note that Jeddah was the venue last week for the fifth session of the “Istanbul Process” to implement resolution 16/18 of the UN Human Rights Council. This resolution aims to promote a culture of tolerance while protecting fundamental human rights, including the freedoms of religion and expression. A USCIRF representative attended the session.

Unfortunately, nearby, Saudi citizen Raif Badawi continues to languish in Jeddah’s Briman prison for peacefully expressing his views on the Internet. On Sunday, the Saudi Supreme Court upheld Mr. Badawi’s sentence of 1,000 lashes and 10 years in prison. We are very concerned that the lashes could resume imminently.

Your Majesty, it has been less than six months since you ascended to the throne. We acknowledge that you face many challenges ahead. Mr. Badawi’s situation provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate your leadership by showing the utmost benevolence to a citizen of your country.

Therefore, we respectfully appeal to Your Majesty to show compassion for Raif Badawi, and his lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair, by granting them official royal pardons.

It is our strong hope and desire that Mr. Badawi soon will be able to join his wife and children in Canada.

We thank you in advance for consideration of our request.

Yours sincerely,



Katrina Lantos Swett, Chair



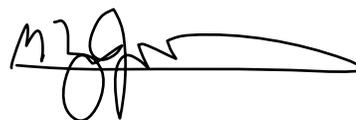
Robert P. George, Vice Chair



James J. Zogby, Vice Chair



Mary Ann Glendon, Commissioner



M. Zuhdi Jasser, Commissioner

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Daniel I. Mark, Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Thomas J. Reese in black ink.

Thomas J. Reese, Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Hannah Rosenthal in blue ink.

Hannah Rosenthal, Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Eric P. Schwartz in black ink.

Eric P. Schwartz, Commissioner