



DANIEL PEARL AWARD

for Courage and Integrity
in Journalism

Speaking Truth No Matter the CONSEQUENCES

DANIEL PEARL AWARD RECIPIENT RAIF BADAWI REMAINS
IN PRISON IN SAUDI ARABIA FOR EXPRESSING HIS OPINIONS

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Raif Badawi is the recipient of the Los Angeles Press Club's 2018 Daniel Pearl Award for Courage and Integrity in Journalism. But he is not at the Biltmore Hotel tonight to accept the honor. Instead, his wife, Ensaf Haidar, and their three children have travelled to Los Angeles on his behalf.

That's because Badawi is in prison in Saudi Arabia, serving a 10-year sentence, plus 1,000 lashes, for "insulting Islam" by promoting human rights and equal rights for women in Saudi Arabia on his blog. His sentence, if fully

carried out, will most likely result in his death.

The writer, blogger, dissident and activist has now been imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for more than six years. His only "crime" was expressing his opinions.

It's a situation that has prompted an outcry around the globe. The Los Angeles Press Club sent a letter to Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman pleading for his release. The organization Human Rights Watch stated, "The charges against him, based solely [on] Badawi's involvement in setting up a website for peaceful discussion about religion and religious figures, violate his right to freedom of expression."

Badawi was born Jan. 13, 1984, and grew up in Jeddah and Riyadh. In his early 20s he started an English school where both men and women were welcome to learn, an unusual initiative in a country where women were not allowed to drive a car.

He opened an online forum called Saudi Liberal Network where he invited others to speak freely, and they did. After being told by the country's General Directorate of Investigation to shut down the site, he did.

In 2006 he started a blog, Free Saudi Liberal, where, in sarcastic but intellectual language, he questioned the ways of Saudi Arabia. In 2008 he was detained for the first time and charged with apostasy, meaning "abandonment of Islam by a Muslim in word or through deed." He was banned from travelling and in 2009 Badawi and his wife's bank accounts were frozen.

In 2012, he was arrested on the charge of "insulting Islam through electronic channels."

Raif Badawi's wife, Ensaf Haidar, will accept the Daniel Pearl Award on his behalf.





The website was shut down by the Saudi government and the following year he was sentenced to seven years in prison and 600 lashes.

On May 7, 2014, the punishment was increased to 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes and a fine of 1 million riyal (roughly \$267,000).

Haidar fled with the couple's three children, first to Egypt and then to Lebanon. When she realized that the ordeal wouldn't "be over in a month," like Badawi had told her on the phone from prison, she sought and was granted asylum in Canada.

On Jan. 9, 2015, Badawi was flogged 50 times in front of the Jeddah mosque. His hands and feet were tied and hundreds of spectators were there to watch. The additional 950 lashes were to be administered over a period of 20 weeks, but they keep getting postponed. After hearing about the flogging of her husband, Haidar said, "What I felt was indescribable. It was an indescribable mixture of sadness and pain. It was



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painfully horrible to imagine what was happening to Raif."

Since his incarceration Badawi has become a diabetic and suffers from hypertension.

DANIEL PEARL AWARD RAIF BADAWI

Raif is with his three children before being imprisoned. Badawi's wife, Haidar, fled with their children to Egypt, then Lebanon, eventually seeking asylum in Canada where she continues to fight for his freedom.



Haidar's family has tried to forcibly divorce the couple, but they remain married and Haidar continues to fight for her husband. She now works as a human rights activist and is the president of the Raif Badawi Foundation for Freedom. When talking to Liberal International she said, "Standing in

being either lives free or he has to die trying."

In Quebec the couple's children go to school and Haidar is learning French and English. She no longer has any connection with Badawi's family; his mother is dead, and his father openly condemns him. The relationship between father and son has been difficult for a long time, and they have argued over the years. Included in Raif's punishment is three months in prison for a crime called *uquq*, meaning "parental disobedience."

Yet Badawi is not forgotten. Leaders in many countries, including Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany, have asked for his release. The United Nations and the European Union have joined in the pleas for his freedom.

Reporters Without Borders has organized a petition to free Badawi. It has received more than 46,000 signatures.

Badawi's lawyer and brother-in-law, Waleed Abu al-Khair, set up a Saudi human rights organization called Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia in 2008. In 2014 he was found guilty of numerous charges, among them "insulting the judiciary, inciting public opinion, and undermining the regime and its officials."

He was sentenced to 15 years in prison. 🇸🇦

Badawi opened an online forum called Saudi Liberal Network which encouraged free speech. After being told to shut it down by the General Directorate of Investigation, he started a blog in 2006, called Free Saudi Liberal.

favor of human rights is not a choice, but rather something that is as evident as the pure air that goes through our lungs. Raif wanted to protect freedom, justice, human rights and equality because he believes in those values. He used to say that a human