



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Middle East & North Africa
Directorate
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www.gov.uk/fco

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Mr Pete Radcliff
English PEN
Free Word Centre
60 Farringdon Road
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Dear Mr Radcliff,

Thank you for your letter of 17 June to the Prime Minister about the cases of Raif Badawi and Waleed Abu al-Khair on behalf of the family and other signatories. I am replying as member of the Gulf Team at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The British Government is seriously concerned by both the case of Raif Badawi and that of Waleed Abu al-Khair. We have raised both cases with the Saudi authorities. The Foreign Secretary has regularly raised the case of Raif Badawi with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and Minister of the Interior, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif, most recently on 14 July. We understand that the case is still under review by the Supreme Court, and we hope for an outcome soon. I can assure you that we will continue to follow these cases closely.

The UK's concerns about the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia are a matter of public record. We have regularly made our views known, including through the UN Universal Periodic Review process and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's annual Human Rights and Democracy Report, in which Saudi Arabia continues to be a designated country of concern. The 2014 report was published on 12 March and is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2014>. The British Government has also supported EU démarches to the Saudi Arabian government highlighting both Mr Badawi and Mr al-Khair's sentences.

We also raise our human rights concerns in ministerial and diplomatic contacts with the Saudi Arabian authorities. The human rights situation in Saudi Arabia reflects widely held conservative social values and we believe that our human rights concerns are sometimes most effectively raised in private in this way rather than in publicly.

The UK is a strong supporter of freedom of expression around the world. People must be allowed to freely discuss and debate issues, peacefully challenge their governments, exercise the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and speak out against violations of human rights wherever they occur.

You also asked about arms sales from the United Kingdom to Saudi Arabia. I can assure you that the British Government takes its arms export responsibilities extremely seriously and operates some of the most rigorous export controls in the world. All export licences are considered on a case-by-case basis against the EU Consolidated Criteria governing arms exports. Respect for human rights in the destination country is mandatory under the Consolidated Criteria.

Finally, I would like to reassure you that, while trade is vital for our economy and future prosperity, we will not pursue trade to the exclusion of human rights; we see them as complementary.

I hope this response addresses your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gulf', written in a cursive style.

Gulf Team
Arabian Peninsula Department