

UN Torture Committee Calls on Saudis to Stop Corporal Punishments



United Nations, April 23 (RHC)-- The United Nations torture committee has called on Saudi Arabia to stop physical punishment, including flogging and amputations, in the Persian Gulf kingdom. In its first review of Saudi Arabia since 2002, the committee that monitors the UN Convention against Torture also expressed concern about the abuse of bloggers, activists and human rights lawyers in Saudi prisons.

Committee member Felice Gaer asked officials if Saudi Arabia taken steps to prohibit corporal punishments, such as flogging and amputation of limbs, which are in breach of the convention. Gaer said "a significant number" of suspects have been tortured into making confessions by the Saudi regime. She pointed to the case of Raif Badawi, a 31-year-old Saudi blogger who has been sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in jail for his writings on the internet, which Saudi authorities described as an affront to Islam. Imprisoned since 2012, Badawi received his first 50 lashes in a public square in the Saudi city of Jeddah in January 2015.

The UN committee generally examines countries every five years or so, but it could not do so for Saudi Arabia because Riyadh's report on its compliance with the Convention against Torture was already four

years overdue. The UN report follows a recent visit to the kingdom by U.S. President Barack Obama, who raised concerns about human rights violations in the country.

Riyadh has long been under fire at the international level for its grim human rights record. The kingdom reportedly executed 153 individuals, including 71 foreign nationals, in 2015. Amnesty International said in a report last year that court proceedings in Saudi Arabia "fall far short" of global norms of fairness.

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