



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01443**

BY: **MR. DUSSEAULT (SHERBROOKE)**

DATE: **JUNE 6, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE CHRYSIA FREELAND**

Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

RAIF BADAWI

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The promotion and protection of human rights, including the freedom of religion or belief and the freedom of expression, is an integral part of Canada's foreign policy. Canada strongly believes that respect for all human rights is essential to achieving a stable and prosperous Middle East, governed by freedom, tolerance, and pluralism.

Canada is greatly concerned by the continued detention of human rights activist Raif Badawi. Canada has repeatedly raised the case of Mr. Badawi at the highest levels, both in Riyadh and in Ottawa, and will continue to call for Mr. Badawi to be granted clemency. The Government of Canada also remains in close contact with Ensaf Haider, the wife of Mr. Badawi.

The primary goal of Canada in this matter is to ensure the release of Mr. Badawi, and conferring honorary citizenship may not be a productive step towards that goal. Many countries, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, do not recognize dual citizenship, and conferring honorary citizenship on Mr. Badawi will not open any additional doors to advocate for his release. However, the Government welcomes all ideas that might help lead to clemency for Mr. Badawi, including suggestions such as granting honorary citizenship.

As Canada's primary goal in this matter is to obtain the release of Mr. Badawi, it is important to avoid taking steps that may be counterproductive to that end.

Canadian officials have been in continued contact with the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to make known Canada's views on human rights and religious freedom, and will continue to advocate for Saudi Arabia to respect its obligations under international human rights law.

Canada will also continue to engage in frank dialogue to seek clemency for Mr. Badawi, and to promote respect for human rights.