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**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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## **Saudi Arabia to end flogging as a form of punishment**

*– Form of corporal punishment will be replaced by jail terms, fines or a mixture of both*

The Guardian (25.04.2020) – <https://bit.ly/3fb4T5h> – Saudi Arabia is ending flogging as a form of punishment, according to a document from the kingdom's top court.

The decision by the general commission for the supreme court, taken sometime this month, will mean the punishment will be replaced by prison sentences, fines or a mixture of both.

“The decision is an extension of the human rights reforms introduced under the direction of King Salman and the direct supervision of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman,” the document said.

Flogging has been applied to punish a variety of crimes in Saudi Arabia. Without a codified system of law to go with the texts making up sharia, or Islamic law, individual judges have the latitude to interpret religious texts and come up with their own sentences.

Rights groups have documented past cases in which Saudi judges have sentenced criminals to flogging for a range of offences, including public intoxication, harassment and extramarital sex.

“This reform is a momentous step forward in Saudi Arabia’s human rights agenda, and merely one of many recent reforms in the kingdom,” said Awwad Alawwad, the president of the state-backed Human Rights Commission.

Other forms of corporal and capital punishment, such as amputation for theft or beheading for murder and terrorism offences, have not yet been outlawed.

“This is a welcome change but it should have happened years ago,” said Adam Coogle of Human Rights Watch. “There’s nothing now standing in the way of Saudi Arabia reforming its unfair judicial system.”

The Saudi supreme court said the latest reform was intended to “bring the kingdom into line with international human rights norms against corporal punishment”.

The most high-profile instance of flogging in recent years was the case of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes in 2014 for “insulting” Islam.

He was awarded the European parliament’s Sakharov human rights prize the following year.

The abolition of corporal punishment in Saudi Arabia comes just days after the kingdom’s human rights record was again in the spotlight after news of the death from a stroke in custody of leading activist Abdullah al-Hamid.

Hamid was a founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (Acpra) and was sentenced to 11 years in jail in March 2013, campaigners said.

He was convicted on multiple charges, including “breaking allegiance” to the Saudi ruler, “inciting disorder” and seeking to disrupt state security, Amnesty International said.

Criticism of Saudi Arabia’s human rights record has grown since King Salman named his son, Mohammed, crown prince and heir to the throne in June 2017.

The October 2018 murder of vocal critic Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul and the increased repression of dissidents at home have overshadowed the prince’s pledge to modernise the economy and society.

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