

# **To the King of Saudi Arabia for freedom of poet Ashram Fayadh - An open letter from 22 'Alternative Nobel Prize' Laureates**

Saturday 13 February 2016, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 12 February 2016).

To,

Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud  
King of Saudi Arabia  
Saudi Arabia

Respected King,

## **WORLD: Open letter from 22 'Alternative Nobel Prize' Laureates to the King of Saudi Arabia for freedom of poet Ashraf Fayadh**

The poet, art curator and Palestinian refugee Ashraf Fayadh, was sentenced to death by beheading, on November 17, 2015, by decision of the government of Saudi Arabia, due to the critical, political, social and religious content of some of his poems, included in his book *Instructions Inside*, identified as blasphemous and instigator of atheism.

Arrested in January 2014, Ashraf Fayadh had been sentenced to 800 lashes and four years in prison, but his case was reviewed and a judge of the General Court later sentenced him to die beheaded. The miscarriage of justice has yet to be ratified by the Supreme Court of Saudi Arabia.

The case that triggered the rejection of international human rights organizations Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the World Poetry Movement, PEN Club International and thousands of poets and hundreds of organizations of poets, artists and scholars worldwide. The unjust sentence was overturned in part; the death sentence was suspended and instead was sentenced to eight years in prison and 800 lashes.

Human life is more sacred than rules. Taking the life of a poet anywhere in the world because of the content of his poems, is to try to suppress human beings' freedom of creation, freedom of thought and freedom of expression, defended in the United Nations Charter. It is threatening the dream and dignity of art and poetry, the legitimate desire of a higher life for humanity.

The International Poetry Festival of Medellin (Colombia), awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize in 2006, has invited the poet Ashraf Fayadh to read his poems in the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the event, to be held between 18 and June 26, 2016. If his freedom and participation in this event were possible, it would mean a triumph of goodness, love and solidarity among human beings, and confirmation that the Government of Saudi Arabia respects the life, liberty and dignity of poets, poetry and art, something that has happened since ancient times in Arab cultures.

The undersigned personalities, Right Livelihood Award Laureates, support the World Poetry Movement, in its clear request to the king of Saudi Arabia, Salman bin Abdulaziz, for an act of mercy for the poet Ashraf Fayadh, involving the immediate suspension of his prison sentence and the

immediate granting of his freedom.

Bianca Jagger, Nicaragua (RLA 2004)  
Angie Zelter, United Kingdom (RLA 2001)  
Helen Mack, Guatemala (RLA 1992)  
Sima Samar, Afganistan (RLA 2015)  
Swami Agnivesh, India (RLA 2004)  
Paul Walker, United States (RLA 2013)  
Manfred Max-Neef, Chile (RLA1983)  
Chico Whitaker, Brazil (RLA 2006)  
Anwar Fazal, Malaysia (RLA 1982)  
Martin Almada, Paraguay (RLA 2002)  
Fernando Funes Aguilar, Cuba (RLA 1999)  
Martin von Hildebrand, Germany (RLA 1999)  
Ruchama Marton, Israel (RLA 2010)  
Theo van Boven, The Netherlands (RLA 1985)  
Zafrullah Chowdhury, Bangladesh (RLA 1972)  
Juan E. Garcés, Spain (RLA 1979)  
Ibrahim Abouleish, Egypt (RLA 2003)  
Fernando Rendón, Gabriel Jaime Franco, Gloria Chvatal, Colombia (RLA 2004)  
Tony de Brum, Marshall Islands (RLA 2015)  
Raúl A. Montenegro, Chile (RLA 2004)  
Andras Biro, Hungary (RLA 1995)  
Annelies Allain, Malaysia (RLA, 1998).

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