

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

**Prominent Emirati human rights defender and blogger Ahmed Mansoor was arrested at his home in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 20 March. His whereabouts are unknown. Amnesty International fears that he has been subjected to enforced disappearance and is at risk of torture and other ill treatment. He is a prisoner of conscience.**

Prominent human rights defender and blogger **Ahmed Mansoor** was arrested at his home in the emirate of 'Ajman in the UAE in the early hours of 20 March. At around midnight, 12 security personnel entered and searched his home, and confiscated his phones and other electronic devices. It is unclear if they presented a search or arrest warrant. After conducting a three-hour search of his home, at around 3:15am, they took him to an undisclosed location. His family has yet to be informed of his whereabouts. Amnesty International fears that he is a victim of enforced disappearance and that he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The UAE authorities often subject activists and human rights defenders to enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment in detention.

Several hours after his arrest, the official state-run news website, the Emirates News Agency, announced that Ahmed Mansoor was arrested on the orders of the Public Prosecution for Cybercrimes and detained pending further investigation. According to the statement, the authorities have accused him of "using social media [including Twitter and Facebook] sites to publish false and misleading information that harm national unity and social harmony and damage the country's reputation" and "promoting sectarian and hate-incited agenda."

Ahmed Mansoor has been the only independent voice still speaking out through his blog and Twitter account against human rights violations from inside the country. As a result, he has faced repeated intimidation, harassment, and death threats from the UAE authorities or their supporters. The authorities have placed him under physical and electronic surveillance: his computer, phone, email and Twitter accounts have all been hacked. He has also been assaulted by and faced numerous death threats from government supporters following his 2011 arrest and imprisonment, when he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "insulting officials". In 2015, in response to his courageous work, he won the prestigious Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders.

### **Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language urging the UAE authorities to:**

- Release Ahmed Mansoor immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression, including through his human right work;
- Pending his release, disclose his whereabouts and ensure he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Ensure he is granted immediate and regular access to a lawyer of his choosing, his family, and any medical treatment he may require.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 MAY 2017 TO:**

#### Vice-President and Prime Minister

HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin  
Rashid al-Maktoum  
Prime Minister's Office  
PO Box: 212000  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates  
Fax: +971 4 330 4044  
Email: info@pmo.gov.ae  
Twitter: @HHShkMohd

**Salutation: Your Highness**

#### Minister of Interior

Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan  
Zayed Sport City, Arab Gulf Street, Near  
to Shaikh Zayed Mosque  
POB: 398, Abu Dhabi  
United Arab Emirates  
Fax: +971 2 402 2762/ +971 2 441 5780  
Email: moi@moi.gov.ae

**Salutation: Your Highness**

#### **And copies to:**

Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi  
HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al  
Nahyan  
Crown Prince Court  
King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz  
Al Saud Street,  
P.O. Box: 124  
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
Fax: +971 2 668 6622

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR ABDULRAHMAN GHANEM

ALMUTAIWEE CVO, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 30 Prince's Gate, London SW7 1PT, 020 7581 1281, email [pressuk@mofa.gov.ae](mailto:pressuk@mofa.gov.ae)

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.** This is the first update of UA 200/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/2464/2015/en/>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed Mansoor is married and, with his wife, has four young boys. He is a member of the Advisory Committee of the NGO Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division, as well as the Advisory Board of the organization Gulf Centre for Human Rights. He has documented the human rights situation in the UAE since 2006 and has spoken out publicly in defence of international human rights in his blog, via social media and in interviews with international media.

On 3 March 2011, Ahmed Mansoor and 132 other prominent figures in the UAE, including lawyers and academics, signed a petition to the president, calling for political reform in the UAE, including universal suffrage and for the UAE's quasi-parliamentary body, the Federal National Council, to be given legislative powers. The next month, the UAE authorities arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned Ahmed Mansoor and four other activists. On 27 November 2011, following a grossly unfair trial, they were convicted of "publicly insulting the UAE's president, vice-president and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi" in comments posted on an online discussion forum, and Ahmed Mansoor was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The next day, he and the other four activists received a presidential pardon.

In September 2011, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had determined that the detention of Ahmed Mansoor was arbitrary, and had called on the UAE government to remedy the situation by releasing him and providing him with adequate reparation. However, though they released Ahmed Mansoor, the government failed to provide him with any reparation. The presidential pardon was never confirmed in writing and it remains uncertain whether his criminal record was ever expunged.

After his 2011 release, Ahmed Mansoor continued to face intimidation and reprisals. He was assaulted twice in September 2012 at 'Ajman University, where he had been studying law; the incident forced him to cease his legal studies. The authorities also failed since 2012 to provide him with a "certificate of good conduct", which is a prerequisite to obtaining employment in the UAE, although the waiting time for these certificates is normally around three working days. Ahmed Mansoor has been banned from travelling for a number of years. He was prevented from travelling to Geneva, Switzerland, to attend the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders' ceremony on 6 October 2015, for which he was a finalist and eventual winner. The UAE authorities had confiscated his passport when he was arrested in 2011 and have been refusing to return it. Both the travel ban and the confiscation of his passport violate Ahmed Mansoor's right under international human rights law to freedom of movement, as they are measures taken by the authorities to punish him for his peaceful human rights activism.

Other forms of harassment Ahmed Mansoor has experienced have included the theft of around US\$140,000 from his bank account and the theft of his car in January 2013. When he filed a complaint about the theft of his money, the office of the Prosecutor in Abu Dhabi asked him to visit their offices to answer some questions in connection with the theft. After the questioning, Ahmed Mansoor realised his car, which he had parked in the well-guarded parking lot of the Prosecution and Court building, had been stolen. He filed another complaint about the car. However, the police never produced a report about the theft. Without it, Ahmed Mansoor's insurance company refused to pay compensation for the vehicle. Neither the car nor the person who stole it, have ever been found. Ahmed Mansoor has filed a number of complaints with the police and other official bodies but has received no information about any progress of the investigations into the assaults, death threats and other harassment.

Further information on UA: 200/15 Index: MDE 25/5923/2017 Issue Date: 21 March 2017