

# URGENT ACTION

## EMIRATI ACADEMIC SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS

**On 29 March, the Federal Appeal Court in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) sentenced prominent Emirati economist and academic, Dr Nasser bin Ghaith to ten years in prison. He was convicted on various charges including “insulting the UAE”. He is a prisoner of conscience.**

On 29 March, the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) capital, sentenced human rights defender **Dr Nasser bin Ghaith** to ten years' imprisonment. He had been tried and convicted on charges including “posting false information” about UAE leaders and their policies, based on comments he made on Twitter stating that he had not been given a fair trial in a case including four other Emiratis known as the “UAE 5” case. Dr Nasser bin Ghaith has also been convicted of “communicating and co-operating with members of the banned al-Islah organization”, in connection with meetings he had with individuals allegedly linked to the organization.

Dr Nasser bin Ghaith was not able to prepare an effective defence as the Emirati authorities had restricted his access to his lawyer. Dr Nasser bin Ghaith's lawyer was unable to be present for the verdict since the court had even changed the order of the cases to be examined, making his first of the day.

Dr Nasser bin Ghaith has the right to appeal his sentence before the Federal Supreme Court. He is currently held at the remote high security al-Razeen prison in Abu Dhabi.

### **Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to quash immediately and unconditionally release him, as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly;
- Urging the authorities to protect Dr Nasser bin Ghaith from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Calling on them to order an independent and effective investigation into his allegations of enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment;
- Calling on them to ensure he has access to medical care, a lawyer of his choice and is allowed family visits.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16/05/2017 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@primeminister.ae](mailto:info@primeminister.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](mailto: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  
Twitter: @MBZNews

**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 fifth update of UA 183/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/5738/2017/en/>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 28 March, 10 human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, called for the release of Dr Nasser bin Ghaith. See Amnesty International, United Arab Emirates (UAE): Stop paying lip service to human rights and release Dr Nasser Bin Ghaith (Index: MDE 25/5968/2017), 28 March 2017, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/5968/2017/en/>. Following the issuing of his sentence, Amnesty International expressed its condemnation. See Amnesty International, United Arab Emirates (UAE): Prominent academic jailed for 10 years over tweets in outrageous blow to freedom of expression, 29 March 2017, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/uae-prominent-academic-jailed-for-10-years-over-tweets-in-outrageous-blow-to-freedom-of-expression/>.

In 2011, Dr Nasser bin Ghaith and four Emiratis (in a case known as the “UAE 5”) were unfairly tried for statements made online” calling for economic, political and social reforms in the UAE. They were convicted of “publicly insulting” the UAE’s President, Vice-President and Crown Prince. Dr Nasser bin Ghaith was sentenced to two years in prison. Following an international outcry, the UAE President pardoned them and they were released.

On 18 August 2015, Dr Nasser bin Ghaith was subjected to enforced disappearance after he was arrested by UAE State Security at his place of work. On 4 April 2016, he was seen for the first time since his disappearance, when he was brought before the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court for his first trial. On this occasion, as well as during his second hearing on 2 May 2016, Dr Nasser bin Ghaith told the court that he had been kept in secret detention and subjected to beatings and deliberate sleep deprivation for nearly eight months. The judge dismissed his claims and refused to order an independent investigation into his allegations of torture and ill-treatment.

In addition to the charges listed above, Dr Nasser bin Ghaith has also been charged with: “committing a hostile act against a foreign state”, in relation to comments he made on Twitter criticizing the government of Egypt; “offensively criticizing the construction of a Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi and inciting UAE citizens against their leaders and government”, in reference to a tweet which he told the court had been misinterpreted and had been intended to promote tolerance.

Amnesty International has documented allegations of ill treatment and torture at the high security al-Razeen Prison, situated in the middle of the Abu Dhabi desert and effectively under the control of the State Security. On 11 November 2015, Dr Mohammed al-Roken was awoken in his cell at al-Razeen prison by blaring music. In August 2013, 18 prisoners went on hunger strike in protest at their treatment by the prison authorities, including beatings by prison guards, restrictions on family visits, and being kept in darkness. Between 21 and 28 August, three of them collapsed after the prison authorities had deliberately turned off air-conditioning when the weather was hot. At least 10 prisoners of conscience were ill-treated in al-Razeen Prison in June 2014.

Prisoners and their families have said that the political prisoners in al-Razeen Prison are specifically discriminated against. The prisoners have complained to the authorities about their conditions, as their families, but with no discernible results. On 25 March 2014, the families of prisoners held at al-Razeen Prison addressed a joint letter to Abu Dhabi’s Attorney General, asking that he investigates alleged abuses against the prisoners. However, they received no response. Likewise, the Minister of Interior did not respond to a letter, dated August 2013, calling his attention to the alleged ill-treatment of the prisoners.

Further information on UA: 183/15 Index: MDE 25/5997/2017 Issue Date: 04 April 2017