

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER REMAINS IN SOLITARY

Over six months after the arrest of prominent Emirati human rights defender and blogger Ahmed Mansoor, his whereabouts remain unverified. He has had no access to a lawyer and has only been allowed two short family visits. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Prominent human rights defender, **Ahmed Mansoor**, remains detained over six months after his arrest. On 17 September he was brought to the Public Prosecution building in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where his family met him briefly for the second time following a first supervised visit, on 3 April. Even though the authorities claim that he is being held at Central Prison, his exact place of detention remains unverified. Ahmed Mansoor still has no access to a lawyer, and since his arrest has been detained in solitary confinement, which amounts to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and possibly torture. Amnesty International fears for his safety.

Ahmed Mansoor was arrested at his home in the emirate of Ajman in the UAE in the early hours of 20 March. Several hours after his arrest, the official state-run news website, the Emirates News Agency, announced that he was arrested on the orders of the Public Prosecution for Cybercrimes and detained pending further investigation on charges of “using social media [including Twitter and Facebook] sites to publish false and misleading information that harms national unity and social harmony and damages the country’s reputation” and “promoting sectarian and hate-incited agenda”. On 28 March, a group of UN human rights experts called on the UAE to release him immediately, describing his arrest as “a direct attack on the legitimate work of human rights defenders in the UAE”. They expressed fear that his arrest “may constitute an act of reprisal for his engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, for the views he expressed on social media, including Twitter”. The next day, the UAE authorities responded directly to the statement, disputing the allegation that Ahmed Mansoor’s detention was arbitrary, and stating that he was held in custody at the Central Prison in Abu Dhabi. They added “he has the freedom to hire a lawyer” and that “his family has full access to the place of confinement and is allowed to visit him”.

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 human right to freedom of expression, including through his human rights work;
- Pending his release, disclose his whereabouts and ensure he is held in an official place of detention and protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Ensure he is granted immediate and regular access to a lawyer of his choosing, his family, and adequate medical care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 NOVEMBER 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
PO Box 398
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Fax: +971 2 402 2762/ +971 2 441 5780
Email via web:
<https://www.moi.gov.ae/en/contactus.aspx>
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 SULAIMAN HAMID ALMAZROUI, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 30 Prince’s Gate, London SW7 1PT, 020 7581 1281, email pressuk@mofa.gov.ae

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 200/15. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/5923/2017/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed Mansoor is married and is the father of 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 of 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.

He was arrested at his home in the early hours of 20 March 2017. 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.

Previously, on 3 March 2011, Ahmed Mansoor and 132 other prominent figures in the UAE, including lawyers and academics, signed a petition addressed to the president, Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, 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 following month, the UAE authorities arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned Ahmed Mansoor and four other activists. On 27 November 2011, following a grossly unfair trial, the five 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.

While his trial was ongoing, in September 2011, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined that the detention of Ahmed Mansoor was arbitrary, and called on the UAE government to remedy the situation by releasing him and providing him with adequate reparation. However, though Ahmed Mansoor was subsequently released, he did not receive 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 was studying law; the incident forced him to cease his legal studies. The authorities also have 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 confiscated his passport when he was arrested in 2011 and have since then, refused 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 from the parking lot of the Prosecution and Court building when he filed a complaint about the theft of his money in January 2013. He filed another complaint about the car. However, the police never produced a report about the theft resulting in the refusal of his insurance company to pay compensation for the vehicle. Neither the car nor the person who stole it have been identified. Ahmed Mansoor 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 25/7224/2017 Issue Date: 5 October 2017