

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN
One year ago on 20 March 2017, prominent Emirati human rights defender and blogger Ahmed Mansoor, was arrested at his home. His whereabouts remain unverified despite a February mission by Irish lawyers to Abu Dhabi to find him. He remains without access to a lawyer. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Several non-governmental organizations mandated two Irish lawyers to go on a mission to Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), to try to gain access to human rights defender and prisoner of conscience, Ahmed Mansoor. On 26 February, the lawyers approached the Ministry of Interior and were referred to the police, who advised them to check with the al-Wathba prison, where they were told that he was not being held there.

A year ago, in the early hours of 20 March 2017, Ahmed Mansoor was arrested at his home in the emirate of Ajman in the UAE. Several hours after his arrest, the official state-run news website 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 29 March 2017, following the call by a group of UN human rights experts to release Ahmed Mansoor immediately, 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 (al-Wathba 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". Despite these claims, Ahmed Mansoor's exact place of detention remains unverified. Amnesty International understands that he has no access to a lawyer, and has been held in prolonged solitary confinement, which amounts to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Since his arrest, Ahmed Mansoor has received only two supervised family visits on 3 April and 17 September 2017. Each time he was brought to the Public Prosecution building in Abu Dhabi, where his family met him briefly.

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 right to freedom of expression, including through his human rights work;
- Pending his release, disclose his exact 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, his family, and adequate medical care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 APRIL 2018 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 via web:

<https://uaecabinet.ae/en/contact-the-prime-minister>

Twitter: @HHSkhMohd

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.asp>

x

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: @MohamedBinZayed

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 third update of UA 200/15. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/7224/2017/en/

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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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 whether or not 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.

On 28 March 2017, 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". See also:

http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21449&LangID=E&_sm_au=iVV5L7PTt6N6VHk6

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".

As a result of his peaceful human rights work, Ahmed Mansoor has faced repeated intimidation, harassment, physical assault, and death threats from the UAE authorities or their supporters. Since at least 2011, the authorities had placed him under physical and electronic surveillance. His computer and email accounts have been hacked and he foiled an attempted hack of his iPhone in 2016, which prompted Apple to issue a security update to the smartphone in August 2016.

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.

Further information on UA: 200/15 Index: MDE 25/8062/2018 Issue Date: 16 March 2018