

URGENT ACTION

EIGHT LEBANESE MEN FACING AN UNFAIR TRIAL

Eight Lebanese men were arbitrarily detained in the United Arab Emirates between December 2017 and February 2018. Some of them were forced to sign “confessions” that they were not allowed to read. They were all held without charge at an undisclosed location until their trial began on 13 February 2019. The eight men remain held in solitary confinement without access to their lawyers. Their charges include forming a terrorist cell and planning terrorist attacks in the UAE on orders of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Their next trial session is set for 3 April 2019.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi
Crown Prince Court
King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Street,
P.O. Box 124
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
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@MohamedBinZayed

Your Highness,

*Eight Shi'a Lebanese nationals arbitrarily detained in the UAE face an unfair trial on fabricated charges including forming a terrorist cell and planning terrorist attacks in the UAE on orders of Hezbollah in Lebanon. They were detained over a year ago and held ever since in solitary confinement. Their trial started on 13 February 2019 and their lawyers have yet to get access to them. At least two of them - **Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman and Ahmed Nimr Sobeh** – may have been forced to sign “confession” documents that they were not allowed to read. One man at least was tortured and ill-treated for the first three months of his detention, including by having his head being run against a wall and being beaten and kicked, resulting with all his veneer teeth being broken.*

I urge you to immediately release the eight men unless there is evidence of a recognisable criminal offence, in line with international law and standards, and ensure that the eight men are granted immediate and regular access to their lawyer, their family, and any medical care they may require. We also call upon you to ensure that any “confessions” obtained by torture and other ill-treatment are not used as evidence in court and that the men are protected from any further ill-treatment. I call on you to launch an independent and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture, in line with the Istanbul protocol on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Yours sincerely,

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Between December 2017 and 18 February 2018, eight Shi'a Lebanese men were arrested by State Security forces in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They were granted short phone calls to their families without being allowed to disclose their whereabouts, but they managed to inform them that they were being detained for "state security issues". According to information received, all eight men have been held in solitary confinement since their arrest which can amount to torture or other ill-treatment. At least two of them - Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman and Ahmed Nimr Sobeh - have been forced to sign "confession" documents that they were not allowed to read. One man at least was tortured and ill-treated for the first three months of his detention, including by having his head being run against a wall and being beaten and kicked, resulting with all his veneer teeth being broken.

Their trial started on 13 February 2019 before the State Security Chamber of the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi. The hearing was adjourned after 10 minutes for all the defendants to appoint lawyers and the charges were not read. However, the same day, [Gulf News](#) published an article stating that "the prosecution accused the cell members residing in the UAE of communicating with Hezbollah in favour of Iran and collecting sensitive security information from the UAE's ports and airports, where Hezbollah agents filmed sensitive places that are not allowed to be photographed". The charges were later announced in court at the second hearing on 27 February. The men denied the charges. Another hearing took place on 13 March and the next one is scheduled for 3 April. None of the detainees were allowed direct access to their lawyers. The court did not afford the lawyers the full documents relating to the cases of their clients. At least two lawyers have since withdrawn from the case.

Following the first trial hearing some family members, who had attended the session, were allowed to meet with the detainees for the first time since their arrest. They have yet to be granted access again.

The men hail from southern Lebanon, an area where Hezbollah has a strong presence. They emigrated to the UAE in the early 2000's. Most of them have been working at Emirates Airlines including as flight attendants, pursers, or safety and security trainer.

In 2016, one Lebanese man was sentenced to 15 years in prison, and two other Lebanese men to life imprisonment on similar charges. Their trial also relied on "confessions" extracted under torture. One of the men was deemed [arbitrarily detained](#) by the UN Working Group on arbitrary detention.

State Security officials in the UAE have arrested several hundred people since 2011, including foreign nationals, and subjected them to enforced disappearance, holding them in incommunicado and secret detention. Some individuals previously subjected to enforced disappearance have said they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated and were forced to make "confessions" during interrogations without the presence of a lawyer. The State Security Chamber of both the Federal Appeal Court and the Supreme Court often allow the use of such "confessions," in contravention of international human rights law, and convicts defendants even when they have repudiated them.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 8 May 2019.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: **Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman** (he/his), **Ahmed Nimr Sobeh** (he/his), and **6 other men** (they/their)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

And copies 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: @HHSkMohd

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR SULAIMAN HAMID ALMAZROUI, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 1-2 Grosvenor Cres, Belgravia London SW1X 7EE, 020 7581 1281, email www.uae-embassy.ae/uk Please check with your section before sending appeals after the above date.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

We are recommending delivery by making a PDF of the letter, or scanning a printed copy, and posting it as an image Tweeted at the official's individual Twitter account. This is a bit of an experiment because we have major difficulty in getting valid postal addresses for Arab Gulf states. Twitter offers some advantages in that we can be sure the message is transmitted, even if we can't make the target read it, and in its public nature, which makes it possible that critical Tweets might be noticed if the target is concerned with his public image. The UAE government also prioritises social media engagement for its own brand image.