

URGENT ACTION

VERDICT ISSUED AGAINST LEBANESE MEN

On 15 May 2019, the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi issued its verdict in the case of 11 Lebanese men – eight of whom had been detained and appeared before the Court. Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman was sentenced to life in prison, along with 3 men sentenced in absentia. Ahmed Nimr Sobeh and another man were sentenced to 10 years in prison, and five others were acquitted. The three convicted men that appeared before court, have 30 days to appeal their convictions and sentences.

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
 Fax: +971 2 668 6622
 @MohamedBinZayed

Your Highness,

On 15 May 2019, the State Security chamber at the Federal Appeal Court issued its verdict in the case of 11 Lebanese men. Eight of them had been detained and appeared before the Court, while the other three were tried in absentia. The court sentenced **Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman** and three men tried in their absence, to life in prison; **Ahmed Nimr Sobeh** and another man to 10 years in prison; and it acquitted five others. Those convicted and sentenced who appeared before court, have the right to appeal within 30 days.

The proceedings against them did not meet international fair trial standards: there was a lack of safeguards to protect the men against torture, and confessions extracted under duress were used as evidence. During the trial, Abdel Rahman Chouman testified that he had been beaten for six hours during the investigation and forced to sign his "confession" without being allowed to read the document. He described how his head was hit against a wall and he was beaten and kicked, resulting in all his veneer teeth being broken. No investigation is known to have taken place into his claims.

I urge you to quash the unreliable convictions and release the detained men, including Abdel Rahman Chouman and Ahmed Nimr Sobeh, unless there is evidence of a recognizable criminal offence and they can be guaranteed a fair trial, in line with international law and standards. In the interim, I call on you to ensure that they are granted immediate and regular access to their lawyer, their families, consular support, and any medical care they may require. I further call on you to order the launch of an independent and impartial investigation into the claims 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

On 15 May 2019, the State Security Chamber of the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi issued its verdict in the case of 11 Lebanese men, eight of whom appeared before the Court and three of whom were tried in absentia. The verdict session lasted a few minutes allowing only for the reading of the sentences. Only two defence lawyers attended court. Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman (a safety and security trainer with Emirates airlines) and the three men tried in their absence received life sentences, and the court ordered the confiscation of all their communications devices including their computers and phones. Ahmed Nimr Sobeh (a sales consultant at Al Nabooda Automobiles) and another man were sentenced to 10 years in prison, and Ahmed was further fined 3,000 Emirati Dirhams (around USD\$ 817) for possessing a rifle without a licence. The court also ordered that they be deported upon completion of their jail terms. They have appealed their sentences. The remaining five men were acquitted but not yet released to give time to the prosecution to decide on whether to challenge their acquittal and/or for the processing of the formalities for their release.

The eight men who were detained in solitary confinement from the time of their arrest were transferred to al-Wathba prison in Abu Dhabi at the end of April 2019. They are now sharing their cells with others. Solitary confinement for more than 15 days can amount to torture or other ill-treatment according to United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules).

During the 3 April 2019 trial session before the Federal Appeal Court, the defendants were allowed to testify. At least one of them, Abdel Rahman Chouman, described how he was beaten for six hours at a time during the investigation. Abdel Rahman Chouman told the judge he was tortured during the first three months of his detention, including by having his head being hit against a wall and being beaten and kicked, resulting in all his veneer teeth being broken. The judge asked him where this took place, to which Abdel Rahman Chouman said that he did not know where he was being detained as he was blindfolded at all times and that he was forced to sign his "confession" without being allowed to read the document. The judge informed them that they could address their statement including their claims of torture and ill-treatment in writing to the court.

Between the end of December 2017 and 18 February 2018, State Security forces arrested the eight Lebanese men on charges including forming a "terrorist" cell and planning "terrorist attacks" in the UAE on orders of Hezbollah, a Shi'a political party and armed group based in Lebanon. The men were granted short phone calls to their families during which they told them they were being detained for state security issues but were not able to communicate where they were being held.

Their trial started on 13 February 2019. They were denied access to lawyers during the pre-trial interrogation and investigation phase; and even when lawyers were appointed after the trial began, they were not allowed to meet with them outside of court. The court did not afford the lawyers the full documents relating to the cases of their clients and at least two lawyers withdrew 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.

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 July 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) (preferred pronouns)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/0180/2019/en/>

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

Please note that 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.

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. His Excellency MR SULAIMAN HAMID Embassy of the United Arab Emirates 1-2 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EF 020 7581 1281 Fax 020 7581 9616 www.uae-embassy.ae/uk Please check with your section before sending appeals after the above date.