

URGENT ACTION

BLOGGER RELEASED AND RETURNED TO OMAN

Omani blogger Muawiya al-Ruwahi was acquitted by the Federal Supreme court in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 14 March. He has been deported to Oman.

Omani blogger **Muawiya al-Ruwahi**, who suffers from bipolar disorder, was acquitted on 14 March by the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court on the grounds that he was not responsible for his actions. The court ordered him to be deported to Oman, and he was returned to Oman four days later.

Muawiya al-Ruwahi had been arrested on 23 February 2015 as he entered the UAE from Oman. He was held in a secret detention facility, where he was denied access to a lawyer, and transferred to al-Wathba Prison in Abu Dhabi at the end of May 2015. He had posted offensive messages about the UAE authorities on his Twitter account. A month later he was able to phone his family and told them that he had been receiving his medication regularly and that the UAE authorities were aware of his mental health condition. Omani diplomats visited him in prison.

His trial before the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court began on 14 September 2015 on cybercrime charges of “establishing and managing online accounts for the purpose of inciting hate and disrupting public order and social peace” and “ridiculing the State and its leaders.” At the first trial session, Muawiya al-Ruwahi denied the charges and said he had been forced under “mental and physical pressure” to “confess”. In detention he tried to commit suicide six times. He asked the court to order a health check for him, and to admit him to hospital, as he said his health was deteriorating. He told the court, “I am suicidal and I need to be treated to prevent another suicide attempt.”

The court ordered on 5 October 2015 that Muawiya al-Ruwahi be assessed by a specialized medical committee. His condition deteriorated and in a 9 November 2015 voice message shared on social media, he said, “I have not received adequate medical treatment... If I am not treated fairly, I will go on hunger strike and will commit suicide... I have had enough and cannot take it anymore”. On 15 February a psychiatric consultant and the head of the medical committee charged with examining Muawiya al-Ruwahi told the court that he had been receiving regular medical care and that he could not be held responsible for his actions when suffering manic episodes.

Muawiya al-Ruwahi was first diagnosed with a personality disorder in 2004 and subsequent medical reports issued by Oman’s Sultan Qaboos University Hospital confirmed him as suffering from bipolar disorder. His medical records were sent to the UAE authorities.

Muawiya al-Ruwahi has been arrested several times in Oman. He was summoned in February 2012 to the Omani State Security headquarters after he criticized Oman’s head of state, Sultan Qaboos, in his blog; he was held in a mental health hospital for one week and released without charge. On 12 July 2014, he was arrested after he criticized the Omani authorities again in his blog. He was detained mainly in mental health facilities and was released without charge a month later.

No further action is requested from the UA Network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the fourth update of UA 64/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/2852/2015/en/>

Name: Muawiya al-Ruwahi

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 64/15 Index: MDE 25/3697/2016 Issue Date: 29 March 2016

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