

URGENT ACTION

AL-ISLAH MEMBERS FACE UNFAIR TRIAL IN UAE

Over 70 male nationals of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are being detained, reportedly in connection with a non-violent association, al-Islah. On 4 March, around 60 of these detainees will go on trial before the State Security Court. The whereabouts of the detainees is unknown; they have been denied access to adequate legal representation and reports indicate that some or all have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

On 4 March, 94 UAE nationals will go on trial, including around 60 of the al-Islah detainees and up to 14 of the female relatives of detainees who were previously released on bail. Others, whose identities are not known, will also be tried. The 70 detainees include at least three prisoners of conscience: two human rights defenders – lawyers **Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori** and **Dr Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken** – who were arrested on 16 and 17 July 2012 respectively and their lawyer **Salem al-Shehhi**, who was arrested on 18 July 2012 at the offices of the State Security Prosecutor where he sought information about his clients.

Others detained include student **Mohammed Salim al-Zumor** (19) – held since December 2012 – the youngest of the detainees. Academic **Dr. Hadeef al-Owais**, arrested in September 2012, is a jurist and university professor who publicly expressed his willingness to defend the detainees. Judge **Mohammed Saeed al-Abdouli** is a former head of an appeal-stage criminal court in Abu Dhabi, arrested in October 2012. According to a statement from the UAE Attorney General on 27 January 2013, the 94 individuals will be tried on charges relating to trying to overthrow the government, but the detainees' defence lawyers have not been told the exact charges.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the UAE authorities to release immediately and unconditionally anyone held solely for peacefully expressing their beliefs or for carrying out their professional duties, and ensure that any others are charged and tried promptly in full accordance with international fair trial standards;
- Urging them to immediately disclose the location of all those held to their families and lawyers, and to ensure that all detainees are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and have access to lawyers of their choice, their families and all necessary medical treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 APRIL 2013 TO:

Vice-President and Prime Minister

Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum
Office of the Prime Minister
POB 2838, Dubai, UAE
Fax: +971 4 3531974
Email via website:
<http://www.uaepm.ae/en/communicate/index.html>

Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Interior

Lt-General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan
Human Rights Directorate
POB: 398, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Fax: +971 4 3981119
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Justice
Dr Hadeef bin Jua'an Al Dhaheri
Ministry of Justice
Al Khubirah, Sector 93, Street 5
P.O. Box 260
Abu Dhabi, UAE
Fax: +971 2 6810680
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 214/12. Further information:
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE25/007/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Al-Islah is a non-violent group established in 1974 that engages in peaceful political debate in the UAE. It advocates greater adherence to Islamic precepts and is not known to have used or advocated the use of violence. Sultan al-Qasimi, the leader of al-Islah, has been held since his arrest in April 2012. In July 2012, Dr Ahmed al-Zaabi, a former judge and member of al-Islah, was sentenced to two six-month prison terms and fined by an Abu Dhabi court that convicted him of apparently politically motivated fraud charges. He is believed to have been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention. On 20 February 2013, an appeal court overturned his prison terms, but confirmed the fine.

In July 2012, allegations by the UAE authorities that a “foreign-based” group was threatening state security coincided with the start of a second wave of arrests, which continued till December 2013. None of the families of those arrested have been informed of their whereabouts and they have had extremely limited access to lawyers. Family members have been threatened with arrest and one lawyer has been subjected to a smear campaign in state media. Some of his employees were harassed; others were deported on opaque “security” grounds.

All of those held have been rarely permitted to meet with their lawyers and family members, the first taking place at the offices of the State Security Prosecutor’s offices in November 2012. Some such meetings took place on 20 and 21 February 2013 in the offices of the UAE State Security Prosecution office. A representative of the state prosecutions was reportedly present throughout the meeting, in contravention of UAE law and international standards for fair trial.

According to unconfirmed information received by Amnesty International, some or all of the detainees have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated physically and/or psychologically, including both Rashid al-Roken, the son of Dr Mohamed ‘Abdullah al-Roken, and Abdallah al-Hajeri, the son-in-law of Dr Mohamed ‘Abdullah al-Roken. In January 2013, around 10 female family members of al-Islah detainees were interrogated, some for up to four hours. They were denied legal representation during the questioning.

The UAE acceded to the UN Convention against Torture in July. It did not recognise the competency of the UN Committee against Torture to investigate individual allegations of torture. The government also made a reservation to the Convention, stating that in its view “pain and suffering arising from lawful sanctions” did not fall under the treaty’s definition of torture.

In January 2013, on the eve of a UN human rights review, the UAE announced that 94 UAE nationals will face charges of seeking to overthrow the government of the UAE. The trial of the 94 is apparently due to start on 4 March, Case No. 17/2013. At the time of writing, despite the detainees’ prolonged detention, defence lawyers have not yet been given documentation relating to the cases. The 94 individuals are believed to include up to 14 women who are free on bail.

On 18 February 2013, family members of the detainees addressed an open letter to the international community, expressing anguish at the lack of family visits. They suggested that many of the detainees are held in solitary confinement, and condemned the campaign of vilification against the detainees who are unable to defend themselves.

Amnesty International has for years expressed concerns that trial proceedings in the UAE are unfair and do not meet international fair trial standards. See *Amnesty International: Trial observer finds flagrant flaws in “UAE 5” trial case*, 31 July 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/uae-trial-observer-finds-flagrant-flaws-uae-5-case-2011-11-03>.

Amnesty International’s Secretary General, Salil Shetty, has spoken out about the 2012 crackdown in the UAE. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=_zju9jBBOAg

Names: Up to 94 UAE nationals including Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori, Dr Mohamed ‘Abdullah al-Roken, Salem al-Shehhi, Mohammed Salim al-Zumor, Dr. Hadeef al-Owais, and Mohammed Saeed al-Abdoui
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 214/12 Index: MDE 25/007/2012 Issue Date: 28 February 2013