

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/united-arab-emirates-blogger-to-appear-in-court-next-13-07-2011,40636.html>

Middle East & North Africa - United Arab Emirates

Trial protest

Mansoor and four other activists refuse to appear in court

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The blogger **Ahmed Mansoor** and four other pro-democracy activists refused to appear in court during the latest hearing in their trial on 2 October in protest against its political nature. The hearing was the first one that journalists and human rights organizations were allowed to attend.

Reporters Without Borders condemns the unfairness of the trial, which keeps on being adjourned in order to keep the defendants in detention, reiterates its call for the release of Mansoor and all other prisoners of conscience and urges the authorities to drop all the charges in this case. The next hearing has been set for 9 October.

After another hearing, detained blogger's trial adjourned again September 23rd, 2011

Another hearing was held in the trial of the blogger **Ahmed Mansoor** and four other activists before the federal supreme court in Abu Dhabi on 26 September and, like the previous hearings, it was held behind closed doors.

The five defendants, who are pleading not guilty, complained of harassment and attacks in prison. They also requested that the trial be open to the public and that they should be allowed access to the prosecution case file. These requests were denied.

After hearing testimony from three witnesses, the court adjourned until 2 October, when Telecommunication Regulatory Authority director-general Mohamed Nasser Al-Ghanim will testify and the prosecution will present its closing arguments.

Reporters Without Borders condemns the repeated adjournments as they allow the authorities to continue detaining the defendants, who have already been held for more than six months. The press freedom organization calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

Blogger to appear in court next week July 13th, 2011

The trial of **Ahmed Mansoor**, a blogger and human rights activist who has been held since April, is due to resume in Abu Dhabi on 18 July. Reporters Without Borders urges the authorities to drop the charges against this netizen and release him without delay.

More than 10 police officers took part in Mansoor's arrest in April, seizing two laptops and several documents. His arrest, after signing a petition calling for democratic reforms in the United Arab Emirates, followed several weeks during which he was the target of intimidation attempts and a smear campaign, especially on the social networks Facebook and Twitter.

Mansoor was also pressured by his employer, a telecommunications company that suddenly decided to relocate to Pakistan in a move which, according to Mansoor's [blog](#), was motivated

by political interests.

Four other pro-democracy activists are being tried with Mansoor. They are **Farhad Salem, Nasser bin Ghaith, Hassan Ali Al-Khamis** and **Ahmed Abdul Khaleq**. They are all charged with threatening state security, undermining public order and insulting the president, the vice president and the crown prince of Abu Dhabi.

They pleaded not-guilty when the first hearing was held on 14 June, just hours after the judge scheduled to preside the case was replaced. During the hearing, a pro-government demonstration took place outside, with members of the crowd chanting death threats against the defendants.

The trial would be adjourned again at next week's hearing as the prosecution wants to bring new "witnesses" whose identity has not yet been revealed to the defence. Reporters Without Borders has learned that Mansoor is meanwhile suffering from a severe allergy but has been denied access to a dermatologist, despite repeated requests.

He seems to be the collateral victim of the increase in security measures and repression that Arab governments have adopted up in recent months because of the spread of protests. More arrests are taking place, online filtering and surveillance of Internet users have been stepped up and the authorities are still trying to get access to the BlackBerry smartphone's encrypted communications – all disturbing signs in this troubled region.

The United Arab Emirates is listed as a "country under surveillance" in the "[Enemies of the Internet](#)" report that Reporters Without Borders released on 12 March.
