

# URGENT ACTION

## PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE ON TRIAL

**On 11 April 2018, prominent human rights defender Ahmed Mansoor appeared before a court in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for his second trial session. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.**

According to information received by Amnesty international, the trial of prominent human rights defender and blogger **Ahmed Mansoor** began in March and his second trial session took place on 11 April in a court in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE. Amnesty International has no information about which court is hearing his case, the exact charges he is facing nor whether he has a defence lawyer.

Ahmed Mansoor was arrested on 20 March 2017, at his home in the emirate of Ajman in the UAE. Several hours after his arrest, the official state-run news website announced that he was arrested on the orders of the Public Prosecution for Cybercrimes and detained pending further investigation on charges of “using social media [including Twitter and Facebook] sites to publish false and misleading information that harms national unity and social harmony and damages the country’s reputation” and “promoting sectarian and hate-incited agenda”. On 29 March 2017, the authorities stated that Ahmed Mansoor was held in custody at the Central Prison (al-Wathba prison) in Abu Dhabi; that he had “the freedom to hire a lawyer” and that his family was allowed to visit him. Despite these claims, Ahmed Mansoor’s exact place of detention remains unverified. According to Amnesty International’s information, he had no access to a lawyer, and has been held in prolonged solitary confinement, which amounts to torture and other ill-treatment. Since his arrest, Ahmed Mansoor has received only two supervised family visits on 3 April and 17 September 2017. Each time he was brought to the Public Prosecution building in Abu Dhabi, where his family met him briefly. At the end of February 2018, a group of international human rights organizations commissioned two Irish lawyers to travel to Abu Dhabi to seek access to Ahmed Mansoor. They approached the Ministry of Interior and were referred to the police, who advised them to check with the al-Wathba prison, where they were told that he was not being held there.

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

- Calling on the UAE authorities to release Ahmed Mansoor immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, including through his human rights work;
- Urging them to disclose, pending his release, his exact whereabouts and information about the stage of his trial, and ensure that he is held in an official place of detention and he is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urging them to ensure he is granted immediate and regular access to a lawyer, his family, and any medical care he may require.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 MAY 2018 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

Salutation: Your Highness

#### Minister of Interior

Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan  
Zayed Sport City, Arab Gulf Street, Near  
to Shaikh Zayed Mosque  
PO Box 398  
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
Fax: +971 2 402 2762/ +971 2 441 5780  
Salutation: Your Highness

#### **And copies to:**

#### Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi

HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan  
Crown Prince Court  
King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz  
Al Saud Street,  
P.O. Box 124  
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
Fax: +971 2 668 6622  
Twitter: @MohamedBinZayed

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR SULAIMAN HAMID ALMAZROUI, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 30 Prince’s Gate, London SW7 1PT, 020 7581 1281, email [pressuk@mofa.gov.ae](mailto:pressuk@mofa.gov.ae)

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.** This is the fourth update of UA 200/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/8062/2018/en/>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed Mansoor is married and is the father of four young boys. He is a member of the advisory committee of the NGO Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division, as well as of the advisory board of the organization Gulf Centre for Human Rights. He has documented the human rights situation in the UAE since 2006 and has spoken out publicly in defence of international human rights in his blog, via social media and in interviews with international media.

He was arrested at his home in the early hours of 20 March 2017. At around midnight, 12 security personnel entered and searched his home, and confiscated his phones and other electronic devices. It is unclear whether they presented a search or arrest warrant. After conducting a three-hour search of his home, at around 3:15am, they took him to an undisclosed location.

On 28 March 2017, a group of UN human rights experts called on the UAE to release him immediately, describing his arrest as "a direct attack on the legitimate work of human rights defenders in the UAE". They expressed fear that his arrest "may constitute an act of reprisal for his engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, for the views he expressed on social media, including Twitter". See also:

[http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21449&LangID=E&\\_sm\\_au=iVV5L7PTt6N6VHk6](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21449&LangID=E&_sm_au=iVV5L7PTt6N6VHk6).

The next day, the UAE authorities responded directly to the statement, disputing the allegation that Ahmed Mansoor's detention was arbitrary, and stating that he was held in custody at the Central Prison in Abu Dhabi. They added "he has the freedom to hire a lawyer" and that "his family has full access to the place of confinement and is allowed to visit him".

In February 2018, a group of international human rights organizations commissioned two lawyers from Ireland to travel to Abu Dhabi to seek access to Ahmed Mansoor. The UAE authorities gave the lawyers conflicting information about his whereabouts. The Ministry of Interior, the official body responsible for prisons and prisoners, denied any knowledge of his whereabouts and referred the lawyers to the police. The police also said they had no information about his whereabouts. The lawyers also visited al-Wathba Prison in Abu Dhabi. However, the prison authorities told the lawyers that he was not being held there. See also: *UAE: Joint statement: One year on, award-winning human rights defender Ahmed Mansoor's whereabouts remain unknown* (AI Index: MDE 25/8101/2018), 20 March 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/8101/2018/en/>.

As a result of his human rights work, Ahmed Mansoor has faced repeated intimidation, harassment, physical assault, and death threats from the UAE authorities or their supporters. Since at least 2011, the authorities had placed him under physical and electronic surveillance. His computer and email accounts have been hacked and he foiled an attempted hacking of his iPhone in 2016, which prompted Apple to issue a security update to the smartphone in August 2016.

Previously, on 3 March 2011, Ahmed Mansoor and 132 other prominent figures in the UAE, including lawyers and academics, signed a petition addressed to the president, Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, calling for political reform in the UAE, including universal suffrage and for the UAE's quasi-parliamentary body, the Federal National Council, to be given legislative powers. The following month, the UAE authorities arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned Ahmed Mansoor and four other activists. On 27 November 2011, following a grossly unfair trial, the five were convicted of "publicly insulting the UAE's president, vice-president and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi" in comments posted on an online discussion forum, and Ahmed Mansoor was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The next day, he and the other four activists received a presidential pardon.

Further information on UA: 200/15 Index: MDE 25/8214/2018 Issue Date: 12 April 2018