

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **United Arab Emirates: Harassment of human rights activists must stop**

Amnesty International is alarmed at the recent measures of intimidation and harassment of human rights activists in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Over the last months the organization has received information about the arrest of a prominent lawyer and a court action against another in order to put an end to their human rights activism and the freedom to practice their work.

On 17 June 2006 an arrest warrant was issued against Mohamed al-Mansoori, a lawyer, human rights activist and President of the independent Jurists' Association after he was accused of "insulting the Public Prosecutor". Amnesty International believes that the authorities' real motive was to silence Mohamed al-Mansoori after he gave several interviews to Arab satellite television channels in which he spoke critically of the human rights situation in the country.

On 23 August 2006 Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken, a lawyer, human rights activist and former president of the UAE's Jurists' Association, was arrested at his office in Dubai reportedly by members of *Amn al-Dawla* (State Security). The reasons for his arrest as well as his fate and whereabouts are still unknown. In July 2006, Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken had been arrested and held for one night after he gave an interview to an Arabic satellite television channel about the recent conflict in Lebanon. He was released without charge. Both Mohamed al-Mansoori and Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken have for a number of years been barred from giving interviews or writing articles for the local media.

The Jurists' Association was founded in 1981 and has 370 members including judges, lawyers and legal experts. It has also been involved in organizing seminars on various human rights issues. However, in September 2005 in the Emirate of Fujairah, the authorities banned a conference on civil rights, women's rights and democracy that the association had sought to organize. No reasons were given for the ban.

Amnesty International is also concerned at reports that the authorities had been seeking to close the Villa no. 18, City of Hope Women's shelter in Jumeirah in the Emirate of Dubai. In early August 2006, the founder of the shelter, Sharla Musabih, was said to have been facing politically motivated criminal charges. The shelter houses and supports women and children survivors of violence, including women domestic workers who have suffered abuse by their employers.

Amnesty International is calling on the UAE authorities to clarify the fate and whereabouts of Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken and ensure that he is given access to a lawyer, family members and medical care as necessary. The organization urges for him to be released if he is not charged with a recognizable criminal offence. If he is being held solely for the expression of his beliefs or opinion Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken would be considered a prisoner of conscience who should be released immediately. Further, Amnesty International is calling on the UAE authorities to take concrete steps to ensure full respect and protection of

the right to freedom of expression and that human rights defenders are free from harassment in accordance with Article 12 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders\*.

\* Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Adopted by General Assembly resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998 Article 12

1. Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

2. The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.

3. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.