

URGENT ACTION

SON OF POC ARRESTED, AT RISK OF TORTURE

The son of a prisoner of conscience has been arrested in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after criticising the treatment of his father and other political prisoners on social media. His whereabouts are unknown and he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Osama al-Najjar, a 25-year-old architecture graduate from an Australian university, was arrested on 17 March in the emirate of Ajman where he lives. Ten state security officers raided his family home at about 4pm, arriving in six cars and searching the house for three hours, confiscating a number of personal effects, including all the family's iPads and laptops. Osama al-Najjar's whereabouts are unknown, but he may be held in a state security detention centre where he would be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. He needs medical care to follow up on surgery carried out on his leg the day before his arrest.

On 16 March, Osama al-Najjar posted a number of tweets about the mistreatment of his father and other political prisoners in al-Razeen Prison. He also responded on Twitter to the Ruler of Sharjah who had said in a radio broadcast that the "families of those arrested should not fill their children with hate and malice against the country". Osama al-Najjar tweeted "your highness, the doctor, we do not hate our country and we do not forget injustice we have faced... Those who were unjust to my father carry 20 months of unfair jail and harassment on their conscience." He had already tweeted the UAE Minister of Interior on 26 February, raising concerns about his father's treatment in prison and requesting a response to a letter he had sent to the Minister.

Amnesty International believes that Osama al-Najjar may have been arrested because of his online activities on Twitter and for tweeting about the human rights violations in the UAE, drawing attention to his father's case and that of other prisoners of conscience.

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

- Urging the UAE authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Osama al-Najjar, and release him immediately if he has been arrested solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to ensure that he receives any medical attention he may require, as a matter of urgency, and that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 APRIL 2014 TO:

President

Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Ministry of Presidential Affairs
Corniche Road
Abu Dhabi, P.O. Box 280
United Arab Emirates
Fax: +971 2 622 2228
Email: ihtimam@mopa.ae
Salutation: Your Highness

Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Crown Prince Court Bainunah Street
Abu Dhabi, P.O. Box 124
United Arab Emirates
Fax: +971 2 668 6622
Twitter: @MBZNews
Salutation: Your Highness

And copies to:

Minister of Interior

Lt General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Zayed Sport City, Arab Gulf Street, Near to Shaikh Zayed Mosque,
Abu Dhabi POB: 398;
Fax: +971 2 4414938 / +971 2 4022762 / +971 2 4415780
Email: moi@moi.gov.ae
Twitter: @SaifBZayed

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Osama al-Najjar is the son of physicist and science teacher, Hussain Ali Alnajjar al-Hammadi, who was one of a number of prisoners of conscience unfairly tried during the mass "UAE94" trial in 2013. Of the 94 defendants, who included human rights lawyers, judges and student activists, 69 were convicted of national security-related charges and sentenced to between seven and 15 years' imprisonment. Hussain Ali Alnajjar al-Hammadi was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. He received an additional one-year and three months prison sentence in a second trial, which convicted 10 UAE and 20 Egyptian nationals on national security-related charges.

The proceedings in both mass trials violated international fair trial standards: the defendants were denied access to lawyers while they were detained incommunicado awaiting trial; all were secretly detained, some for up to a year; many told the judge they had been tortured; "confessions" purportedly obtained while defendants were in secret detention were used as evidence of their guilt; and all were denied the right to appeal the court's verdict in contravention of international human rights standards.

Some relatives of the 69 imprisoned government critics told Amnesty International when it visited the UAE in November 2013 that they had been bullied, harassed, threatened and stigmatized by the authorities in a bid to silence their pleas for justice. They have been threatened by state security officials, as well as prevented from travel and have been refused security clearance for jobs. Several have received threatening tweets, either from named individuals believed to work for or connected with state security or from anonymous Twitter accounts.

Prisoners' families have been vilified by the largely pro-government national media and in a documentary about the "UAE 94", produced by an organization believed to have close links with the authorities, which was first shown at a screening on 21 November in Dubai and ignores human rights concerns about the trial.

Aisha Ibrahim al-Zaabi, wife of activist Mohamed Saqer al-Zaabi, unfairly convicted in absentia in the UAE94 trial, was arrested in January 2014 at a checkpoint on the border with Oman and kept in secret detention for five days with no access to her family or lawyer. Aisha Ibrahim al-Zaabi and her five children had been stopped in 2012 from boarding a flight out of Abu Dhabi International Airport and been told they were on a list of people banned from travelling outside the UAE.

In her preliminary observations on the UAE on 5 February 2014, Gabriela Knaul, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, expressed deep concerns on a number of human rights issues, including reports of surveillance, harassment, threats and pressure exerted on lawyers, and urged the authorities to take immediate measures to put an end to this situation. The Special Rapporteur also observed that the UAE judicial system remained under the de facto control of the executive branch of government. She made a series of recommendations to the UAE government, including that it must revise legislation to ensure the right of appeal in cases currently heard in first instance by the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court; establish an independent committee to investigate all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in detention; and ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocols, as well as the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced disappearance. The Special Rapporteur's preliminary observations can be found here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14223&LangID=E>

Name: Osama al-Najjar

Gender m/f: m

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