

URGENT ACTION

VERDICT DATE SET FOR TWO LEBANESE MEN

The Federal Supreme Court has set 20 January 2020 to issue its verdict in the case of two Lebanese men, including Ahmed Nimr Sobeh, who are appealing their conviction and sentences. The Court is yet to set the date to hear the appeal of a third Lebanese man, Abdelrahman Talal Chouman. The three men had been sentenced by the Federal Appeal Court in a trial that did not meet international fair trial standards.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

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Your Excellency,

On 20 January 2020, the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court is expected to issue its verdict in the case of two Lebanese men, **Ahmed Nimr Sobeh** (a sales consultant at Al Nabooda Automobiles), and another Lebanese man, both of whom were sentenced on 15 May 2019 to 10 years in prison by the State Security Chamber of the Federal Appeal Court. The court is yet to set a date for the trial of a third Lebanese man, **Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman** (a safety and security trainer with Emirates airlines), who was sentenced to life in prison in the same case. Charges included "forming a terrorist cell" and "planning terrorist attacks in the UAE on orders of Hezbollah". The three men's convictions were based on proceedings that failed to meet international fair trial standards; indeed, the court admitted as evidence "confessions" extracted under duress; the defendants were detained incommunicado for months and denied access to lawyers during interrogation and investigation; and they were not given adequate time and facilities to prepare their defence. All three have appealed their conviction and sentences.

In light of the above, and given the fact that we repeatedly have raised similar grave concerns in the past, we call on the Emirati authorities to remind all members of the judiciary of their obligations under international law to ensure that all trials fully comply with international fair trial standards, and to emphasise, in particular, that courts must exclude evidence obtained under torture.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Between the end of December 2017 and 18 February 2018, State Security forces arrested eight Lebanese men, including Abdelrahman Talal Chouman (a safety and security trainer with Emirates airlines) and Ahmed Nimr Sobeh (a sales consultant at Al Nabooda Automobiles), on charges including “forming a terrorist cell” and “planning terrorist attacks in the UAE” on orders of Hezbollah, a Shi’a political party and armed group based in Lebanon. The men were granted short phone calls to their families during which they told them they were being detained for state security issues but were not able to communicate where they were being held. At least one of the detainees was forced to sign his so-called “confession” without being allowed to read the document.

Their trial started on 13 February 2019. They were denied access to lawyers during the pre-trial interrogation and investigation phase; and even when lawyers were appointed after the trial began, they were not allowed to meet with them outside of court. The court did not afford the lawyers the full documents relating to the cases of their clients and at least two lawyers withdrew from the case. Following the first trial hearing some family members, who had attended the session, were allowed to meet with the detainees for the first time since their arrest.

On 15 May 2019, the State Security Chamber of the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi issued its verdict in the case of the eight men, and three others who were tried in absentia. The verdict session lasted a few minutes allowing only for the reading of the sentences and relied on coerced “confessions” as evidence. Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman and the three men tried in their absence received life sentences, and the court ordered the confiscation of all their communications devices including their computers and phones. Ahmed Nimr Sobeh (a sales consultant at Al Nabooda Automobiles) and another man were sentenced to 10 years in prison, and Ahmed Nimr Sobeh was further fined 3,000 Emirati Dirhams (around USD\$ 817) for possessing a rifle without a licence. The court also ordered that they be deported upon completion of their prison terms. The remaining five men were acquitted and later released.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 31 January 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Abdel Rahman Talal Chouman (he/his), Ahmed Nimr Sobeh (he/his),

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE2504302019ENGLISH.pdf>