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Amnesty International trial observer denied entry into UAE

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities have denied an Amnesty International delegate entry into the country ahead of a trial of 94 UAE citizens, highlighting serious questions about its transparency and fairness, Amnesty International said.

The defendants, including at least three prisoners of conscience and many other peaceful activists, are due to be tried with “plotting to overthrow the state” in the UAE tomorrow, 4 March.

This morning, Ahmad Nashmi al-Dhafeeri, a Kuwaiti lawyer and human rights activist who was meant to observe the trial on behalf of Amnesty International, was denied access to the UAE. The authorities offered no explanation for refusing him entry.

“By denying access to observers from human rights groups, the UAE authorities are blatantly trying to manage what information is made available about the trial to the outside world,” said Drewery Dyke, Amnesty International’s UAE Researcher.

Noémie Crottaz, a Swiss national representing the Geneva-based NGO Alkarama Foundation, was denied entry into the UAE on Saturday 2 March. Other international observers will seek to attend the trial.

“There are already serious concerns about the fairness and transparency of the proceedings. The authorities have undermined the defendants’ right to a fair trial almost from the outset,” said Dyke.

“The basis for the arrests was never made clear, while lawyers chosen by the defendants have been accorded scant access to the clients. Reports about ill-treatment of the detainees – including torture - have never been investigated. We are particularly concerned for the wellbeing of Dr Mohammad al-Roken – a prisoner of conscience – and other human rights defenders among the 94.”

For background, see [“Al-Islah members face unfair trial in UAE”](#), Amnesty International Urgent Action, 28 February 2013.