

# URGENT ACTION

## SHAM MASS TRIAL OF 84 EMIRATI MEN ONGOING

The unfair mass trial of 84 Emirati men, including human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience Ahmed Mansoor, Mohammed al-Roken and Nasser bin Ghaith, on charges under an indictment that has so far been kept secret, is ongoing. On 7 February 2024, during the fifth trial session before the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi, defendants stated that they continued to be held in solitary confinement and disputed the Prosecution's arguments that the new case against them is different from the one they had previously been convicted and sentenced for in 2013.

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

**Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan**

President of the United Arab Emirates

Twitter: @MohamedBinZayed

Your Highness,

*I am concerned that the ongoing mass trial of 84 Emirati men, including 26 prisoners of conscience, among them Ahmed Mansoor, Nasser bin Ghaith and Mohammed al-Roken, is politically motivated and disregards the defendants' right to a fair trial.*

*The new mass trial began on 7 December 2023, before the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi, on charges of establishing a "terrorist organization" and supporting and funding this organization. The "terrorist organization" referred to is the Justice and Dignity Committee. At least 66 of the defendants in the ongoing mass trial face double jeopardy as they were previously convicted in 2013 in the UAE94 mass trial on charges related to establishing the Justice and Dignity Committee, to call for the respect of human rights in the UAE. Fifty-nine of them are being held beyond the expiry of their sentences.*

*According to family members, at the fourth trial session on 11 January, defendants complained they were being held in solitary confinement since July 2023, and some stated they had also been subjected additional forms of torture or other ill-treatment. The judge agreed to let these complaints be included in the record. Some defendants also added that they had only had 15 minutes to talk with their lawyers since the trial started.*

*The latest trial session took place on 7 February and unlike the previous four hearings, family members of the defendants were finally allowed to enter the court room to follow the proceedings. They reported that the prosecution accused the UAE94 group of initiating the March 2011 petition calling for democratic reform, to which Ahmed Mansoor responded that he was the one who had initiated and worked on it. The next trial session is scheduled for 15 February.*

***I urge your Highness to take all necessary measures to secure the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Ahmed Mansoor, Mohammed al-Roken, Nasser bin Ghaith and all others arbitrarily detained and prosecuted in the ongoing mass trial solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association; and for all charges against them stemming from their exercise of their human rights to be dropped. In the meantime, I call on you to ensure that they are detained in conditions that comply with international standards, that they are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment; and have immediate and regular access to their families and lawyers and any health care they may require.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The total number of defendants in this new mass trial was initially reported to be 87, however it is only on 6 January 2024, when the UAE authorities finally [announced](#) the trial on the official news agency WAM, that their number was confirmed as 84.

Multiple gross violations of the defendants' fair trial rights have been observed since the beginning of the new mass trial on 7 December 2023, including authorities directing witness testimony, failure to disclose key details such as the exact charges or what articles of the law are being used to bring the charges, restrictions on lawyers sharing documents relating to the case with the defendants and their families, and barring family members from attending hearings during the trial. During the second court session on 14 December 2023, family members of the defendants were taken to a separate room to watch the proceedings on a screen; there was no sound, preventing them from hearing proceedings. Following the families' protests, they were finally allowed to attend the court proceeding inside the court room on 7 February 2024. According to a family member, all the defendants were shackled, and the trial session started at 10am and ended at 3pm. As the judge was about to adjourn the session until the next day as scheduled, Mohammed al-Roken requested that it be postponed for the next week as Al-Razeen prison is situated three hours' drive from the court in Abu Dhabi, meaning that defendants are woken up at midnight to be prepared for their transfer.

On 19 January 2024 a number of [United Nations experts](#) said that "[they] are extremely concerned that the new charges brought against at least 84 members of civil society, including human rights defenders, activists and political dissidents, under the 2014 Counter-Terrorism Law violate international prohibitions on double jeopardy and retroactive criminal law." Double jeopardy refers to the legal principle that a defendant cannot be charged a second time with an offence if they have already been acquitted of that offence.

By 2014, the UAE effectively succeed in shutting down the limited space that had existed for dissent in the country by arbitrarily detaining scores of Emirati nationals, including dozens who had signed a March 2011 petition for democratic reform addressed to the country's rulers. In 2013, after a grossly unfair [mass trial](#) of 94 defendants, known as the UAE94, 69 people were convicted and sentenced to between seven and 15-year prison terms, scores of them for their demands for reform and democracy. Under UAE law at the time, the judgement was final and not subject to appeal, in violation of international law. Of the 69 men sentenced, five received a seven-year prison sentence, 56 a 10-year prison sentence and eight were sentenced to 15 years in their absence. Fifty-nine of [those imprisoned in the case](#) remain arbitrarily detained after completing their sentences.

Prominent human rights lawyer and former president of the UAE's Jurists Association, Mohammed al-Roken, was arrested on 17 July 2012. He was sentenced in July 2013 to 10 years' imprisonment, followed by three years' probation, at the end of the UAE 94 trial. He should have been released from prison on 17 July 2022.

Human rights defender [Ahmed Mansoor](#) was arrested on 20 March 2017, and sentenced in May 2018 to 10 years' imprisonment. He was convicted on charges including having "[insulted the 'status and prestige of the UAE and its symbols', including its leaders](#)". Since his arrest, Ahmed Mansoor has been held in solitary confinement. Up until his arrest, he was the only independent voice still brave enough to speak out against human rights violations from inside the country after the end of the 2013 mass trial.

Human rights defender [Nasser bin Ghaith](#) is serving a 10-year prison sentence handed to him on 29 March 2017 by the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi. He was convicted on charges including "posting false information" about UAE leaders and their policies, based on comments he made on X (formerly Twitter) stating that an earlier trial of himself and four other Emiratis was unfair. During his trial in 2017, the authorities restricted his access to his lawyer and he was unable to prepare adequately for his defence.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Arabic/ English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 10 April 2024

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** **Ahmed Mansoor** (he/him); **Mohammed al-Roken** (he/him); **Nasser bin Ghaith** (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde25/7553/2023/en/>