



Joint Statement by the Martin Ennals Award Jury

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United Arab Emirates (UAE): Lift travel ban on 2015 finalist Ahmed Mansoor, urges Martin Ennals Award Jury

Ten human rights groups represented in the Martin Ennals Award Jury today called on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities to lift the travel ban imposed on Ahmed Mansoor, one of the three human rights defenders nominated for the 2015 Award, and to issue him a passport.

Widely respected as one of the few voices within the UAE to provide a credible independent assessment of human rights developments in the country, Ahmed Mansoor regularly raises concerns regarding arbitrary detention, torture or degrading treatment, and failure to meet international standards of fair trial. He also draws attention to other human rights abuses, including against migrant workers.

As a result, Ahmed Mansoor has faced repeated intimidation, harassment, and death threats from the UAE authorities or their supporters, including arrest and imprisonment in 2011 following an unfair trial. He and four other activists who called for democratic rights in the UAE were jailed in 2011 on the charge of “insulting officials”. Although pardoned and released later that year, Ahmed Mansoor has been banned from travel and had his passport confiscated.

As a result of his courageous work, Ahmed Mansoor was selected as one of the three finalists of the Martin Ennals Award who will be recognized at a ceremony hosted by the city of Geneva on October 6th. The Award is usually handed out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

As matters stand, however, Ahmed Mansoor will be prevented from attending the ceremony, to be held in the city of Geneva, because the UAE authorities have arbitrarily imposed a travel ban on him and have refused to return his passport, which they have confiscated since 2011. Both the travel ban and the confiscation of his passport violate Ahmed Mansoor’s right under international human rights law to freedom of movement, as these measures were taken to punish him for his peaceful human rights activism.

The Martin Ennals Award Jury today noted with concern: “Ahmed Mansoor’s absence at the ceremony would mark a very disappointing position for the UAE, which is a country that prides itself as one of the hubs of international business and tourism in the Middle East, as well a safe haven in the region. As a member of the UN Human Rights Council, which is running for a second term, we expect the UAE authorities to honour their obligations to uphold human rights and protect human rights defenders. The UAE government must match its rhetoric on the international stage with meaningful actions at home, starting with immediately lifting the travel ban on Ahmed Mansoor, returning and renewing his passport, and allowing him to travel to Geneva for the ceremony.”

Ahmed Mansoor is a member of the Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division, as well as the Advisory Board of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights.

Martin Ennals Award Jury:

- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch
- Human Rights First
- FIDH
- World Organisation Against Torture – (OMCT)
- Front Line Defenders
- International Commission of Jurists
- EWDE Germany
- International Service for Human Rights
- HURIDOCS.