

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AMONG 13 ARRESTED

Two prominent human rights defenders and at least 11 political activists have been detained in a wave of arrests in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Their whereabouts are unknown, placing them at increased risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Human rights defender **Dr Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken**, a lawyer, was arrested at 1.30 am on 17 July while driving to a police station in Dubai to tell them that his son **Rashid Mohamed al-Roken** and son-in-law **'Abdullah al-Hajeri** had been missing for five hours.

Abu Dhabi's Public Prosecutor announced on 15 July that a group of people would be investigated for plotting "crimes against state security", "opposing the UAE constitution and ruling system", and having ties to "foreign organizations and agendas". Following that announcement, at least 11 activists have been arrested by officers of *Amn al-Dawla* (State Security) at their homes or places of work, who confiscated their computers and personal documents. Among them are human rights defender, lawyer and former member and former head of the Jurists' Association in the UAE **Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori**; the director of the Centre for the Memorization of the Qur'an **Abdul-Rahman al-Hadidi**; **Rashid al-Shamsi**; **Hussain al-Najjar**; **Omran al-Radhwan**; **Khaled al-Shaiba**; **Dr Ibrahim al-Yassi**; **Mohamed al-Hoosani**; **'Issa al-Sari**; and **Khalifa al-Nu'aimi**. Some of those held are associated with the Reform and Social Guidance Association (al-Islah) a non-violent political group which has been engaged in peaceful political debate and discussion in the UAE for many years.

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

- Urging the UAE authorities to release Dr Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken and Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori immediately and unconditionally as Amnesty International believes they are prisoners of conscience, held solely for peacefully expressing their conscientiously held beliefs and to release the other 11 (naming them) unless they are to be charged with an internationally recognized criminal offence and tried promptly in accordance with international fair trial standards;
- Urging them to disclose the whereabouts of all 13 detainees immediately, ensure that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and have access to lawyers of their choice, their families and any necessary medical treatment;
- Calling on them to remove restrictions on the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and ensure that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without hindrance in line with international human rights law and standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 AUGUST 2012 TO:

Vice-President and Prime Minister

Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum
Office of the Prime Minister
POB 2838,
Dubai, UAE
+971 4 3531974

Minister of Interior

Lt-General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan
Human Rights Directorate
POB: 398, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Fax: +971 4 3981119
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Justice

Dr Hadeef bin Jua'an Al Dhaheri
Ministry of Justice
Al Khubirah, Sector 93, Street 5
P.O. Box 260
Abu Dhabi, UAE
Fax: +971 2 6810680
Salutation: Your Excellency

Email via website:

<http://www.uaepm.ae/en/communicate/index.html>

Salutation: Your Highness

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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

The United Arab Emirates is a federation of seven emirates, each governed by an absolute ruler called an *amir*. The individual emirates do not hold local elections. Instead, a regionally determined and selected National Electoral Committee elects half the members of a consultative body, the 40-person Federal National Council (FNC), which sits in Abu Dhabi. The other 20 are appointed by the president. The term of office is two years. Within its limited remit, the FNC can examine and amend federal legislation but not veto it.

The Reform and Social Guidance Association (al-Islah) is a non-profit organization that advocates greater adherence to Islamic precepts.

Most people suspected of political offences in the UAE are arrested by the *Amn al-Dawla* (State Security) and held incommunicado at undisclosed locations for typically around a week before they are allowed to make brief and limited phone calls to their families. After release or while on trial, some have spoken of being tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

Political parties are not formally permitted in the UAE; political dissent is not readily tolerated and there are severe restrictions on freedom of expression and association, which have been increasing in recent months. The authorities have closed down online discussion forums and political websites or blocked their access from the UAE. On 9 March 2011, over 130 civil and political rights activists in the UAE petitioned the President to introduce universal, direct elections.

Dr Mohammad al-Roken was one of the defence lawyers in the case of the five UAE residents arrested in April 2011, known as the "UAE 5". In June 2011, they were tried unfairly before the Supreme Court on criminal defamation charges relating to articles posted on an online forum, some calling for political reform and others critical of some UAE government policies. Amnesty International considered all five – Ahmed Mansour, a human rights activist and blogger; Nasser bin Ghaith, a university lecturer and advocate of political reform; and online activists Fahad Salim Dalk, Ahmed Abdul Khaleq and Hassan Ali al-Khamis – to be prisoners of conscience. While held, they were targeted in a campaign of vilification on social networking sites. On 27 November 2011, Ahmed Mansour was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, and the other four to two years. All five were released the following day after a presidential pardon, in advance of the UAE's national day, on 2 December 2011. Despite the pardon, they still have criminal records, which should be overturned. On 16 July 2012 Ahmed Abdul Khaleq, was forced to leave the country for exile in Thailand as otherwise he faced indefinite detention (see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/uae-bidun-blogger-forced-leave-country-raising-alarm-after-wave-arbitrary-arrests-2012-07-16>).

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On 17 July 2012 a spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed his concern at the accelerating crackdown on human rights defenders in the UAE. He referred to harassment, denial of travel, termination of work contracts, arrests, denaturalization and expulsion from the country as methods being used by the UAE authorities to repress activists in the UAE.

Names: Mohammad al-Roken, Rashid al-Roken, 'Abdullah al-Hajeri, Mohammad al-Mansoori, Abdul-Rahman al-Hadidi, Rashid al-Shamsi, Hussain al-Najjar, Omran al-Radhwani, Khaled al-Shaiba, Ibrahim al-Yassi, Mohamed al-Hoosan, 'Issa al-Sari and Khalifa al-Nu'aimi
Gender m/f: M