

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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OPEN LETTER TO THE EMIRATI AUTHORITIES TO FREE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AHMED MANSOOR ON HIS 50TH BIRTHDAY

Your Excellency, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan,

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has recently announced multiple projects promoting pluralism and tolerance both at home and abroad. 2019 has been declared the 'Year of Tolerance' and in 2020, Dubai will host the World Expo trade fair, under the theme 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future.' Upon Dubai's selection for this exhibition in 2013, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, said: "[w]e renew our promise to astonish the world in 2020." We welcome these public commitments to tolerance and open-mindedness.

It is in this same spirit that we, the undersigned, call upon the UAE government to immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Ahmed Mansoor, whose life we believe may be at risk following beatings and hunger strikes to protest deplorable and inhumane prison conditions. The Authorities have convicted and imprisoned him solely for his human rights work and for exercising his right to freedom of expression, which is also protected under the UAE's Constitution. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Before his imprisonment, Mansoor was known as 'the last human rights defender left in the UAE' on account of his fearless work to document human rights violations in the country. His willingness to speak out publicly in defence of human rights on his blog, via social media and in interviews with international media was an example to us all. He is also an engineer, a poet, and a father of four. He is on the advisory boards of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and Human Rights Watch and was awarded the 2015 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders.

UAE authorities arrested Mansoor on 20 March 2017 at his home and subjected him to enforced and involuntary disappearance for over six months, with no access to a lawyer and sparse contact with his family, who did not know his exact whereabouts. The authorities held him in solitary confinement for prolonged periods of time.

Shortly after his arrest, a group of United Nations human rights experts said that the UAE should release him immediately, describing his arrest as "a direct attack on the legitimate work of human rights defenders in the UAE." They expressed fear that his arrest "may constitute an act of reprisal for his engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, for the views he expressed on social media, including Twitter."

A year later, on 29 May 2018, Mansoor was sentenced under vague charges of "insulting the status and prestige of the UAE and its symbols, including its leaders", "publishing false information to damage the UAE's reputation abroad" and "portraying the UAE as a lawless land." He received a sentence of 10 years in prison, a fine of 1,000,000 UAE Dirhams (US\$272,000), three years of probation after completion of his sentence, and confiscation of his electronic devices. On 31 December 2018, the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court upheld his conviction and sentence.

The UAE's Government actions against Mansoor have been widely criticised. For instance, on 4 October 2018, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning Mansoor's "harassment, persecution and detention, and calling for his release." In May 2019, after he ended a month-long hunger strike to protest his unjust conviction and his detention conditions in Al-Sadr prison, a group of UN Special Rapporteurs stated that his conditions of detention "violat[e] basic international human rights standards and risk[ed] taking an irrevocable toll on Mr Mansoor's health." In September 2019, Mansoor was severely beaten for continuing his protests and he undertook yet another hunger strike. Nevertheless, he continues to be held in an isolation cell with no running water or bed and is not permitted to leave his cell except for family visits.

In September 2019, the annual report of the UN Secretary General about reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN mechanisms cited Mansoor's case. This was the fourth time that the Secretary General had denounced reprisals against him, having previously raised concerns in 2014, 2017 and 2018.

It is a tragedy and a disgrace for the UAE that this Tuesday, on 22 October of the UAE's 'Year of Tolerance', Ahmed Mansoor will turn 50, alone in a prison cell in such deplorable conditions, simply for exercising his fundamental right to free speech and for speaking out against human rights violations.

Mansoor's imprisonment is part of a larger and growing pattern of repression in the UAE. Since 2011, the authorities have embarked on an unprecedented campaign of repression on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in the country, shrinking the space for peaceful dissent to near-obliteration. Authorities have used privately manufactured technologies, such as those made by NSO Group, for the unlawful targeted surveillance of human rights defenders, including Mansoor, in order to monitor and clamp down on dissent. The authorities have arrested, detained, and prosecuted activists, human rights defenders and other critics of the government, including prominent lawyers, judges and academics, on broad and sweeping national security-related or cybercrime charges and in proceedings that fail to meet international fair trial standards.

The UAE has publicly declared itself a champion of tolerance in the Middle East and the world. Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it has an obligation to protect the rights of its citizens and residents. For this reason, we call upon the UAE government to uphold these principles, and to release Ahmed Mansoor without further delay.

Signatories:

1. A Common Future- Cameroon
2. Abraham's Children Foundation- Nigeria
3. ACAPE BURUNDI
4. Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT)-Belgium
5. ACAT- France
6. ACAT-Germany
7. ACAT-Liberia
8. ACAT-Switzerland
9. Access Center for Human Rights-France
10. Access Now
11. Accountabilitylab- Niger
12. African Monitoring Observatory on Climate, Waters, Earth, and Cultures (AMOClimWEC)- Benin
13. American Association of University Professors - New York University Chapter
14. American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
15. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
16. Amis des Etrangers au Togo (ADET)- Togo
17. Amman Center for Human Rights Studies- Jordan
18. Amnesty International
19. Angels in the Field- India
20. Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)
21. ARTICLE 19
22. Asociación de Tecnología, Educación, Desarrollo, Investigación, Comunicación (TEDIC)- Paraguay
23. Association de defense des libertas individuelles- Tunisia
24. Association For Promotion Sustainable Development- India
25. Association for Victims of Torture in UAE- Switzerland

26. Badhon Manob Unnayan Sangstha- Bangladesh
27. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
28. Center for Civil Liberties- Ukraine
29. Center for Innovative and Pragmatic Development Initiative (CIPDI)
30. Centre d'Appui a l'Education et au Developpement Communautaire (CEDECO)- Democratic Republic of the Congo
31. Centre for Social Mobilization and Sustainable Development - Ghana
32. Centro de Estudios y apoyo al desarrollo Local- Bolivia
33. CIVICUS
34. Comision Nacional de los Derechos Humanos- Dominican Republic
35. Committee for the Respect of Liberties and Human Rights in Tunisia
36. Community Initiative for Social Empowerment (CISE)- Malawi
37. Community Uplift and Welfare Development (CUWEDE)- Uganda
38. Conacce Chaplains- Colombia
39. Construisons Ensemble le Monde- Democratic Republic of the Congo
40. Coordination Maghrébine des Organisations des Droits Humains- Morocco
41. Daniel Iroegbu Global Health Foundation- Nigeria
42. Educating Girls and Young Women for Development- Zambia
43. English PEN
44. Ensemble contre la peine de mort (ECPM)
45. European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR)
46. FINESTE- Haiti
47. Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights- Germany
48. Freedom Forum- Nepal
49. Freedom Now- Morocco
50. Front Line Defenders
51. Fundacion CELTA- Venezuela
52. Fundación Regional de Asesoría en Derechos Humanos (INREDH)- Ecuador
53. Fundacion TEA Trabajo Educacion Ambiente- Argentina
54. Future Leaders Network Gambia Chapter- Gambia
55. Geneva Council for Rights and Liberties- Switzerland
56. Global Learning for Sustainability- Uganda
57. Global Participe- Congo
58. Global Vision- Democratic Republic of the Congo
59. Global Youth on the Quest for Developmental Networking- Gambia
60. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
61. Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR)- Australia
62. HOPE Worldwide-Pakistan- New Zealand
63. Human Rights Defenders Network (ACPDH)- Burundi

64. Human Rights First
65. Human Rights Foundation
66. Human Rights Watch
67. Humena for Human Rights and Civic Engagement- Egypt
68. Hunger Reduction International- Somalia
69. IFEX
70. Innovation for Change - Middle East and North Africa
71. International Campaign for Freedom in the United Arab Emirates (ICFUAEE)
72. International Center for Supporting Rights and Freedoms- Switzerland
73. International Centre for Justice and Human Rights- Switzerland
74. International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
75. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), under the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
76. International Legal Initiative- Kazakhstan
77. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
78. International Youth Alliance for Peace- Sri Lanka
79. Iraqi Network for Social Media (INSM)- Iraq
80. Jeunesse Assistance- Niger
81. Justice Access Point- Uganda
82. Kaimbu Sex Workers Association- Kenya
83. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law- Kazakhstan
84. Legal Clinic Adilet- Kyrgyzstan
85. Liberia Freedom of Information Coalition- Liberia
86. Ligue Burundaise pour les Droits de la Femme- Burundi
87. Maharat Foundation- Lebanon
88. Martin Ennals Foundation- Switzerland
89. MENA Rights Group
90. Middle East Studies Association of North America
91. Most at Risk Populations in Uganda (MARPS)
92. National Campaigning for Sustainable Development- Nepal
93. National Sudanese Women Association - Sudan
94. Norwegian PEN- Norway
95. Omani Association for Human Rights
96. Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains (OMDH)- Morocco
97. Pakistan NGOs Forum- Pakistan
98. Palestinian Center for Communication and Development Strategies- Palestine
99. Participatory Research Action Network (PRAN)- Bangladesh
100. PEN America
101. PEN Canada

102. PEN International
103. PEN Iraq
104. Plateforme d'Autonomisation des organisations de jeunesse de Côte d'Ivoire (Paajci)- Cote D'Ivoire
105. Promo-LEX Association- Moldova
106. Qurium Media Foundation- Sweden
107. Reconciliation and Development Agency- Cameroon
108. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
109. Resilient Youth for Change- Zambia
110. Rights Realization Centre
111. Rise Initiative for Human Advocacy- South Sudan
112. Rotel Foundation for Social Development- Nigeria
113. Rukiga Forum for Development (RUFODE)- Uganda
114. Rural Development Foundation- Pakistan
115. Salam for Democracy and Human Rights
116. Scholars at Risk
117. Sentinel for Human Rights
118. Sierra Leone School Green Clubs- Sierra Leone
119. Society for Rural Women and Youth Development- Nigeria
120. SPEDYA-Africa- Togo
121. Street Children Empowerment Foundation- Ghana
122. Sukaar Welfare Organization- Pakistan
123. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
124. Terres des Jeunes- Togo
125. TRIO Uganda- United Kingdom
126. Tunisian Association For Supporting Minority Rights- Tunisia
127. Tunisian League of Defending Human Rights- Tunisia
128. Union des Frères pour Alternatif de Développement Intégré (UFADI)- Haiti
129. Urnammu for Justice and Human Rights- Canada
130. Veritas Collective Foundation- Pakistan
131. Vigilance for Democracy and the Civic State- Tunisia
132. Vijana Hope- Democratic Republic of the Congo
133. Volunteers Welfare for Community Based Care of Zambia- Zambia
134. Wales PEN Cymru
135. Women's March Global
136. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), under the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
137. Young Men Association- Botswana
138. Youth Action for Relentless Development Organization- Sierra Leone
139. Youth Advocacy Nepal- Nepal

- 140. Youth for the Mission- Jamaica
- 141. Youth Harvest Foundation- Ghana
- 142. YOUTH AID- Liberia