

URGENT ACTION

TWO MEN HELD AT UNKNOWN LOCATION IN UAE

The whereabouts of two men arrested in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in April remain unknown. They might be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Saleh al-Dhufairi, a UAE national, was arrested at a mosque in Ras al-Khaimah, a northern emirate within the UAE, on 29 April 2012, after 10 plain-clothes officials, who did not show arrest warrants, took him away. The men did not respond to a request by his son, who was present during the arrest, to reveal where his father was being taken. One of the group of 10 identified himself as a policeman and another one as a member of the *Amn al-Dawla* (State Security) agency. However, when his family searched for him at the Ras al-Khaimah police station, the officers denied any knowledge of his arrest.

Previously, on 23 April 2012 Saleh al-Dhufairi had been questioned for three hours at the Public Prosecution Office in the city of Abu Dhabi, the UAE seat of government in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, in reference to posts he put on twitter criticizing the State Security. He is a member of the Reform and Social Guidance Association (*al-Islah*), a non-profit organization that advocates greater adherence to Islamic precepts, and he has been active on twitter and online blogs as a member of this group. He is also the general manager of the Ras Al Khaimah Holy Qur'an Foundation, an Islamic organization based in the UAE. He was previously arrested on 6 March and referred to the Federal State Security prosecution in Abu Dhabi on charges related to using twitter to incite members of the public to undertake acts that pose a threat to state security, and he was later released on bail on 20 March. His whereabouts remain unknown and it is unclear if he is detained in relation to these previous charges.

On 30 April 2012, media in the UAE reported the detention of another *al-Islah* member, **Salim Sahoo**, after his house in the emirate of Sharjah was searched for 10 hours. He is apparently not involved in any twitter or blogging activity. His family have not been told of his whereabouts since his arrest, or of any charges levelled against him. If both men are held solely for their peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of opinion and expression, they should be released immediately and unconditionally.

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

- Urge the authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Saleh al-Dhufairi and Salim Sahoo, and to disclose the reason for their arrest and their current legal status;
- Urging them to allow Saleh al-Dhufairi and Salim Sahoo immediate access to their families and lawyers;
- Urging them to protect Saleh al-Dhufairi and Salim Sahoo from any torture and ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JUNE 2012 TO:

Vice-President and Prime Minister

Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum

Office of the Prime Minister

POB 2838, Dubai, UAE

Email via website:

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

POB 260

Abu Dhabi, UAE

Fax: +971 2 6810680

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

Although most individuals suspected of political offences in the UAE are held incommunicado in undisclosed locations after their arrest by *Amn al-Dawla* (State Security), a few political detainees are allowed to make brief and limited phone calls to their families. Following their release or during their trials, some have spoken of the torture or other ill-treatment they have been subjected to.

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. Online discussion forums and political websites have been closed down or their access from the UAE blocked by the authorities. On 9 March 2011, over 130 civil and political rights activists in the UAE petitioned the President of the UAE to introduce universal, direct elections.

In April 2011 five UAE residents - the "UAE5" – were arrested. In June 2011, they were tried unfairly before the Supreme Court on criminal defamation charges relating to articles calling for political reform and others critical of some UAE government policies posted at an online forum. 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, while the other four received two year prison sentences. 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.

The recent arrest of Saleh al-Dhufairi and Salim Sahoo coincides with a wave of arrests of nine other members of *al-Islah*. The nine men were detained between March and April 2012 for their affiliation with the organization and their public criticism of the government. They are: Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Kayed al-Qasimi, Dr. Ali Hussain al-Hammadi, Dr. Shahin Abdullah al-Hosni, Hussein Munif al-Jabri and his brother Hassan Munif al-Jabri; Ibrahim Hassan al-Marzouqi, and Sheikh Mohammad Abdul Razak al-Sediq, Ahmed Ghaith al-Suwaidi and Dr. Ahmed al-Zaabi. The whereabouts of the nine men are known, except for one of them, Dr. Ahmed al-Zaabi, who was granted bail on 15 April but has not been released. Amnesty International considers all nine to be prisoners of conscience, held solely for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release. For more information see the public statement on this issue, MDE 25/004/2012: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE25/004/2012/en>.

Name: Saleh al-Dhufairi and Salim Sahoo

Gender m/f: Both male

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