URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT ACADEMIC ARRESTED, RISKS TORTURE

Economist and prominent academic Dr Nasser bin Ghaith was arrested on 18 August in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), by the country's State Security apparatus. His whereabouts are unknown and he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. He is a former prisoner of conscience.

According to information gathered by Amnesty International, economist and prominent academic **Dr Nasser bin Ghaith** was arrested at 2pm on 18 August at his workplace in Abu Dhabi by State Security officers, who confiscated a number of items. They then took him to his home in Dubai where 13 State Security officers carried out a search between 4pm and 8:30pm and confiscated further items. Dr Nasser bin Ghaith was then taken to an unknown location. State Security officers did not inform him or his family of the reasons for his arrest, and they did not explain where they were going to detain him. Dr Nasser bin Ghaith's family has no information about his whereabouts. He has several medical conditions, including high blood pressure and requires regular medication.

Amnesty International believes that he has been taken to a secret detention facility run by the UAE's State Security apparatus where there is growing evidence that torture and other ill-treatment is used routinely against detainees, often to extract "confessions" that can later be used as evidence against them in court.

Dr Nasser bin Ghaith, a former university lecturer at Paris-Sorbonne University in Abu Dhabi, has publicly called for political reform and human rights in the UAE. In March 2011, he was among a group of leading Emirati citizens who signed a petition calling for political reform, including the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Dr Nasser bin Ghaith has previously been targeted as a result of his activism. He was arrested on 10 April 2011, charged and prosecuted, alongside four other activists, for "publicly insulting" the UAE's President, Vice-President and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi in comments posted on an online discussion forum. After over seven months in detention, following an unfair trial, the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court convicted all five men on 27 November 2011. Dr Nasser bin Ghaith was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The men became known collectively as the "UAE 5" and, after international pressure, Dr Nasser bin Ghaith and the others were released under a presidential pardon the next day (although it remains unclear whether their convictions were ever expunged from the official record).

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

- Urging the UAE authorities to release Dr Nasser bin Ghaith immediately if he has been held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly;
- Urging them to, in the meantime, disclose his whereabouts, ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, has access to a lawyer of his choosing, his family, and any necessary medical treatment he may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 SEPTEMBER 2015 TO:

Vice-President and Prime Minister
HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid al-Maktoum
Prime Minister's Office
PO Box: 212000
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Fax: +971 4 330 4044
Email: info@primeminister.ae
Twitter: @HHShkMohd
Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Interior
Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Minister of the Interio
Zayed Sport City, Arab Gulf Street, Near to Shaikh Zayed Mosque
POB: 398, Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates
Fax: +971 2 402 2762/ +971 2 441 5780
Email: moi@moi.gov.ae
Salutation: Your Highness

And copies to:
Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi
Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Crown Prince Court
King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz
Al Saud Street,
P.O. Box: 124
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Fax: +971 2 668 6622
Twitter: @MBZNews

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

Since 2011, the UAE authorities have mounted an unprecedented crackdown on freedom of expression and association in the country. The space for dissent has shrunk and many of those critical of the UAE government, its policies, or the human rights situation in the country have been subjected to harassment, arrest, torture, unfair trial and imprisonment. The authorities have arrested, detained, and prosecuted more than 100 activists and critics of the government, including prominent lawyers, judges, and academics, on broad and sweeping national security-related or cybercrimes charges and in proceedings that fail to meet international fair trial standards.

Dr Nasser bin Ghaith and the other "UAE 5" activists were charged in 2011 with violating Articles 176 and 8 of the UAE Penal Code for statements they had made on the UAE *Hewar* website, which was an online political discussion forum. The authorities prosecuted the men on charges of "publicly insulting" the UAE's President, Vice-President and Crown Prince in comments posted on the online discussion forum, which the authorities had blocked a year earlier. The five men were not charged until nearly two months after their arrests and were denied by the prosecutor and the court any meaningful opportunity to see the charges and any evidence against them, despite repeated requests by their lawyers to the court. Their trial, which began on 14 June 2011, was held largely in secret. Authorities closed the hearings of the trial to the public, journalists, independent international observers, and the families of the accused without explanation.

At the start of one of the hearings, three months into the trial, four of the defendants walked out after the panel of judges refused to address any of their due process requests, including releasing them on bail. Subsequently, the defendants boycotted the next hearing. The court did not allow the defendants to review the evidence and charges against them, including evidence collected by the State Security Prosecution during the investigative period. The court also failed to allow defence lawyers to cross-examine one prosecution witness and did not allow them sufficient time to cross-examine others. The five activists, their families, and their lawyers received numerous death threats as a result of an ongoing campaign of intimidation by some Emiratis in support of the ruling elite. To date, the authorities have not investigated the threats or prosecuted those responsible.

A letter smuggled out of prison in late August 2011 signed Dr Nasser bin Ghaith and the other four activists said that procedural flaws had led them to be certain that they would not receive a fair trial. In the letter, the activists demanded that the court cease trying them in secret and allow observers and the public to attend the hearings. They also urged the court to release them on bail, allow them to review the charge sheet against them, and allow their lawyers to question prosecution witnesses.

After the letter's release, Dr Nasser bin Ghaith complained that prison authorities had encouraged other inmates to harass him. After he had an altercation with another prisoner, prison authorities chained him in solitary confinement in a cell without air conditioning despite the 40-degree Celsius heat.

Name: Dr Nasser bin Ghaith
Gender m/f: m

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