

**His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan**

President of the United Arab Emirates

Ministry of Presidential Affairs

Corniche Road

Abu Dhabi, P.O. Box: 280

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

**Fax:** +971 2 622 2228

**Email:** [ihitimam@mopa.ae](mailto:ihitimam@mopa.ae)

Your Highness

We the undersigned academics from the School of Law at the University of Warwick respectfully urge you to release immediately and unconditionally human rights lawyer and law professor Dr. Mohammed al-Roken. He is a former masters and PhD student of our Law School. He is now a prisoner of conscience serving a 10-year prison sentence, followed by three years' probation, after he was convicted during a mass trial of "establishing an organization seeking to bring about the government's overthrow," a charge which he denied in court.

The mass trial of 94 reform advocates and government critics in which Dr Mohammed al-Roken was convicted in July 2013 has been widely condemned by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and various UN Special Rapporteurs and international human rights organizations.

In November 2013, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued an Opinion in the case of Dr Mohammed al-Roken and the other defendants imprisoned following the trial. The Working Group found that their arrest and detention had resulted from the exercise of their rights to opinion and expression and to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, guaranteed under Articles 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It called on the UAE government to release them and provide them with adequate reparation.<sup>1</sup>

The trial of the "UAE 94" was deeply flawed and unfair. Many defendants were

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Opinions adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary detention at its 68th Session (13-22 November 2013), UN Doc A/HRC/WGAD/2013/60, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/131/83/PDF/G1413183.pdf?OpenElement>

subjected to enforced disappearance and held in solitary confinement in secret locations for up to one year. Dr Mohammed al-Roken was held in secret detention for eight months before the start of the trial. The court accepted prosecution evidence that consisted largely of “confessions” made by defendants in pre-trial detention and did so without taking steps to investigate defendants’ claims that State Security interrogators had forced them, under torture or other ill-treatment, to make false statements incriminating themselves and others during months when they were held incommunicado in secret locations and without access to lawyers or the outside world.

Defence lawyers also complained that they were permitted insufficient time to prepare the defence. Although the defendants had been in custody for up to one year, defence lawyers were given access to the court documents only four days before the opening of the trial. The trial failed to conform to international fair trial standards also because the defendants were denied a right of appeal to a higher tribunal.

Prior to his arrest, Dr Mohammed al-Roken had been a target of harassment because of his work as a human rights lawyer, his criticism of the UAE’s human rights record, and his advocacy of democratic reforms. He had been arrested and detained several times; placed for some time on a travel ban; forced to stop lecturing at UAE University, writing in newspapers, and giving interviews to local media, and subjected to surveillance.

Dr Mohammed al-Roken is not a criminal and we urge you to exhibit compassion by releasing him immediately and unconditionally, reinstating his licence to practice law, thereby allowing him to resume his work as a lawyer, and permitting him to also continue his work as a lecturer of law.

As legal academics, we believe that Dr Mohammed al-Roken’s case represents an important test of whether the United Arab Emirates upholds values of academic freedom, human rights, and adherence to the rule of law.

Yours faithfully

Dr Sam Adelman  
Dr Rajnaara C. Akhtar  
Professor Shaheen Ali  
Dr Ana Aliverti  
Dr Paul Anderson

Professor Hugh Beale  
Dr Christopher Bisping  
Dr Kimberley Brownlee  
Dr Stephen Connelly  
Dr James Dempsey  
Professor Julio Faundez  
Dr Jonathan Garton  
Dr James Harrison  
Professor Jackie Hodgson  
Juliet Horne  
Dr Philip Kaisary  
Dr Andreas Kokkinis  
Professor Dora Kostakopoulou  
Dr Ming-Sung Kuo  
Professor Roger Leng  
Dr Kathryn McMahon  
Dr Solange Mouthaan  
Dr Barbara Nastoll  
Dr Jayan Nayar  
Professor Alan Norrie  
Dr Bill O'Brien  
Professor Abdul Paliwala  
Professor Rebecca Probert  
Dr Dwijen Rangnekar  
Dr Sharifah Sekalala  
Professor Dalvinder Singh  
Dr Adam Slavny  
Natassja Smiljanic  
Professor Ann Stewart  
Professor Victor Tadros  
Professor Lorraine Talbot  
Dr Celine Tan  
Dr Anastasia Tataryn  
Dr Helen Toner  
Professor Gary Watt  
Dr Illan Wall  
Professor Andrew Williams  
Dr Ania Zbyszewska