

UPR statement

Honorable members of the United Nations,

My Name is Hamad Alshamsi, I am the executive director of the emirates detainees advocacy center , a non-profit organization founded to support detainees of conscience in the UAE and shed light on their cases.

first of all, it is my honor to speak before you today at the Universal Periodic Review of the United Arab Emirates. As we are gathered here to discuss the state of human rights in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and its commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

During the third UPR cycle in 2018, the government received eleven recommendations regarding the protection of human rights defenders and representatives of civil society. The government has committed to several relevant recommendations including ensuring that Counter-Terrorism and cybercrime laws do not impede the legitimate activities of human rights defenders, citizens and the media. All recommendations received were accepted. However, the government has not implemented any recommendation.

Due to the failure to implement the recommendations, the UAE is one of the most dangerous places in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region for HRDs. HRDs are subjected to arbitrary arrests, intimidation and are detained for lengthy periods after they are convicted under repressive laws that are not in line with international standards.

Just four months after the UPR, the State Security Department of the Abu Dhabi Court of Appeal in May 2018 sentenced Emirati defender Ahmed Mansoor, Martin Ennals Award winner, to ten years in prison on charges related entirely to his human rights activities, which were upheld by the Federal Supreme Court on December 31. 2018 unfair verdict against him.

Over the past years, UAE courts have convicted some human rights defenders on terrorism charges for their contact with human rights organisations. For example, Syrian human rights defender was sentenced in 2021 to ten years in prison. On August 18, the UAE responded to the rapporteur on human rights defenders, saying that he contacted Al-Karama Organization for Human Rights.

Another example is the prisoner of conscience, Amina Al-Abdouli, who was arrested in 2015 because of her tweets on social media programs, and she was sentenced to 5 years in prison. Amina sent a distress message from Al-Wathba prison to the UAE authorities and human rights organizations explaining the bad situation of prisoners in Al-Wathba prison. Instead of the UAE authorities investigating these allegations, they sentenced her to an additional 3 years in prison, to remain in prison despite the end of her previous sentence.

In addition, the UAE authorities informed Janan Al-Marzouqi of revoking her Emirati nationality in November 2016, after Janan decided to leave the UAE and defend her father, Abdul Salam Darwish, who had been detained since 2012 and whose sentence ended in 2022

Revoking nationality is a systematic punishment carried out by the UAE authorities without legal procedures. Dozens of prisoners of conscience and their young children have been stripped of their nationality without judicial action.

In addition, the UAE authorities use the Counter-Terrorism as a pretext to punish prisoners of conscience and extend their detention indefinitely. As I speak to you now, there are 56 detainees of opinion in prison despite the end of their sentences. Many of them are part of a group of prisoners known collectively as the UAE94, who were arrested in 2012 and sentenced to ten years in prison for their pro-democracy activities. The UAE authorities extend their sentence without judicial procedures, but by a decision of the Public Prosecutor, who justifies his decision that the detainees still hold terrorist ideas.

Another example of the use of counterterrorism to punish human rights defenders is me. I have been in exile since 2012, and in May 2021, we established the UAE Detainees Advocacy Center to shed light on prisoners of conscience, and 4 months after the establishment of the center, the authorities included my name on the local terrorism list.

The authorities also continue to target and threaten relatives of human rights defenders and activists who are serving long sentences in detention centers in the

UAE. In some cases, relatives of dissidents have been arrested or threatened with arrest as an attempt to put more pressure on detained Emirati dissidents or dissidents living abroad.

The relatives of the dissidents and detainees also faced more obstacles. Hundreds of detainees' families are on the list of travel bans, in addition to work restrictions, as well as difficulty in pursuing higher education.

Accordingly, I demand all delegations of countries participating in the UPR to call on the UAE authorities to:

- 1- release of all prisoners of conscience and not to use the Counter-Terrorism Law to extend the sentences of those whose sentences have expired.
- 2- 2- Amending the Counter-Terrorism Law to be in line with international standards.
- 3- Stop all acts of reprisal against human rights defenders, and allow United Nations mechanisms to visit the Emirates.