

BY PRIORITY AIRMAIL

Vice-President and Prime Minister HH
Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
Prime Minister's Office
PO Box 212000
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Amsterdam, 27 July 2020

Subject: Continued detention of lawyer Dr. Mohammad Al-Roken

Your Excellency,

Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent and non-political foundation that seeks to promote the proper functioning of the rule of law by pursuing freedom and independence of the legal profession.

This month, it has been eight years since Dr. Mohammad Al-Roken, a respected human rights lawyer, was arrested and detained. Lawyers for Lawyers would like to express its grave concern about the continued arbitrary detention of our colleague Dr. Al-Roken.

Dr. Mohamed Al-Roken provided legal assistance to victims of human rights violations in the United Arab Emirates, including to other human rights defenders. Amongst others, he represented the "UAE 5"; five human rights defenders who were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment by a UAE court for their human rights work in November 2011 and subsequently released as a result of a Presidential amnesty.

Dr. Al-Roken has been detained since he was arrested on 17 July 2012. Following his arrest, Al-Roken was detained in solitary confinement at an undisclosed location for 8 months, without access to his lawyer and his family. On 2 July 2013, the Federal Supreme Court convicted and sentenced Dr. Al-Roken to a 10-year prison sentence for signing - along with 132 other people - an online petition calling for political reform. He was convicted and sentenced following a grossly unfair mass trial of 94 people (known as the "UAE 94" trial) including human rights lawyers, judges and student activists.

Human rights organisations and UN Special Procedures condemned the "UAE 94" mass trial for failing to uphold minimal fair trial guarantees. On 22 November 2013, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued an opinion recognising the arbitrary nature of the detention of Dr. Al-Roken and 60 other defendants in the "UAE 94" trial. The Working Group further raised concerns about the flagrant breaches of fair trial guarantees and urged the government to release them and provide them with adequate reparation.

We again respectfully draw your attention to the United Nations (UN) Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (Basic Principles), more in particular Principles 16 and 23, which read:

16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference (...) and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

23. Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognized standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, Lawyers for Lawyers respectfully urge you again to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Mohammed Al-Roken and put an end to all acts of harassment against him, including at the judicial level;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Dr. Mohammed Al-Roken; and
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all (human rights) lawyers in the United Arab Emirates are able to carry out their legitimate professional rights and duties without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

We thank you for your attention to this very important matter. We are confident of your good will and sense of justice and will continue to monitor this case closely.

Sincerely,

LAWYERS FOR LAWYERS