

Advocacy dossier

Ahmed Mansoor

أحمد منصور

Imprisoned (serving sentence) **United Arab Emirates**

Ahmed Mansoor is an Emirati engineer, poet and human rights defender, and the 2015 laureate of the Martin Ennals Award, who has been detained since March 2017. He is serving a 10-year sentence imposed in 2018 and a further 15-year sentence from the UAE84 mass trial, upheld in March 2025, and is held in solitary confinement in al-Sadr Prison in Abu Dhabi.

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The case at a glance

Ahmed Mansoor is an Emirati engineer, poet and human rights defender, and the 2015 laureate of the Martin Ennals Award, who has been detained since March 2017. He is serving a 10-year sentence imposed in 2018 and a further 15-year sentence from the UAE84 mass trial, upheld in March 2025, and is held in solitary confinement in al-Sadr Prison in Abu Dhabi.

Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **20 Mar 2017**	Country **United Arab Emirates**

Sentence 10 years' imprisonment, a fine of 1,000,000 dirhams and three years' probation (29 May 2018, upheld on 31 December 2018), followed by a further 15 years' imprisonment in the UAE84 case (10 July 2024, upheld on 4 March 2025).

Charges Spreading false news to harm the reputation of the state, and insulting the status and prestige of the UAE and its symbols, including its leaders (2018 case, Cybercrime Law)
Cooperating with a terrorist organisation and supporting it through social media posts (UAE84 case)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Ahmed Mansoor immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

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How the case unfolded

9 April 2011

Arrest

Arrested after backing a petition for democratic reform

He was arrested without a warrant, weeks after he and others launched a March 2011 petition calling for an elected parliament. He was prosecuted with Nasser bin Ghaith, Fahad Salim Dalk, Ahmed Abdul-Khaleq and Hassan Ali al-Khamis in what became known as the UAE Five case; their trial opened on 14 June 2011.

22 November 2011

Other act

UN Working Group finds his 2011 detention arbitrary

In Opinion No. 64/2011 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found his deprivation of liberty arbitrary, in breach of articles 9, 10 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and asked for his immediate release and adequate reparation.

27 November 2011

Conviction

Sentenced to three years for insulting the country's leaders

The Federal Supreme Court convicted the five men of publicly insulting the country's top officials under article 176 of the penal code. He received three years in prison and the other four two years each. Because the case was prosecuted under state security procedures, there was no right of appeal.

28 November 2011

Release

Released after the President commutes the sentences

The five men were released on the evening of 28 November 2011 after President Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan commuted their sentences. The convictions were not quashed, and his passport was never returned, leaving him under a de facto travel ban.

20 March 2017

Arrest

Arrested in a night raid on his home

Security forces raided his home in Ajman just before midnight, detained him without a warrant and confiscated his devices. The official news agency said he was held for publishing false information. His family did not know where he was held for more than a year.

December 2017

Detention conditions and health

Denied eyeglasses and basic hygiene items in solitary confinement

From December 2017 he was denied eyeglasses and most personal hygiene items while held in an isolation ward of al-Sadr Prison without reading materials, television or radio. Human Rights Watch reported that until recently he also had no bed or mattress.

29 May 2018

Conviction

Sentenced to 10 years in prison

The State Security Chamber of the Abu Dhabi Court of Appeals, where his trial had opened on 14 March 2018, convicted him on five charges and acquitted him of a terrorism charge. It sentenced him to 10 years in prison, a fine of 1,000,000 dirhams and three years of surveillance after release.

31 December 2018

Appeal: judgment upheld

Federal Supreme Court upholds 10-year sentence

The State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court, the court of last resort, upheld the 10-year sentence.

17 March 2019

Hunger strike begins

Begins hunger strike over prison conditions and his trial

He began a hunger strike in protest at his conditions of detention and his unfair trial. Human Rights Watch and GCHR reported that it lasted 25 days, until 10 April 2019.

September 2019

Hunger strike begins

Begins a second, prolonged hunger strike

In early September 2019 he began a second hunger strike, taking only juice and mineral water from 14 September. Human Rights Watch and GCHR reported that it lasted 49 days; MENA Rights Group reported that it continued for at least five months.

16 July 2021

Solitary confinement imposed

Moved to a more isolated cell after a prison letter is published

After a London-based Arabic news site published a letter he wrote describing his treatment, an informed source told Human Rights Watch that he was moved to a smaller and more isolated cell, denied critical medical care and had his reading glasses confiscated.

7 December 2023

Referral to trial

Put on trial in the UAE84 mass case

The mass trial of 84 defendants opened before the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal. He faced new terrorism charges, including founding a clandestine organisation called the Justice and Dignity Committee. The official news agency announced the referral on 6 January 2024.

10 July 2024

Conviction

Sentenced to a further 15 years in the UAE84 case

The State Security Department of the Federal Court of Appeal in Abu Dhabi convicted 53 defendants and sentenced Ahmed Mansoor to 15 years in prison for cooperating with a terrorist organisation and supporting it through articles and social media posts. Nasser bin Ghaith also received 15 years, and Mohamed Al-Roken, Abdulsalam Al-Marzooqi and Mohammed Al-Siddiq were among those sentenced to life. The trial was closed and the rulings have not been made public.

4 March 2025

Appeal: judgment upheld

Federal Supreme Court rejects appeal in UAE84 case

The State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court rejected his appeal on procedural grounds, together with the appeals of 52 other defendants, leaving the 15-year sentence in place.

April 2026

Detention conditions and health

Still held in solitary confinement in al-Sadr Prison

As of April 2026 he remained detained in an isolation ward of al-Sadr Prison in Abu Dhabi, held in solitary confinement for prolonged periods. In April 2026 MENA Rights Group submitted his case again to the UN Secretary-General for the annual report on reprisals, which had named him in 2014, 2017 to 2019, 2021, 2022, 2024 and 2025.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Ahmed Mansoor remains in solitary confinement in al-Sadr Prison in Abu Dhabi, serving a 10-year sentence from 2018 and a further 15-year sentence from the UAE84 mass trial, upheld in March 2025. The most recent public report on his situation dates from April 2026.

Background and Work

Ahmed Mansoor, born in 1969, is an Emirati telecommunications engineer and poet who studied at the University of Colorado Boulder and began human rights work in 2006. He documented arbitrary detention, torture, unfair trials and the situation of stateless people (Bidoon) in the Gulf, and in 2009 he helped lead opposition to a draft media law that was later suspended. He sits on the advisory committee of the Middle East and North Africa Division of Human Rights Watch and on the advisory board of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights. He attended the 2008 to 2009 UN Universal Periodic Review of the United Arab Emirates, the only Emirati outside the official delegation to do so.

In March 2011 he launched a petition with others calling for an elected parliament. In April 2011 he was arrested and tried with Dr. Nasser bin Ghaith, Fahad Salim Dalk, Ahmed Abdul-Khaleq and Hassan Ali al-Khamis in the case known as the UAE Five. On 27 November 2011 the Federal Supreme Court sentenced him to three years for publicly insulting the country's leaders; the five were released the next day when the President commuted their sentences. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had found his detention arbitrary in Opinion No. 64/2011. His passport was never returned. In August 2016 the Citizen Lab identified a spyware attack against his phone, and in 2015 he received the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, which he accepted by video link because he could not travel.

The Arrest

Just before midnight on 20 March 2017, uniformed security officers raided his home in Ajman, detained him without a warrant and took his devices. The official news agency said the next day that he was accused of publishing false information. His family did not learn where he was held for more than a year. UN experts later noted that he was held in an unknown location until his first hearing on 14 March 2018 and was allegedly unable to appoint a lawyer of his choice.

Detention Conditions and Health

He has been held in an isolation ward of al-Sadr Prison near Abu Dhabi since his arrest. Human Rights Watch reported that from December 2017 he was denied eyeglasses and most hygiene items, had no reading materials, television or radio, and for a long period had no bed or mattress. He went on hunger strike from 17 March to 10 April 2019 and again from September 2019; Human Rights Watch put the second strike at 49 days, while MENA Rights Group reported that it lasted at least five months. GCHR has reported high blood pressure and general fatigue. After a letter he wrote describing his treatment was published on 16 July 2021, a source told Human Rights Watch that he was moved to a smaller and more isolated cell and denied medical care. UN experts said on 7 May 2019 that his

conditions, including prolonged solitary confinement, may constitute torture. The authorities deny mistreating him and do not allow independent monitors to visit.

Legal Proceedings

On 29 May 2018 the State Security Chamber of the Abu Dhabi Court of Appeals convicted him on five charges, including spreading false news to harm the reputation of the state and insulting the status and prestige of the country and its leaders, and acquitted him of a terrorism charge. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, a fine of 1,000,000 dirhams and three years of surveillance after release. The Federal Supreme Court upheld the ruling on 31 December 2018.

On 7 December 2023, with his first term near its end, he was brought to trial again with 83 other defendants in the UAE84 case before the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal, accused of founding a clandestine organisation called the Justice and Dignity Committee. On 10 July 2024 the court convicted 53 defendants and sentenced him to 15 years for cooperating with a terrorist organisation and supporting it through articles and tweets. Co-defendants in the same case included Nasser bin Ghaith, who also received 15 years, and Mohamed Al-Roken, Abdulsalam Al-Marzooqi and Sheikh Mohammed Al-Siddiq, who were sentenced to life imprisonment. The Federal Supreme Court rejected his appeal on procedural grounds on 4 March 2025. Both trials were closed, and the charge sheet and rulings have not been published. No public source explains how the two sentences are to run together.

International Response

Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience. UN experts asked the authorities to disclose his whereabouts in March 2017, condemned his conviction in June 2018 as a possible reprisal for his engagement with UN mechanisms, and raised his conditions in May 2019 and the new charges in January 2024. The UN Secretary-General has named his case in the annual report on reprisals for cooperation with the UN in 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2024 and 2025, and MENA Rights Group submitted it again in April 2026. Human Rights Watch, GCHR, MENA Rights Group and PEN International continue to call for his release and for the convictions to be quashed.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/ahmed-mansoor/

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