

Advocacy dossier

Dr. Nasser bin Ghaith

ناصر بن غيث

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

An Emirati economist who taught at the Sorbonne's Abu Dhabi campus, Nasser bin Ghaith is serving a 15-year sentence imposed in the UAE84 mass trial on top of an earlier ten-year sentence, for tweets about reform and for attending meetings with other activists.

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The case at a glance

An Emirati economist who taught at the Sorbonne's Abu Dhabi campus, Nasser bin Ghaith is serving a 15-year sentence imposed in the UAE84 mass trial on top of an earlier ten-year sentence, for tweets about reform and for attending meetings with other activists.

Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **18 Aug 2015**	Country **United Arab Emirates**

Sentence 15 years in prison in the UAE84 case (10 July 2024; final on 4 March 2025), on top of the ten-year sentence imposed in 2017.

Charges Posting false information about UAE leaders and state institutions
Harming the reputation of the state
Publicly insulting the President, Vice-President, and Crown Prince (2011 case)
Communicating and cooperating with members of banned organisation Al Islah
Communicating and cooperating with the banned Emirates Ummah Party
Cooperating with and supporting a terrorist organisation through social media (2024 case)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Dr. Nasser bin Ghaith 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.

04 Provide Dr. Nasser bin Ghaith with immediate, independent medical evaluation and the full treatment that condition requires, including transfer to an independent civilian hospital if necessary.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Denial of legal counsel International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14(3)

Denial of medical care UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 24 to 27

Enforced disappearance International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16

Inhumane detention conditions International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10
UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)

Judicial harassment UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

Prolonged pretrial detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)

Torture Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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How the case unfolded

27 November 2011

Conviction

Convicted of insulting UAE leaders

Nasser bin Ghaith and four other activists were convicted of publicly insulting the UAE's President, Vice-President, and Crown Prince based on online statements calling for reform. He was sentenced to two years in prison and received a presidential pardon the following day.

18 August 2015

Re-arrest

Arrested for the second time

Emirati authorities arrested Nasser bin Ghaith. He was held incommunicado in an undisclosed location for over seven months without charge or access to legal counsel.

4 April 2016

Reappearance in custody

First appearance before court

Bin Ghaith was brought before the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court in Abu Dhabi after seven months of enforced disappearance. He told the court he had been tortured, beaten, and deprived of sleep for up to a week.

29 March 2017

Conviction

Sentenced to 10 years in prison

The Federal Supreme Court convicted bin Ghaith of posting false information about UAE leaders and harming the state's reputation, based largely on tweets about his earlier trial. He received a ten-year prison sentence.

November 2018

Hunger strike begins

Began liquid-only hunger strike

Bin Ghaith began a hunger strike in Al-Razeen Prison to protest ill-treatment of detainees, denial of medical care, and inconsistent family visits. He also demanded his release following the pardon granted to British academic Matthew Hedges.

December 2023

Charge filed

Charged in the UAE84 case

He was charged as one of 84 defendants in the UAE84 mass trial, while already serving his 2017 sentence.

10 July 2024

Conviction

Sentenced to 15 years in the UAE84 mass trial

The Abu Dhabi Federal Appeals Court sentenced bin Ghaith to 15 years in prison in the UAE84 mass trial, for allegedly cooperating with and supporting a terrorist organisation through articles and tweets.

4 March 2025

Final judgment

Federal Supreme Court makes the sentence final

The State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court rejected the appeals in the UAE84 case. The judgment is final.

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The full story

Background and Work

Nasser bin Ghaith is an economist and academic who specialised in economic policy and development. Before his imprisonment, he taught at institutions in the United Arab Emirates, including the Sorbonne's Abu Dhabi campus. His professional work centred on economic reform, public finance, and the relationship between governance and economic stability. He also engaged in public discourse about political and civil rights, frequently using social media to discuss the need for transparency, accountability, and institutional reform in the UAE.

Bin Ghaith first attracted government attention in 2011 when he and four other Emirati activists were prosecuted for statements made online advocating economic, political, and social reforms. The five were convicted on 27 November 2011 of publicly insulting the UAE's President, Vice-President, and Crown Prince. Bin Ghaith received a two-year prison sentence but was granted a presidential pardon the following day, along with his co-defendants.

The 2015 Arrest

On 18 August 2015, Emirati authorities arrested Nasser bin Ghaith a second time. He was held incommunicado for over seven months without charge or access to legal counsel. His family did not know his whereabouts. He was not brought before a judicial authority until 4 April 2016, when he appeared at the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court in Abu Dhabi.

At that first hearing, bin Ghaith told the court he had been tortured and beaten in detention. He said he had been deprived of sleep for up to a week and remained in secret detention. He stated that he had been denied the opportunity to prepare an effective defence because authorities had severely restricted his access to his lawyer.

Legal Proceedings and Convictions

On 29 March 2017, the Federal Supreme Court sentenced bin Ghaith to ten years in prison. The charges included posting false information about UAE leaders and state institutions, and harming the reputation of the state. The conviction was based largely on tweets in which he asserted that he had not received a fair trial in the 2011 case, known as the "UAE 5."

Prosecutors also accused him of communicating and cooperating with members of Al Islah, a banned organisation, based on visits he made to individuals convicted in the 2013 "UAE 94" mass trial. Another allegation involved his participation in a presentation on Islamic economics delivered at the invitation of a member of the banned Emirates Ummah Party, an engagement tied to his professional role as an economist.

In July 2024, the Abu Dhabi Federal Appeals Court handed down sentences in the UAE's second-largest mass trial, known as the UAE 84 case. On 10 July 2024, the court sentenced 53 defendants to terms ranging from ten years to life. Bin Ghaith was sentenced to 15 years in prison for allegedly cooperating with and supporting a terrorist organisation through articles and tweets, despite the fact that his earlier conviction had already criminalised much of the same conduct. On 4 March

2025 the Federal Supreme Court rejected the appeals, making the judgment final.

Detention Conditions and Health

Nasser bin Ghaith is held in Al-Razeen Prison in Abu Dhabi, a facility known for harsh conditions and restricted access to medical care. In November 2018, he began a liquid-only hunger strike to protest the ill-treatment of detainees, denial of medical care, and inconsistency in family visits. He also demanded his own release following the presidential pardon granted to British academic Matthew Hedges on 26 November 2018, a week after Hedges had been sentenced to life on spying charges.

The hunger strike caused a severe deterioration in bin Ghaith's health. He ate only small amounts of food a handful of times over the course of months. According to credible reports, he has lost much of his sight and is too weak to stand or walk without assistance. Prior to his arrest, he suffered from high blood pressure, which had already led to cardiomegaly, an enlargement of the heart, and early-stage fatty liver disease. The prolonged hunger strike and denial of adequate medical treatment have exacerbated these conditions significantly.

International Response

Nasser bin Ghaith's case has drawn attention from international human rights organisations, academic networks, and governments concerned about fair trial standards and conditions of detention in the UAE. His treatment illustrates the broader pattern of repression facing human rights defenders, academics, and critics in the country. Despite repeated calls for his release, Emirati authorities have not reconsidered his sentence, and he remains imprisoned with no prospect of early release.

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