

**Vice-President and Prime Minister
Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum
Office of the Prime Minister
POB 2838, Dubai, UAE**

Brussels, the 24th of July 2013

Re: Concerns regarding the conviction of Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori and Dr Mohamed ‘Abdullah al-Roken, Human Right Lawyers

Your Highness,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE wrote to you earlier this year, on 20 March 2013, to express its deep concern over the arrest and trial Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori and Dr Mohamed ‘Abdullah al-Roken, two prominent lawyers and human rights defenders, who were arrested in July 2012 with 94 other government critics and were charged with trying to overthrow the government.

The CCBE has been informed of several violations of fundamental rights that occurred before the beginning of the trial. It seems that at least 64 of the defendants were arrested and held in undisclosed locations prior to the trial. In addition, according to reliable sources, some of the defendants were subjected to torture, ill-treatment or denied access to legal assistance.

Most recently, in a verdict decided by the Federal Supreme Court in Abu Dhabi on 2 July 2013, 56 people including Mohammed Al-Roken and Mohammed Al-Mansoori were sentenced to 10 years in prison, with eight other defendants sentenced in absentia to 15 years and five defendants sentenced to 7 years.

Especially worrisome is the fact that the entire trial has been plagued by allegations of unfairness and a lack of due process. Moreover, the verdict cannot be appealed, since it was decided by the highest court in the country.

The CCBE believes that the defendants were convicted solely on the basis of exercising their rights to free association and expression, and is alarmed by the facts that show a repressive environment and a crackdown on fundamental freedoms in the UAE.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention Article 23 of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990), which states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights 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 organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to release Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori, Dr Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken and all other defendants convicted solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and association. The CCBE implores you to take immediate and effective steps to ensure that all detainees are protected from torture and ill-treatment while in custody, have access to their lawyers and families and that impartial investigations are promptly opened into all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. In conclusion, the CCBE urges your Highness to take the necessary measures to ensure that all lawyers in the UAE can carry out their peaceful and legitimate activities without hindrance, intimidation or harassment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Tsouroulis', written in a cursive style.

EVANGELOS TSOUROULIS
CCBE President