

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

Brussels, 20th of March 2013

Re: Concerns regarding the detention and trial of lawyers Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori, Dr Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken and Mr Salem al-Shehhi

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 has also 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 writes to express its serious concerns over the arrest and trial of three lawyers and human rights defenders, Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori, Dr Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken and Mr Salem al-Shehhi.

According to the information we received, Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori, Dr Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken were arrested respectively on the 16th and 17th of July 2012, while their lawyer, Salem al-Shehii, was arrested on the 18th of July 2012 at the offices of the State Security Prosecutor while seeking information about his clients.

The three lawyers are among the 70 people arrested and detained in connection with a non-violent association, al-Islah, which since 1974 is engaged in peaceful political debate in the United Arab Emirates. The detainees will be tried on charges relating to trying to overthrow the government, but the defence lawyers have not been told the exact charges nor have been given the documentation relating to the cases.

Especially worrisome is that the whereabouts of the detainees is unknown; they have been denied access to adequate legal representation and we understand that there is an unconfirmed report that they might have been submitted to torture or other forms of ill-treatment.

The CCBE is alarmed by the fact that the three lawyers have been arrested solely for peacefully expressing their beliefs and carrying out their professional duties. Furthermore we are concerned by the fact that these conscience prisoners have been denied access to adequate physical and psychological protection as well as to legal representation.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 23 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 release unconditionally the prisoners of conscience and lawyers Dr Mohamed al-Mansoori, Dr Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken and Mr Salem al-Shehhi. The CCBE also urges you to take immediate and effective steps to disclose the location of all those held to their families and lawyers, and to ensure that they receive adequate protection and legal representation.

Yours sincerely,



EVANGELOS TSOUROULIS

CCBE President