



## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NASSER BIN GHAITH

The facade of a constitution that claims to promote “freedom of opinion” hides a much harsher reality of persecution and oppression. Expression of opinions – particularly when this involves political dissent – too often leads to arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances. Nasser bin Ghaith is one of these victims.

- ▶ Dr. Nasser bin Ghaith, a prominent economist, academic and human rights defender, was arrested by security forces in civilian clothes on 18 August 2015.
- ▶ He was held for almost eight months in incommunicado detention at an undisclosed location with no contact to the outside world.
- ▶ On 29 March 2017 the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi sentenced him to ten years in prison for charges relating to the peaceful expression of his conscientiously held beliefs.
- ▶ The charges included posting information “intended to damage the UAE” by claiming that he was tortured during a previous trial in 2011.
- ▶ Further charges were in connection with comments he made on social media critical of the Egyptian security forces’ mass killing of demonstrators at Raba’a Square in August 2013.
- ▶ An Egyptian judge was appointed to decide his case at the Federal Supreme Court in Abu Dhabi.
- ▶ In an open letter sent from his prison cell bin Ghaith writes: “Perhaps one of the most ironic thing in my case is the appointment of an Egyptian judge in an Emirati court to rule out over charges related to defaming Egyptian figures. “



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- ▶ He goes on to say: “I insist on my innocence and I deny all the charges against me. I feel really sad and depressed of the fact of being unfairly tried by my own people and in my own country [...]”
- ▶ At his trial bin Ghaith reported that he had been tortured while in detention: He had been beaten and deprived of sleep for up to a week.
- ▶ He was not given his glasses for several weeks and was denied winter clothes.
- ▶ He has very limited access to his family and lawyer.
- ▶ On 05 February 2018 he announced his second hunger strike in protest against his ill-treatment in Al-Razeen prison.
- ▶ The case provoked international condemnation, notably from the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), which published an opinion declaring the detention of Nasser Bin Ghaith arbitrary and urging the UAE government to release him immediately.