



Date : 15/02/2021

## **Justice for Ahmed: How the UAE punishes Facebook users?**

It has been revealed that Jordanian national Ahmed Etoum, a 46 year-old father of two, has been given a ten-year sentence by a United Arab Emirates (UAE) Court of Appeals.

Mr. Etoum was arrested in the spring of 2020 for critical remarks posted on Facebook concerning the Jordanian government and society. He was sentenced in October 2020.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) strongly condemns Mr. Etoum's arrest, sentencing, and the treatment he has received by the Emirati authorities. The AOHR UK affirms Mr. Etoum's basic right to free expression, and demands of the UAE authorities that they release him immediately.

Etoum was snatched by security officers from the street on 14 May 2020, as he walked home with his young children. The children returned home without him. His family only made contact with him a full three weeks after his arrest.

Mr. Etoum had lived in Abu Dhabi for five years with his children and wife. Both he and his wife worked as teachers.

Mr. Etoum was charged on 8 October 2020, with 'Deliberately acting against a foreign country (Jordan) that could damage political relations between the UAE and Jordan', in addition to several other crimes. Mr. Etoum has been held in solitary confinement for prolonged periods.

The basis of the charges are remarks Mr. Etoum made on Facebook about the Jordanian politics and society. They include criticism of the levels of poverty in his country of birth, and of the role of King Abdoullah II in Jordanian politics. In one of the posts referred to by the court, Mr. Etoum criticized the lack of internet freedom in Jordan.



The UAE is a very popular tourism destination, and a regional ally of Israel and the US. It is widely acknowledged that the UAE authorities systematically deny citizens and non-Emirati workers their basic rights.

AOHR UK calls again for the release of Mr. Etoum, and insists that the relevant international bodies, and in particular the UAE's major allies, including the US and Britain, make clear their own opposition to this flagrant violation of international norms regarding freedom of expression.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)