

## **STATEMENT UPR Pre-session on United Arab Emirates (UAE)**

**Geneva, 03/04/2023**

**Delivered by: International Campaign for Freedom in the UAE (ICF UAE)**

### **1- Presentation of the Organisation**

This statement is delivered on behalf of the International Campaign for Freedom in the UAE (ICF UAE), an Emirati founded research and advocacy organisation set up to advance and protect human rights and freedom in the United Arab Emirates. ICF UAE has participated in UPR processes since 2017

### **2- National consultations for the drafting of the national report**

Unfortunately almost all civil participation that challenges or contradicts the authorities is an arrestable offence, so ICF UAE was not included in National consultations and furthermore it has had to be located in London by no choice of its own but because of the impossibility of free civil society in the UAE.

### **3- Plan of the Statement**

This statement addresses the issue of torture in the United Arab Emirates, including cases of torture, abuse, and inhumane treatment in detention facilities.

### **4- Statement**

#### **Torture and ill-treatment in the UAE**

##### **A. Follow-up to the previous review**

During the previous review, several countries raised concerns regarding torture and ill-treatment in the UAE, including the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, Denmark, Finland, Italy and Austria. However, despite these concerns, reports of torture and ill-treatment in detention facilities have persisted.

##### **B. Torture and ill-treatment in the UAE**

These are a small snapshot into the cases of torture as the UAE has actively carried out reprisals against those who have given information about their torture.

1. We have evidence of human rights activists, arrested placed in solitary confinement, denied medical care, and tortured.
2. Evidence of systematic beatings, sleep deprivation, and threats.
3. Evidence of the use of electrocution during interrogation and during detention.

4. Evidence of severe mistreatment and torture of detainees as reprisal for their reaching out for support to human rights organisations and the UN.
5. Evidence of Female detainees hung by their wrists, subject to prolonged solitary confinement, electrocution and threats of sexual abuse.
6. Evidence of human rights detainees subjected to torture, including beatings and electric shocks for being the relative of another detainee.
7. There is the horrifying case of a detainee who was sexually assaulted and contracted HIV due to the assault.

### **C. Recommendations**

Based on the continuing concerns regarding torture in the UAE, we urge the government to take immediate and concrete steps to address these issues. We recommend that the Government of the United Arab Emirates:

1. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and establish an independent national preventive mechanism to monitor and inspect all places of detention.
2. Establish in its national law a definition of torture in line with the definition provided in article 1 of the Convention against Torture.
3. Immediately invalidate all convictions based on confessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect the confession was gained through torture.
4. Investigate all allegations of torture and ill-treatment promptly, impartially, and effectively, and hold perpetrators accountable.
5. Provide adequate compensation and rehabilitation for victims of torture and ill-treatment.
6. Ensure that all detainees have access to legal representation, medical care, and contact with their families.
7. Ensure that the prohibition of torture is established as absolute and non-derogable in national legislation.

Torture is amongst the most disturbing of crimes, that we have children and loved ones in a world where there are those who still partake in torture should elicit a collective shudder from us all and it remains an eternal embarrassment for any country to have participated or justified it. So I urge you for your recommendations to end this practice in the UAE for good.

In closing ICFUAE is based in London not Abu Dhabi, why? Because there is no civil society space, it isn't possible to imagine a citizens-led human rights initiative or to even imagine a demonstration of any form, why? because when a group of citizens signed a petition then humbly sent it to the ruler, they were arrested and sentenced to between 7 and 15 years, yes 7 to 15 years for a petition – a lawyer when to enquire about the detainees and was arrested and himself sentenced to 10 years in prison, some of their family have had their citizenship stripped and others have been spied on even abroad. Then when those terms in detention were completed, detainees were simply not released and honourable listeners, have still not been

released. The UAE must be judged not on what it writes in its report or this initiative or that public relations inspired event but on when a story like the one I just told becomes impossible.