

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 22, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We request your Administration's urgent attention to the recent detention of U.S. citizen and Virginia resident Mr. Asim Ghafoor by United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities. Mr. Ghafoor was convicted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on currently unsubstantiated charges of money laundering and tax evasion, in absentia and, reportedly, without his knowledge. Mr. Ghafoor was detained by UAE authorities on July 14, 2022, while transiting Dubai International Airport, and was sentenced to three years in prison on July 16, 2022. The UAE's decision to detain Mr. Ghafoor – without notice or opportunity to seek legal counsel – represents a gross violation of his due process rights.

Mr. Ghafoor is a board member for the nonprofit organization Democracy in the Arab World Now (DAWN), which advocates for democratic reforms in the Middle East and has at times criticized the Emirati government. In his capacity as an attorney, Mr. Ghafoor is reported to have represented his friend Mr. Jamal Khashoggi, who was also a Virginian and who was brutally murdered by Saudi officials in 2018. Noting your July 16, 2022, meeting with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan and your invitation for him to visit the United States by the end of this year, as well as the close relationship between the Saudi and Emirati governments, we strongly urge you and your Administration to raise Mr. Ghafoor's case immediately at the highest levels of the Emirati government and advocate for his fair treatment, including assurances regarding his health and safety while in Emirati custody. It is critical the Administration makes clear that the hasty detention of U.S. citizens like Mr. Ghafoor cannot become normalized as an appropriate tactic of U.S. partners.

The UAE has claimed the United States played a role in Mr. Ghafoor's detention, and as such we further urge your Administration to clarify the nature of the United States' potential involvement. We welcomed the Department of State's July 18, 2022, statement that the United States had "not sought" Ghafoor's arrest. However, absent concrete evidence of Ghafoor's alleged criminal behavior, the UAE's repeated claim that this arrest was conducted in coordination with the United States government in order to "combat transnational crimes," raises concerns about oversight of U.S. involvement in that partnership.

As your Administration works to ensure that Mr. Ghafoor is treated humanely and fairly, we respectfully request that you take the following interim measures:

1. Call on Emirati authorities to allow Mr. Ghafoor regular access to his family and to his attorneys.
2. Ensure that the U.S. embassy continues to receive consular visits with Mr. Ghafoor and that U.S. embassy staff are permitted to attend all trial proceedings.
3. Confirm with UAE officials that Mr. Ghafoor will receive humane and fair treatment while in Emirati custody, including immediate access to required medical care.
4. Solicit additional information from the Emirati government regarding the legal proceedings against Mr. Ghafoor, in order to determine if his arrest should be considered a wrongful detention or act of transnational repression.


Sincerely,



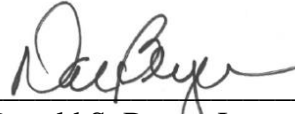
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress