



Commonwealth of Virginia

General Assembly

RICHMOND

July 30, 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 unjust detention of U.S. citizen and Virginia resident Mr. Asim Ghafoor by United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities. Mr. Ghafoor has been convicted on unsubstantiated charges of money laundering and tax evasion. His detention represents a violation of his due process rights as he was unable to seek legal counsel and was not given proper notice of these charges. Mr. Ghafoor has been sentenced to three years in prison as of July 16, 2022, only two days after being unjustly detained.

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. This and his reported representation of Mr. Jamal Khashoggi, a Virginian murdered by Saudi officials, raises a clear need for concern over the validity of this arrest.

While we appreciate your recent Executive Order to deter the wrongful detention of Americans abroad, we urge you to meet with President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan immediately on this issue and to raise Mr. Ghafoor's case. Your relationship with the UAE government puts the White House in a strong position to advocate for Mr. Ghafoor's fair treatment and urge them to ensure he is safe while in UAE custody and granted bail.

In addition to the above, without evidence that Mr. Ghafoor engaged in criminal behavior, it is concerning that the UAE also is claiming that the United States contributed to this rights violating detention. Similar to our fellow federal legislators, we welcomed the July 18th statement from the Department of State that Mr. Ghafoor's arrest had not been "not sought" by their department. However, despite this statement, the UAE continues to claim the United States coordinated the arrest of Mr. Ghafoor as part of efforts to help "combat transnational crimes." We agree that this raises concerns about oversight of potential U.S. involvement in that partnership

As your Administration works to ensure that Mr. Ghafoor is treated humanely and fairly, including access to required medical care due to him reportedly experiencing COVID-19 complications after contracting the virus while in jail. We join our federal colleagues and respectfully request that you take the following interim measures:

1. Request that Mr. Ghafoor be immediately granted reasonable bail and time to prepare his defense.
2. Call on Emirati authorities to allow Mr. Ghafoor regular access to his family and to his attorneys.
3. 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.
4. Confirm with UAE officials that Mr. Ghafoor will receive humane and fair treatment while in Emirati custody, including immediate access to required medical care.



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Mr. Ghafoor's retrial is set for Monday, August 1st, and he has not been given more than mere minutes to speak with his lawyers. Please, Mr. President, take immediate action to right the wrong that has been done to Mr. Ghafoor. This cannot wait.

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Senator Jennifer McClellan, 9th District

Delegate Candi Mundon-King, 2nd District

Senator Ghazala Hashmi, 10th District

Delegate Wendy Gooditis, 10th District

Senator John Bell, 13th District

Delegate Elizabeth Guzman, 31st District

Senator Jeremy McPike, 29th District

Delegate David Reid, 32nd District

Senator Jennifer Boysko, 33rd District

Delegate Kathleen Murphy 34th District

Senator Scott Surovell 36th District

Delegate Mark Keam, 35th District

Senator J. Chapman "Chap" Peterson 34th District



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Delegate Alfonso Lopez, 49th District

Delegate Sally Hudson, 57th District

Delegate Dawn Adams, 68th District

Delegate Suhas Subramanyam 87th District

Delegate Angelia Williams Graves, 90th District

Delegate Kaye Kory, 38th District

Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, 45th District

Delegate Richard "Rip" Sullivan, Jr. 48th District

Delegate Michelle Maldonado 50th District

Delegate Karrie Delaney 67th District

Delegate Irene Shin, 86th District

Delegate Jackie Glass, 89th District

Delegate Shelly Simonds, 94th District