

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **United Arab Emirates: End abuses in the criminal justice system**

In a statement delivered today at the UN Human Rights Council, Amnesty International expressed its grave concern about the United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities' disregard for due process in the criminal justice system, as well as the use of secret detention centres.

Amnesty International was speaking on the occasion of the adoption of the Universal Periodic Review outcome on the UAE by the Human Rights Council.

The Universal Periodic Review is a four-and-a-half-year review of the human rights situation in all UN members states, carried out by other states in a peer review. Its recommendations are not legally binding.

In the Working Group in January this year, the UAE government had stated that its political system is characterized by the "application of the rule of law" and that national security is protected "with due respect for international human rights principles".<sup>1</sup> Only one state had raised the issue of due process for those accused of crimes.<sup>2</sup>

However, this is an issue of grave concern to Amnesty International and its partners. Ninety-four critics of the government are currently on trial for allegedly violating Article 180 of the Penal Code, which prohibits founding, organizing, or operating a group that aims to overthrow the country's political system.

A verdict is due in July. If convicted, they could face up to 15 years in prison.

Many of the defendants are members of the Reform and Social Guidance Association (Al-Islah), which has been engaged in peaceful political debate in the UAE for many years. Among the detainees are two prominent human rights lawyers.

During the review, the UAE government referred to the case by saying that the "issue of a group recently detained" would be "addressed in accordance with due process".<sup>3</sup>

However, Amnesty International is concerned that the legal process has been marred by serious irregularities. At least 64 of the detainees were held at undisclosed locations for periods of up to one year before the trial. Many of them did not have access to legal assistance for months. Their allegations of abuse have not been investigated. The trial is now being conducted in a special court whose decisions cannot be appealed. International monitors, including from Amnesty International, have not been allowed to observe it.

The organization urges the UAE authorities to drop any charges that relate solely to the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression or association and to release immediately and unconditionally all those held on this basis. The authorities should also ensure prompt, independent and impartial investigations of torture and allow in international monitors.

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/23/13, paras 7, 21 and 84

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/23/13, recommendation 128.119 (USA)

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/23/13, paras 7, 21 and 84

**Background**

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of the UAE on 7 June 2013 during its 23<sup>rd</sup> session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered an oral statement addressing the issues above.

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in the UAE: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE25/009/2012/en/6c8c4bd9-a0ff-4740-97a0-96e077428172/mde250092012en.pdf>

To view Amnesty International's work on the UAE, see:  
<http://amnesty.org/en/region/uae>

Public Document

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