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UAE must end crackdown on dissent

Some of the 35 men arrested by state security officers (Amn al-Dawla) are said to be associated with the Reform and Social Guidance Association (al-Islah). A non-violent group engaged in peaceful political debate in the UAE for many years, al-Islah advocates greater adherence to Islamic precepts.

Political parties are not formally permitted in the UAE. Political dissent is not readily tolerated and restrictions on freedom of expression and association have been increasing in recent months.

The authorities have closed down at least one online discussion forum and blocked access from the UAE to some political websites.

Most people suspected of political offences in the UAE are arrested by the Amn al-Dawla and held incommunicado at undisclosed locations for typically about a week before they are allowed to make brief and limited phone calls to their families.

Amnesty International has documented at least two cases in which detainees, denied any contact with the outside, were tortured by security officials. Others have spoken following their release from custody of being tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

On 17 July 2012, a spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed his concern at the accelerating crackdown on human rights defenders in the UAE.

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