

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



10

7 June 2013
Check against delivery

**UN Human Rights Council
Twenty-third session, 27 May - 14 June 2013**

**Item 6:
Consideration of UPR reports**

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Mr. President,

In the Working Group, the UAE government 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".¹ Only one state raised the issue of due process for those accused of crimes.²

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".³

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

¹ A/HRC/23/13, paras 7, 21 and 84

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

³ A/HRC/23/13, paras 7, 21 and 84

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.

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

Thank you, Mr. President.