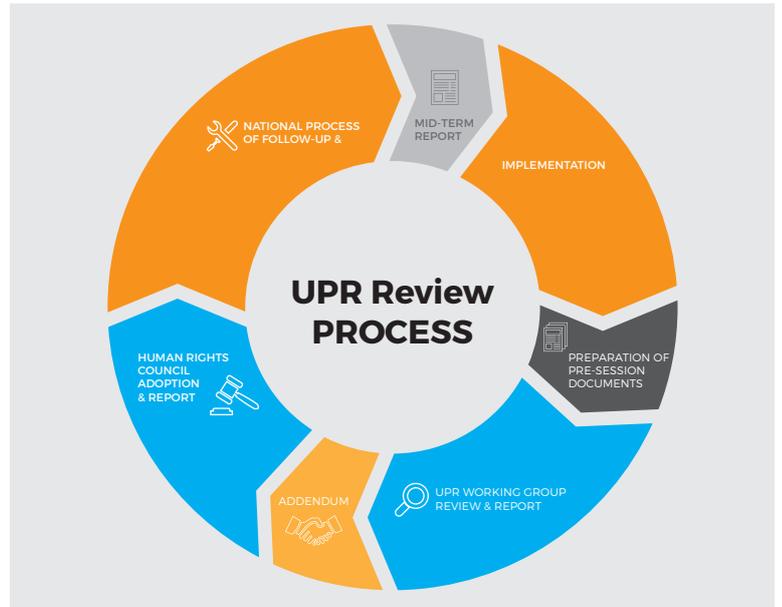


UN - UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UAE

Every 5 years, the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva reviews the human rights situation of every country in the world. In January 2018, it will publish a report about the United Arab Emirates.

The 2013 Review

At the last Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2013, numerous NGOs highlighted the absence of human rights in the UAE, specifically with regards to civil liberties, women's and migrants' rights. Members of the Human Rights Council issued the following recommendations amongst others:



- Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);
- Protect freedom of expression by reforming cybercrime laws that criminalise the work of human rights defenders and journalists;
- Give women equal rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody;
- Strengthen labour legislation to protect migrant workers from exploitation;
- Establish an independent national human rights organisation to monitor the situation;
- Abolish the death penalty.

The UAE rejected 19 of the recommendations and while it accepted 107, it didn't make significant progress in implementing them.

In the report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights "expressed concern about what appeared to be an accelerating crackdown on human rights defenders through harassments, denial of travel, termination of work contracts, arrests, denaturalization and expulsion from the country. The High Commissioner noted that apparently national security was increasingly being used as a pretext to clamp down on peaceful activism, and to stifle calls for constitutional reform and calls to address human rights issues such as statelessness".

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The Current Situation

- Arbitrary arrests and detentions, including enforced disappearances by UAE authorities have continued throughout the last 5-year period. There has been a worrying growth in the number of Emirati citizens and foreign nationals alike being arrested in the UAE for their use of social media.
- Freedom of expression has been further curtailed in the UAE by the increased use of surveillance technologies to monitor online activists and dissenting voices. In March 2017, prominent human rights defender **Ahmed Mansoor** was arrested and has yet to face trial.
- There have been numerous reports of the family members of prisoners being subject to harassment, threats, and even arrest. Such was the case in 2015 of **Asma, Mariam, and Dr. Alyziah Khalifa Al-Suwaidi**, 3 sisters who were forcibly disappeared after launching an online campaign on Twitter for their brother's release.
- In a few cases, detainees' relatives have been deported or stripped of their citizenship, like in the case of the **Al-Siddiq siblings** - Asma, Doa'a, and Omar, children of prisoner **Mohammed Abdulrazzaq Al-Siddiq**, who had their citizenship revoked without official explanation in March 2016.
- The "**UAE94**" case remains up to date the biggest case of mass trial of activists, academics, lawyers, and peaceful dissenters in the UAE. The trial, which concluded in July 2013, convicted 69 of the defendants, including 8 of whom were tried in absentia. They were sentenced between 7 to 15 years in prison in a trial that, according to the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), failed to meet "the internationally recognised standards of fairness". Several violations have been found to have taken place during the arrest, interrogations, detention, and trial of the defendants. These include being kept up to one year in **incommunicado detention**, the **lack of legal representation**, the alleged **use of torture** and forced confessions, and the denial to appeal.
- Migrant workers keep being vulnerable to exploitation due to the kafala sponsorship system which bounds their immigration status to their employers.
- Women are discriminated against in both law and practice. For example, domestic violence is permitted by law.