

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/05/08/uae-detention-torture-case>

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Government Should Release Details of Investigation, Prosecution

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(New York) - The reported detention of a member of the United Arab Emirates royal family, Sheikh Issa bin Zayed al Nahyan, in connection with the videotaped torture of an Afghan grain dealer is a significant development, but much more needs to be done to restore faith in the country's police and justice system, Human Rights Watch said today.

UAE officials told American diplomats that the sheikh was put under "house arrest" this week and prevented from leaving the country as the Ministry of Justice conducts a criminal investigation of the incidents on the videotape, ABC News reported today. The government has not released any information about the detention.

"The videotape of this episode shocked the world," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "The report of the arrest was reassuring, but now the government needs to make the details public. Secretive prosecutions will not deter further abuses and torture."

The [videotape](#) of the attack, aired on ABC News on April 22, 2009, showed the sheik torturing the grain dealer with whips, electric cattle prods, and a wooden plank with protruding nails. It has set off international condemnation.

The United Arab Emirates announced on April 29 that the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department would conduct an expeditious and "comprehensive review" of the torture incident. The announcement followed a [letter](#) from Human Rights Watch to the UAE president on April 28 urging the government to take action. Previously, the Ministry of Interior had characterized the abuse as an assault that the parties subsequently settled "privately."

Human Rights Watch reiterated its call to the UAE government to establish an independent body with authority to inquire more broadly into the prevalence of abuse and torture by UAE police. The UAE government should also ratify the Convention against Torture and publicly and unequivocally renounce the use of torture and physical abuse by the police, others in positions of authority, or private citizens, Human Rights Watch said.

Despite international coverage of the incident, media in the UAE have been reluctant to report on it, highlighting the need for the government to revise its [draft media law](#) and, among other changes, remove Article 32, which provides a fine of up to 5,000,000 dirhams (US\$1,350,000) against anyone who "disparages" senior government personnel or members of the royal family.

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