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<http://www.rsf.org/united-arab-emirates-news-blackout-imposed-on-trial-of-25-03-2013,44256.html>

Middle East/North Africa - United Arab Emirates

Closed-door trial

News blackout imposed on trial of 94 activists on national security charges

25 March 2013

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Reporters Without Borders roundly condemns the news blackout that the UAE's authorities have imposed on the trial of 94 political activists and human rights defenders before the supreme court in Abu Dhabi on charges of endangering the country's security.

The authorities have allowed the UAE media to attend the four hearings so far held but not the international media. International observers and relatives of the defendants have also been banned from fifth hearing, which is due to be held tomorrow.

In a related development, the netizen [Abdulla Al-Hadidi](#) was arrested on trumped-up charges of attacking a security guard outside the court on 19 March and disseminating false information on Twitter. He is being held in Abu Dhabi's Khaledyya district police station.

The second charge has been brought under a new [cyber-crime law](#) (Federal Legal Decree No. 5/2012), which was adopted at the end of 2012 and which is regarded as pretext for drastically curbing freedom of expression and information in the UAE.

The [Emirates Centre for Human Rights](#) said it believes that 41 relatives of the 94 defendants could also be arrested soon because of what they have allegedly posted on social networks about the trial.

Six human rights organizations including Reporters Without Borders issued a joint statement on 28 January [condemning the crackdown](#) on human rights defenders and political activists on the eve of the UAE's Universal Periodic Review by the UN Human Rights Council.

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