

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: MDE 25/008/2005 (Public)
News Service No: 329
5 December 2005

United Arab Emirates: Amnesty International seeks clarification of the fate of 26 men arrested at a "gay wedding ceremony"

Amnesty International has expressed strong concern to the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) about the arrest last month at a hotel in Abu Dhabi of 26 men allegedly for organizing a "gay wedding ceremony" and called for urgent clarification of their legal status and treatment in detention.

In a letter to UAE Interior Minister Major General Shaikh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Amnesty International expressed particular concern about statements reportedly made by police and Interior Ministry officials last week suggesting that the men would be subjected to psychological and hormone treatment to "cure" their sexual identity. Subsequently, however, an Interior Ministry spokesperson denied on 30 November that the men would be subjected to forcible treatment.

The men, said to be nationals of the UAE as well as nationals from certain Arab and Asian countries, continue to be detained.

Amnesty International requested urgent clarification of the legal grounds on which the 26 men are being detained and whether the UAE authorities intend to charge them and bring them to trial. The organization said that they should be released immediately and unconditionally if they are being held solely on account of their sexual orientation. Amnesty International also sought assurances that the men were not being subjected to any kind of ill-treatment, and expressed concern that any attempt to subject the men to forced hormone or other treatment would constitute a breach of medical ethics, and a violation of physical and mental integrity.