

UAE Crackdown on Online Political Activism—Is America Next?

The United Arab Emirates just hardened Internet monitoring and enforcement codes. The new codes give authorities wider leeway to crack down on Web activists for offenses such as mocking the country's rulers or calling for demonstrations.

Considering the hostile political cycle that just ended with a **divided nation**, could the move have prophetic implications in the U.S.?

AP called the measures another sign of tougher cyber-policing efforts by Western-backed leaders across the Gulf amid growing concerns over perceived political or security threats since the Arab Spring uprisings.

"Many of the codes in UAE's updated Internet law focus on issues such as online fraud, privacy protection and efforts to combat prostitution. But a major section spells out sweeping limits and possible prison terms for any posts 'to deride or to damage the reputation or the stature of the state or any of its institutions,' including the rulers and high officials across the UAE—a federation of seven semiautonomous emirates. It also outlaws "information, news, caricatures or any other kind of pictures" that authorities believe could threaten security or "public order." These include Web posts calling for public protests or "disobeying the laws and regulations of the state'."

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution defends freedom of speech, but with the clear erosions to religious liberty in the land, could our freedom to analyze—and even strongly disagree with—politicians in online forums soon meet with resistance? Discuss.