

# Anti-child porn laws on the way in the UAE

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- By Rayeesa Absal, Staff Reporter
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Abu Dhabi: Being in possession of child pornography must be declared as an offence in its own right — separate to being in possession of adult pornography, legal experts have advised.

The change in the law would better protect the rights of children, they said.

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However, this is likely to change thanks to the work of the Interior Ministry's child protection committee, recently set up by the government.

The committee — comprised of law enforcement officers, legal and IT experts — is in the process of drawing up new legislation that meets international standards and best practices.

## Violation of rights

Rapporteur and committee coordinator Major Faisal Al Shammari told Gulf News that: "Watching child porn is equivalent to victimising the children and is in itself a grave violation of their rights. It cannot be treated the same as adult porn, which is why we need new legislation".

Major Al Shammari said those convicted of possessing or promoting child pornography should be sentenced to at least two years in jail. The government also hoped to set up a sex offenders' register by the end of this year.

Legal Advisor Adam Jackson, who is on the committee, called for child pornography punishments to be stronger than those for adult pornography.

"New legislation must make possession of child pornography a distinct offence outside the possession of adult pornography," he said.

Child pornography and child abuse must be made a felony, allowing courts to impose longer custodial sentences [than those for adult pornography offences], he added.

Once the committee prepared the new legislation's final draft, it would be published for public consultation, and later made into law, he said.

Watching child porn had a decivilising effect on people, Major Al Shammari said. Watching such videos on the internet and making copies would also be punishable under the laws. Websites were already being monitored, he said

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