

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/emirats-arabes-unis-two-years-in-prison-and-100-000-18-11-2013,45472.html>

Middle East/North Africa - United Arab Emirates

Outrageous sentence

Two years in prison and 100,000-euro fine for trial tweets

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Reporters Without Borders deplores the two-year jail sentence and fine of 500,000 dirhams (100,000 euros) that an Emirati court passed today on cyber-activist **Waleed Al-Shehhi** because of his tweets about the trial of 94 dissidents (the "UAE 94") during the first half of the year.

Only carefully chosen national media were allowed to cover the UAE 94 trial, in which the defendants were accused of links with the Muslim Brotherhood. Neither foreign media nor foreign observers were allowed to attend.

"We firmly condemn this verdict, which flouts the UAE's international obligations." Reporters Without Borders said. "The sentence is both disproportionate and absurd, and coincides with the start of the trial of another 30 persons with alleged Muslim Brotherhood links, to which again only the national media have access.

"The authorities are trying to make an example out of Shehhi in order to dissuade Emirati citizens from posting any information about the latest trial that strays from the official line. We call for Shehhi's immediate release, the quashing of his conviction and the repeal of the cyber-crime law."

Shehhi was arrested on 11 May under articles 28 and 29 of Federal Legal Decree No. 5/2012, [a cyber-crime law adopted in late 2012](#) that bans the use of information technology for activities that endanger national security and defame the government.

He is the second Emirati citizen to have been convicted under this law for posting information about the UAE 94 trial. **Abdullah Al-Hadidi**, [a netizen arrested on 22 March](#), received a 10-month jail sentence that was upheld on appeal on 22 May. He was finally released on 1 November.

Reporters Without Borders also deplores the news blackout imposed on the latest trial of 30 persons (20 Egyptians and 10 Emiratis) over their alleged links to the Muslim Brotherhood and their alleged attempts to overthrow the government.

As with the UAE 94 trial, the authorities are censoring coverage by carefully choosing the reporters allowed to attend. Two hearings have already been held, on 5 and 12 November, and a third is scheduled for tomorrow.

Reporters Without Borders calls for the immediate lifting of this news blackout, which constitutes a grave violation of freedom of information.
