

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/united-arab-emirates-three-netizens-still-held-for-08-09-2013,45149.html>

Middle East/North Africa - United Arab Emirates

Arbitrary detention

Three netizens still held for tweeting about UAE 94 detainees

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Reporters Without Borders is very worried about the fate of the news providers still being held in the United Arab Emirates. They include the citizen-journalist **Waleed Al-Shehhi**, who has been [detained since May](#) and who is due to go on trial tomorrow.

They are the victims of a year-old government crackdown on citizen-journalists and human rights activists who tried to provide information about the trial of 94 pro-reform activists (known as the "UAE 94"), who included many members of Al-Islah (The Reform), a local group with links to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.

"Not content with [banning foreign and independent local observers](#), the Emirati authorities have persecuted individuals who relayed information about the UAE 94 trial on social networks," Reporters Without Borders said.

"This information was in the public interest and we again call on the authorities to release these news providers immediately and unconditionally and to drop all the charges against them."

Shehhi was arrested on 11 May after posting information on his Twitter account ([@w_alshehhi](#)) about the proceedings against newly detained Al-Islah members. After being held incommunicado for week, they were transferred to Al-Wathaba prison.

He is charged under articles 24, 29 and 41 of [Federal Legal Decree No. 5/2012](#), a cyber-crime law adopted in late 2012 that has been widely criticized for providing the Emirati authorities with grounds for drastically limiting freedom of expression and information.

Article 29 provides for a prison sentence and a fine of up to 1 million dirhams (212,000 euros) for anyone who "publishes information, news, statements or rumours on a website or any computer network or information technology means with intent to make sarcasm or damage the reputation, prestige or stature of the state or any of its institutions or its president, vice-president [and] any of the rulers of the Emirates."

Two activists, **Hitham Jassim** and **Kalifah Rabia**, have been [held incommunicado since 25 July](#) for posting information on their Twitter accounts about the alleged torture of UAE 94 detainees.

The citizen-journalist **Abdullah Al-Hadidi** was sentenced on 8 April to 10 months in prison for disseminating information "with bad intentions." He is due to be released at the end of October.

The UAE 94 proceedings ended on 2 July with the Abu Dhabi supreme court sentencing a total of 68 people to terms of up to 15 years in prison on a range of charging including trying to overthrow the government and links to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is banned in the UAE. Most of those convicted were Al-Islah members. No appeals are possible.
