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<http://www.rsf.org/united-arab-emirates-netizen-arrested-after-tweeting-24-03-2014,46036.html>

Middle East/North Africa - United Arab Emirates

Arbitrary arrest

Netizen arrested

24 March 2014

Reporters Without Borders calls for the immediate and unconditional release of **Osama Najjar**, a netizen and activist [held](#) since 17 March, and voices concern about his state of health, as he was arrested the day after an operation and does not have his medicine with him.

No official reason has been given for his arrest and it is still not known where he is being detained.

The plainclothes police who went to his family's home on 17 March [did not identify themselves or show a search warrant](#). Nonetheless, they searched the home for two and a half hours, taking Najjar's computer and other electronic devices.

When his mother insisted on seeing an arrest warrant, one of the policemen showed part of document in which his name and a signature could be seen, but concealed the rest of it.

Najjar is the son of Hoseen Najjar, who is serving a 10-year jail sentence and who is one of the "UAE 94," the 94 Emirati citizens who were tried last year on charges of links to the Muslim Brotherhood and trying to overthrow the UAE government.

Osama Najjar has often used Twitter [to voice support](#) for the UAE 94 and to condemn their imprisonment and the mistreatment and even torture to which they have been subjected while held. He also reported that his father was forbidden to call his family.

The day before his arrest, Najjar posted a tweet in response to comments on a radio station by the Al-Sharika province judge in charge of the UAE 94 trial, who urged the families of the detainees not to encourage their children to "hate their country."

[Najjar tweeted](#): "*Your Highness, Doctor, we do not hate our country and we do not forget the injustice we faced even if our mothers forgot it. Those who were unjust to my father carry 20 months of unfair jail and harassment on their conscience.*"

[Two Emirati netizens were convicted last year](#) under the UAE's cyber-crime law for posting information about the UAE trial. One was **Abdullah Al-Hadidi**, who was arrested in March and got a 10-month jail sentence that [was confirmed](#) on appeal in May. He was released on 1 November after being deemed to have completed his sentence.

The other was **Waleed Al-Shehhi**, who was arrested in May and was sentenced in November to two years in prison and a fine of 500,000 dirhams (100,360 euros) for tweeting about the trial. He was convicted under articles 28 and 29 of the cyber-crime law, which forbid the use of information technology for activities "endangering state security" and "harming the reputation of the state."

Shehhi said he was mistreated and tortured following his arrest but these claims were never investigated, in violation of article 12 of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

[Reporters Without Borders wrote to Gabriela Knaul](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, in January ahead of her visit to the UAE at the end of that month. The letter drew attention to problems with the judicial system that RWB has observed while monitoring the trials of information providers and the lack of impartiality in the sentences some of them received.

After her visit Knaul [reported](#) that the justice system “remains under the de facto control of the executive branch of government.” She said she was told that “evidence is sometimes manipulated and fabricated by the police or other security agencies and the prosecution” and that prosecutions sometimes go ahead on the basis unfounded and even contradictory allegations.
