

Advocacy dossier

Abdulsalam Mohammed Darwish Al-Marzooqi

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Imprisoned (serving sentence) **United Arab Emirates**

A former Dubai court official held since 2012 for signing a pro-democracy petition. After serving 10 years, authorities extended his detention indefinitely, then retried him and imposed a life sentence in 2024.

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The case at a glance

A former Dubai court official held since 2012 for signing a pro-democracy petition. After serving 10 years, authorities extended his detention indefinitely, then retried him and imposed a life sentence in 2024.

Status	Arrested	Country
Imprisoned (serving sentence)	**12 Jun 2023**	**United Arab Emirates**

Sentence Life imprisonment (twenty-five years under UAE law), imposed 10 July 2024 and made final on 4 March 2025, following an earlier ten-year sentence served from 2012 to 2022.

Charges Founding, organising and administering an organisation aimed at overthrowing the government (2013 trial, under Article 180 of the Penal Code)
Establishing, founding and managing the Justice and Dignity Committee with the aim of committing terrorist acts (2024 retrial)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Abdulsalam Al-Marzooqi immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

04 Provide Abdulsalam Al-Marzooqi with immediate, independent medical evaluation and the full treatment that condition requires, including transfer to an independent civilian hospital if necessary.

05 Immediately end all harassment, summons, surveillance, and threats against the family of Abdulsalam Al-Marzooqi in United Arab Emirates.

06 Immediately end all transnational targeting of Abdulsalam Al-Marzooqi, including surveillance, defamation campaigns, Interpol misuse, and consular harassment.

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Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Denial of family visits UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 58

Denial of legal counsel International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14(3)

Denial of medical care UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 24 to 27

Deprivation of nationality Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15

Enforced disappearance International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16

Inhumane detention conditions International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10
UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)

Prolonged pretrial detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)

Reprisal against relatives UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12

Torture Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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How the case unfolded

24 July 2012

Arrest

Arrested by State Security

State Security officers arrested him in the street. He was then held in solitary confinement at a secret location for about eight months, with his family refused all information about where he was.

26 November 2012

Reappearance in custody

Seen by his family for the first time at the State Prosecution

His family saw him for the first time since the arrest, at the State Prosecution office. He was visibly unwell, had been denied his medication and threatened with its permanent withdrawal.

9 March 2013

Transfer between places of detention

Moved from secret detention to Al-Razeen prison

He was moved from the secret detention facility to Al-Razeen prison.

2 July 2013

Conviction

Convicted in the mass trial and sentenced to ten years

The Federal Supreme Court convicted him in the UAE94 mass trial of founding, organising and administering an organisation aimed at overthrowing the government, and sentenced him to ten years in prison followed by three years of probation.

September 2013

Context

Denied treatment for facial nerve paralysis

He developed facial nerve paralysis; his family's requests for specialist treatment were refused.

November 2013

Citizenship revoked

Citizenship revoked by the state

The state revoked his citizenship four months after the conviction. In January 2017 his wife was told by telephone that all of their children had also been denationalised.

22 November 2013

UN opinion or decision

UN Working Group finds his detention arbitrary

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, in Opinion 60/2013, found his detention arbitrary.

May 2017

Family visit denied

Prison administration stops his calls to his family

From May 2017 the prison administration stopped allowing him to call his wife, his sons and two of his daughters. His daughter Jenan, who remained in the country, was barred from visiting him between August 2017 and March 2020.

July 2022

Detention beyond the end of a sentence

Held past the end of his sentence in indefinite counselling detention

When the ten-year sentence expired, authorities transferred him to indefinite counselling detention under the Counter-Terrorism Law rather than releasing him.

30 March 2023

UN opinion or decision

UN Working Group finds counselling detention arbitrary

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found that holding him and other UAE94 prisoners in counselling detention after their sentences ended was arbitrary.

12 June 2023

Start of enforced disappearance

Last call to his family from al-Razeen prison; contact then stops

He made his last phone call to his family from al-Razeen prison. His family then had no contact with him until December 2023.

December 2023

Charge filed

Charged again in a new mass trial

Charged in fresh proceedings over an alleged Justice and Dignity Committee, more than a year after completing his original sentence.

1 December 2023

Reappearance in custody

Calls his family from an unidentified State Security facility

After almost six months without contact, he called his family from an unidentified facility of the State Security Apparatus.

7 December 2023

Hearing

UAE84 mass trial opens

The new mass trial known as the UAE84 case opened before the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal.

10 July 2024

Conviction

Sentenced to life by the Abu Dhabi Federal Appeals Court

Sentenced to life imprisonment, twenty-five years under UAE law, for allegedly founding the Justice and Dignity Committee with the aim of committing terrorist acts. His place of detention has not been disclosed since his call from a State Security facility on 1 December 2023.

30 July 2024

Context

UN experts condemn the UAE84 life sentences

UN human rights experts said they were dismayed by the life sentences handed down in the UAE84 case.

4 March 2025

Final judgment

Federal Supreme Court makes the sentence final

The State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court rejected the appeals in the UAE84 case. The judgment is final.

16 April 2025

UN special procedures communication

UN experts write to the UAE about the revoked citizenship of him and his family

UN special rapporteurs and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention wrote to the UAE government about the revocation of his citizenship and that of his wife and children.

26 June 2025

Other act

Federal Supreme Court gives life sentences to 24 co-defendants in the UAE84 case

On appeal by the Attorney General, the Criminal Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court overturned the dismissal of the cases against 24 co-defendants and sentenced them to life imprisonment, bringing the life sentences in the case to 67. The ruling concerned those 24 defendants; no source reports a change to his own sentence.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again. Abdulsalam Al-Marzooqi, stripped of his citizenship in 2013, remains in detention, serving the life sentence imposed in the UAE84 mass trial on 10 July 2024, which became final when the Federal Supreme Court rejected the appeals on 4 March 2025; his place of detention has not been disclosed since he called his family from a State Security facility on 1 December 2023, and no release has been reported. Human Rights Watch reported that after UAE94 prisoner Ali al-Khaja died in custody at al-Razeen prison on 19 November 2025, families of other political detainees there were not allowed to visit.

Background and Work

Abdulsalam Mohammed Darwish Al-Marzooqi was born in 1970 in the Emirate of Sharjah. He served as Chief of the Family Counselling Department in the Courts of Dubai, where he provided guidance to families in matters of marriage, divorce and child custody. He also held the position of General Supervisor at Bedaya television channel.

In March 2011, 133 Emirati citizens, including academics, judges, lawyers, students and human rights defenders, signed a petition addressed to the President of the United Arab Emirates and the Federal Supreme Council. The petition called for comprehensive democratic reform, including the election of the Federal National Council by universal suffrage and the grant of full legislative and oversight powers to that body. Al-Marzooqi was among the signatories.

Arrest and Enforced Disappearance

On 24 July 2012, officers from the State Security Apparatus arrested Al-Marzooqi in the street. He was transferred to an undisclosed location and held incommunicado in solitary confinement for eight months. During this period he was denied all access to his family and to legal counsel. He was subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including threats to withhold his medication permanently.

On 26 November 2012, Al-Marzooqi was permitted to see members of his family for the first time, during a brief meeting at the office of the State Prosecution. His relatives reported that he appeared to be in poor health. In protest against the conditions of his detention and the ill-treatment to which he had been subjected, Al-Marzooqi began a hunger strike, which further aggravated his physical condition.

The UAE 94 Trial and First Sentence

On 27 January 2013, ninety-four defendants, including Al-Marzooqi, were formally charged before the Federal Supreme Court with founding, organising and administering an organisation aimed at overthrowing the government, under Article 180 of the Penal Code. The trial, which became known as the UAE 94 case, was the largest mass prosecution in the modern history of the Emirates.

On 2 July 2013, the Federal Supreme Court convicted sixty-one of the ninety-four defendants. Al-Marzooqi was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment followed by three years of probation. The proceedings failed to meet international standards of fair trial: defendants were denied

effective legal representation during the investigative phase, and evidence obtained under torture was admitted without scrutiny.

Citizenship Revocation and Family Targeting

In November 2013, while Al-Marzooqi was serving his sentence, the Emirati authorities revoked his citizenship. The denationalisation was imposed as a reprisal measure for his peaceful advocacy. In January 2017, his wife received a telephone call from the Nationality and Passport Department informing her that the citizenship of all their children had also been revoked. The family was rendered stateless.

From May 2017, prison authorities ceased to allow Al-Marzooqi to make telephone calls to his wife, his sons and two of his daughters. His daughter Jenan Al-Marzooqi, herself a human rights defender who remained in the UAE, was prohibited from visiting her father between August 2017 and March 2020. When visits and calls were eventually permitted, they were subjected to close monitoring and were frequently interrupted.

Detention Conditions and Denial of Medical Care

In September 2013, Al-Marzooqi developed facial nerve paralysis. His family submitted repeated requests for him to be granted access to specialist medical treatment. All requests were refused. He was also denied physiotherapy and medical care for chronic back pain. The deliberate withholding of appropriate medical treatment has resulted in a significant and ongoing deterioration of his health.

Indefinite Extension and the UAE 84 Retrial

Al-Marzooqi's ten-year sentence expired in July 2022. Instead of releasing him, the authorities transferred him to indefinite administrative detention under the pretext of "rehabilitation needs," invoking the Counter-Terrorism Law and the law governing the Munasaha counselling centre. No judicial review of this extension was provided.

On 7 December 2023, a new mass trial commenced before the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal. Al-Marzooqi and dozens of other defendants, many of whom had already completed sentences in the UAE 94 case, were charged with terrorism-related offences. The charges alleged that they had established, founded and managed an organisation called the Justice and Dignity Committee with the aim of committing terrorist acts on Emirati soil. On 1 December 2023, Al-Marzooqi was able to telephone his family from an unknown State Security facility, his first contact in months.

On 10 July 2024, the Abu Dhabi Federal Appeals Court issued its verdict in what became known as the UAE 84 case, the second-largest mass trial in the country's history. Fifty-three defendants received sentences ranging from ten years to life imprisonment. Al-Marzooqi was sentenced to life imprisonment, equivalent under Emirati law to twenty-five years. His place of detention has not been disclosed since his call from a State Security facility on 1 December 2023.

International Response

The UAE 94 trial and subsequent retrials have been condemned by United Nations human rights experts, regional and international non-governmental organisations, and foreign governments. UN special procedures have repeatedly called for the immediate release of all those detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and have documented the systematic use of torture, enforced disappearance and unfair trial in these cases. The use of indefinite "counselling" detention and the practice of re-prosecuting individuals who have completed their sentences have been described as flagrant violations of the

prohibition on double jeopardy and arbitrary detention.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/abdulsalam-al-marzooqi/

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