

Advocacy dossier

Mahmood Hasan Al-Hosani

محمود حسن الحوسني

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

Emirati journalist arrested in 2012 for signing a reform petition. Sentenced to seven years, then held indefinitely after his term ended. Charged in a new case in 2023 and sentenced to life imprisonment in the UAE84 mass trial.

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The case at a glance

Emirati journalist arrested in 2012 for signing a reform petition. Sentenced to seven years, then held indefinitely after his term ended. Charged in a new case in 2023 and sentenced to life imprisonment in the UAE84 mass trial.

Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **16 Jul 2012**	Country **United Arab Emirates**

Sentence Seven years' imprisonment (2013 verdict), followed by indefinite detention from July 2019. Life imprisonment (equivalent to twenty-five years) imposed in July 2024.

Charges Founding, organising, and administering an organisation aimed at overthrowing the government (article 180 of the UAE penal code, 2013 trial)
Establishing, founding, and managing the Justice and Dignity Committee with the aim of committing terrorist acts (2024 trial)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Mahmood Al-Hosani 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.

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

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)

Judicial harassment UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

Press freedom violation International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19

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

Threats and intimidation 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

March 2011

Defender activity

Signs reform petition

Al-Hosani signs a petition with 132 other Emiratis calling for democratic reforms, addressed to the UAE President and Federal Supreme Council.

16 July 2012

Arrest

Arrested at home

State security forces raid Al-Hosani's home without a warrant, arrest him, and confiscate his phone and laptop. He is taken to a secret location.

27 January 2013

Charge filed

Formal charges filed

Al-Hosani and 93 other defendants are formally charged with founding and organising an organisation aimed at overthrowing the government under article 180 of the penal code.

March 2013

Reappearance in custody

First court appearance

After eight months of enforced disappearance, Al-Hosani appears in court for the first time. His family learns of his detention.

2 July 2013

Conviction

Convicted in UAE94 trial

The Federal Supreme Court convicts 61 of 94 defendants. Al-Hosani is sentenced to seven years' imprisonment.

16 July 2019

Detention beyond the end of a sentence

Sentence expires, detention extended

Al-Hosani's seven-year sentence ends but he is not released. Authorities invoke counter-terrorism and rehabilitation laws to hold him indefinitely.

3 June 2020

Context

His Munasaha detention raised with UN experts

MENA Rights Group raised his continued detention in the Munasaha centre, after his sentence had ended, with UN human rights experts.

7 December 2023

Hearing

UAE84 mass trial begins on new charges

A new mass trial opens before the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal. Al-Hosani is tried in a new case (Case 87 of 2023) on new terrorism charges related to the Justice and Dignity Committee.

6 January 2024

Referral to trial

State media announces his referral to trial in Case No. 87 of 2023

The state news agency WAM announced that 84 defendants, including him, had been referred to trial in Case No. 87 of 2023.

19 January 2024

Statement by UN experts

UN experts alarmed by new charges in UAE84 case

UN experts expressed alarm at the new terrorism charges brought against him and other UAE94 detainees. On 30 July 2024 they expressed dismay at the life sentences.

10 July 2024

Conviction

Sentenced to life imprisonment

The Abu Dhabi Federal Appeals Court sentences Al-Hosani to life imprisonment (25 years) in the UAE84 mass trial for allegedly founding the Justice and Dignity Committee.

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.

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. Mahmood Al-Hosani 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 current place of detention has not been publicly confirmed 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

Mahmood Al-Hosani, born in 1980, established himself as a journalist and media entrepreneur in the United Arab Emirates. He founded Smart Media and contributed to a range of television and radio projects. In 2010, he served as the official spokesperson and public relations officer for Sharjah Transport, a public-sector role that placed him at the intersection of government communication and media.

Al-Hosani was also a member of the Dubai Press Club, a professional association for journalists working in the UAE's tightly regulated media environment. His work spanned institutional communications, independent media production, and civic engagement.

The Petition and Arrest

In March 2011, a group of 133 Emirati citizens, including academics, judges, lawyers, students, and human rights defenders, signed a petition addressed to the President of the UAE and the Federal Supreme Council. The petition called for democratic reforms, including the direct election of the Federal National Council and expanded legislative powers. The signatories made their appeal publicly, within existing constitutional channels.

The UAE State Security Apparatus responded with arrests. Mahmood Al-Hosani was arrested on 16 July 2012. Security forces raided his home without an arrest warrant, searched the premises, and confiscated his phone and laptop. He was taken to a secret detention location and held incommunicado for eight months. His family received no information about his whereabouts or condition until he appeared in court in March 2013.

The UAE94 Trial and First Sentence

Al-Hosani was among ninety-four defendants brought before the Federal Supreme Court in what became known as the UAE94 trial, the largest mass trial in the country's history at that time. On 27 January 2013, the defendants were formally charged under article 180 of the penal code with founding, organising, and administering an organisation aimed at overthrowing the government.

On 2 July 2013, the court convicted sixty-one of the ninety-four defendants. Al-Hosani was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. The trial proceeded without adequate guarantees of due process. Defendants reported prolonged incommunicado detention, allegations of torture and coerced confessions, and denial of effective legal representation.

Indefinite Detention and the UAE84 Retrial

Al-Hosani's seven-year sentence ended in July 2019. He was not released. Instead, authorities invoked the UAE's Counter-Terrorism Law and the Munasaha Centre Law, legislation governing a so-called "counselling" or "rehabilitation" centre, to extend his detention indefinitely, citing unspecified "rehabilitation needs." No new charges were filed, and no judicial review authorised the extended detention beyond the original sentence.

On 7 December 2023, a new mass trial opened before the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal. Al-Hosani was tried again, alongside dozens of other UAE94 defendants, in a new case (Case 87 of 2023) on new terrorism charges. The prosecution alleged that he had founded, established, and managed the Justice and Dignity Committee "with the aim of committing terrorist acts on the country's soil." On 10 July 2024, the court sentenced Al-Hosani to life imprisonment, equivalent under UAE law to twenty-five years. This was the UAE's second-largest unfair mass trial, known as the UAE84 case. Fifty-three defendants received sentences ranging from ten years to life.

The proceedings violated fundamental fair-trial standards. Defendants were denied effective legal representation, held in prolonged incommunicado detention, and tried in proceedings whose appeal the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court rejected on 4 March 2025, making the judgment final.

Detention Conditions and Family Targeting

After his sentence ended, Al-Hosani was held in the Munasaha centre at Al-Razeen prison in Abu Dhabi, a maximum-security facility where conditions are known to be harsh and access to family and legal counsel severely restricted. His current place of detention has not been publicly confirmed. The prolonged incommunicado detention he endured in 2012 and 2013 amounted to enforced disappearance.

International Response

Human rights organisations have repeatedly documented the abuses in the UAE94 and UAE84 trials and called for the immediate release of all those convicted on politically motivated charges. Al-Hosani's case exemplifies the UAE's systematic use of counter-terrorism legislation to silence peaceful dissent and its disregard for due process. His detention beyond the expiry of his original sentence, followed by retrial on new charges for the same underlying conduct, constitutes double jeopardy and arbitrary detention.

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

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