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- Real World Links
- New Media
- Letters
- Archives
- Blog Line
- World Links
- EAST-ASIA-INTEL**
- GEOSTRATEGY-DIRECT**
- Population Clock
- Cartoon
- Greatest Hits
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BREAKING...

SPECIAL TO WORLD TRIBUNE
 Monday, June 8, 2009

Iranian's lawsuit reveals royals' power in UAE

ABU DHABI — A member of the royal family in the United Arab Emirates has for the first time been sued by an Iranian executive on charges of fraud. [Share This](#)

Shahram Abdullah Zadeh has sued the brother-in-law of the emir of Dubai in an unprecedented civil action in the UAE. The 37-year-old Iranian national has accused the brother-in-law, Hasher Maktoum Bin Juma'a Al Maktoum, of trying to take over Zadeh's real estate firm.



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"He thought he could do it all because he's a sheik," Zadeh said.

The suit has challenged the transparency of the justice system of Dubai, which requires foreign investors to take on a UAE partner, Middle East Newsline reported. Zadeh said he reverted to a civil action when prosecutors refused to file criminal charges against Hasher.

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Zadeh, a life-long resident of Dubai, said he selected Hasher as the required UAE partner in Al Fajer Properties, established in 2004 and now worth \$2 billion. Zadeh said he and Hasher fell into a dispute amid delays in building a billion-dollar office tower.

The economic downturn in the UAE has harmed a range of partnerships with foreign investors. In Dubai, the commercial capital, police have detained nearly 20 executives on suspicion of fraud. None of the detainees was connected to the ruling Al Maktoum family.

"There is no room for corruption and the corrupt," Dubai ruler Mohammed Al Maktoum said. "In all corruption cases, people are not only prosecuted and punished, administrative and legal holes that they exploited to commit their crimes are plugged. No one in the emirates is above the law and accountability."

Zadeh said Hasher, who ignored two summonses, exploited his connections to the ruling family to have the Iranian arrested. In February 2008, Zadeh was imprisoned for 60 days and pressed to renounce links to Al Fajer.

As Zadeh languished in prison, Hasher was said to have taken over Al Fajer and appointed his son chief executive officer. By the time, he was released, Zadeh found that his office safe was ransacked and cleansed of any documents that linked him to the company.

At one point, Zadeh appealed to Dubai's emir. He said the emir did not respond to the complaint against his brother-in-law.

"We understand that Al Fajer Properties is controlled by a powerful member of Dubai's ruling family," Moses Oye, who represents investors in another Al Fajer project, said.

Skill, Al Fajer continues to operate. On April 15, Al Fajer and the Dubai Real Estate Regulatory Agency announced the first transfer of property

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using a new official online system. Hasher's son, Maktoum, was identified as president of Al Fajer. Zadeh was not mentioned.

Foreign investors have demanded an investigation of another Al Fajer project, Ebony Ivory. The investors, alleging fraud, have called on the Dubai Real Estate Regulatory Agency to force Al Fajer to issue a refund.

"We have paid approximately \$140 million and have a signed contract from Sheik Maktoum Bin Hasher Al Maktoum," Oye, who represents investors from Britain, Canada, India, Iran, Pakistan and the United States, said. "Now, we want our money back."

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Comments

I am an investor in the Ebony Ivory Towers development by Al Fajer Properties. I have a signed contract from Sheikh Maktoum Bin Hasher Maktoum Al Maktoum, the so called president of Al Fajer. When I tried to explain to him about how he has cheated us with fake construction photos and false press releases, Sheikh maktoum threatened me that he could have me "disappeared" by Dubai State Security and sometimes one should be smart not to provoke the ruling family. The Dubai ruler knows about all of this and yet the Dubai government continues to actively protect criminals from the ruling family who are thirsty for [money](#). This is a general problem in UAE where there are no human rights and the laws are implemented selectively depending who is the complainer and who is the defendant. In Dubai it's even worse because the government is desperate for money.

Najib 4:32 a.m. / Thursday, June 11, 2009

The Gulf Arab rulers want to be part of the 21st century modernity but still want to practice tribal norms of the 5th century. There is a need for the total overhaul of every single institution, from labor practices to the judiciary not to mention the form of governance, which in itself allows the practice of such unjust rules.

Ahmed Bahraini 7:21 p.m. / Wednesday, June 10, 2009

This is the exact reason I don't live in the Gulf any longer. Expatriates start a good idea and when the business starts booming, the local "sponsor" jumps in and takes over. I have seen it happen with regular UAE nationals, so why not their rulers?

John Mareef 6:01 p.m. / Wednesday, June 10, 2009

The Dubai ruler has to practice what he preaches for his own family members. 500 investors have complained about fake photographs used by Sheikh Maktoum Hasher, yet there is no reply! Dubai's foundation was built on foreign traders from the 70s. When members of the ruling family use the police and other state institution to break laws for their commercial benefit, then it is the beginning of the end of Dubai as a safe investment hub. The more government officials continue to cover up the chain of crimes, the more embarrassing it will be for Dubai ruling family.

Khalifa 3:05 a.m. / Wednesday, June 10, 2009

Dubai's reputation and investors' confidence has been ruined by the actions of Sheikh Maktoum Hasher. He clearly is above the law and nobody cares to investigate. The fake photos to sell properties to us is as solid an evidence as you could ever have. But the government officials ignore our rights because he is a sheikh and brother in law of Dubai ruler. Is it too much to ask for a transparent investigation and announce the findings to the public?

Schol 10:21 a.m. / Tuesday, June 9, 2009

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