



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
6 February 2024

English only

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-fourth session

11 September–13 October 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Business and Human Rights: The Dubious Practices of the Swiss Company Alp Services with the Example of the United Arab Emirates’ ‘Smear Campaign’**

The consortium of media outlets, including RTS, has been uncovering the dubious practices of Alp Services, a Geneva-based intelligence firm. Since 2018, the company’s mission has been to tarnish the reputations of the United Arab Emirates’ perceived “enemies” in Switzerland and Europe.

The Abu Dhabi Secret Files (the United Arab Emirates Gate), via the French journal Mediapart, point to the fact that the United Arab Emirates falsely and purposefully targeted individuals as being linked to the Brotherhood.

The campaign was only the tip of a huge Alp Services mission dubbed by the code name ‘Arnica’ or ‘Crocus’. The mission centered on the United Arab Emirates’s two issues: Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood organisation.

The Alp Services’ delivery presents an infographic showing pictures of people, allegedly radical Muslims, intertwined with lines in a network. Several Mediapart and New Yorker reports have displayed many of the secretive strategies implemented by the United Arab Emirates-hired entity.

Furthermore, a more shocking reveal from the latest probe that relies on Mediapart-acquired confidential data was sent to the European Investigative Collaborations (EIC) network.

The Alp Services data to Abu Dhabi between 2017 and 2020 include a list of more than 1,000 individuals and 400 organisations incorrectly linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in 18 European states.

The list goes to extremes by revealing the individuals’ personal information and putting them in the same place as Al-Qaeda-associated terrorists. Every person on the list is noted as strongly connected with the Muslim Brotherhood or a supporter of the organisation.

### **Slander-centered Mission**

Leading the mission is Mario Brero, 77, a renowned private investigator and founder of Alp Services. The agency was founded in Geneva over 30 years ago.

On 7 August 2017, Brero told Matar, an intelligence officer from the United Arab Emirates, about the offer his agency received two weeks earlier. The offer was to embark on a mission to “map” and then “discredit” the alleged opponents of the Abu Dhabi.

The mission was to confidentially and thoroughly spread jeopardising data, according to Mediapart’s report.

In 2017, there were many trips to the United Arab Emirates, during which Matar guided the Swiss private officers to his supervisor officer. The latter was the true leader of the mission, labelled by Mediapart as Ali Saeed Al-Neyadi.

Al-Neyadi supervises a local office for crisis and natural disaster management. However, in real life, it directly relays information to the Supreme National Security Council, serving the armed wing of special operations.

Talks between both sides led to the signing of an initial contract in October 2017.

According to Mediapart, Alp Services received not less than €5.7m (approx. \$6.26m) from 2017 to 2020. The money was provided by the Emirati research facility “Al Ariaf”, allegedly a front for the secret services.

## **Investigation Reveals Israel's Involvement**

These strategies cover media campaigns, documents spread under false identities, and the forging of Wikipedia data. It also included moves to persuade banks of closing accounts. Hazim Nada, a businessman in Switzerland and shareholder of an oil trading company, fell victim. The special operations were the reason behind Nada's bankruptcy, Mediapart reported.

Among the states, in which the agency was active, France stood out. Several files and reports were published, including a file labelled "Muslim Brotherhood in France December 2020". The file included 191 names and 125 organisations.

The documents also present Alp Services as the entity that provided the United Arab Emirates intelligence services with the option to place more orders. The orders targeted people of their choice, at a price ranging from 20 to 50 thousand euros per individual.

The United Arab Emirates has always been involved in slander crusades against Qatar. Experts claim that the crusades aim at damaging Qatar's reputation, built over the last several years.

"These networks are still operating on behalf of the UAE," Krieg said in regards to the United Arab Emirates anti-Qatar crusades. "They can be mobilised against Qatar if and when the UAE decides to do so."

## **Flagrant Violation of Fundamental Rights to Privacy, Freedom of Expression, and Association**

The documents obtained by Mediapart and shared with the European Investigative Collaborations (EIC) have shed light on the unlawful actions undertaken by Alp Services on behalf of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) between 2017 and at least 2020. These actions include the collection of private data, dissemination of disinformation, and attempts to influence political processes, targeting individuals and organizations suspected of having affiliations with Qatar or the Muslim Brotherhood.

The scope and severity of Alp Services' activities as outlined in the disclosed documents are deeply alarming. The fact that individuals and organizations, including those residing in Europe and Switzerland, have been subjected to unwarranted surveillance, invasive measures, and defamatory campaigns is a flagrant violation of their fundamental rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and association.

## **Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement Condemn the Undermining the Principles of Democracy and Human Rights**

Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement (IRDG) strongly condemn such actions, as they undermine the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. No individual or organization should be subjected to unwarranted interference, intimidation, or character assassination based on their beliefs, affiliations, or activities, particularly when it comes to peaceful advocacy for human rights and the well-being of communities.

Therefore, we request that Alp Services immediately ceases all activities that infringe upon the rights and freedoms of individuals and organizations. We also demand a thorough and impartial investigation into the allegations made against Alp Services, ensuring that all responsible parties are held accountable for their actions.

Additionally, we call upon the relevant Swiss authorities, including the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Public Prosecutor's Office, to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into this matter. It is essential to determine the extent to which Alp Services may have violated Swiss laws and regulations, particularly those related to data protection, privacy, and private security services. The perpetrators must be brought to justice, and appropriate measures should be taken to prevent similar incidents in the future.

We know that the Swiss government is committed to the protection of fundamental rights. The protection of individuals against any form of violation of these rights is a top priority on the political agenda of the country. We therefore trust that you will treat this complaint with the seriousness it deserves, recognizing the urgency and importance of remedying these serious human rights violations. We also hope that the relevant authorities will pay particular attention to this case and act accordingly to ensure that the rights of the individuals concerned are fully respected and protected. We look forward to your prompt response and your assurances that the necessary steps will be taken to rectify the situation and prevent any recurrence.

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