

Public Safety

Iraqi refugees in Va. accused of hiding ties to a kidnapper to get into U.S.

By [Rachel Weiner](#)

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When Yousif Al Mashhadani came to the United States as a refugee in 2008, he told officials his brother had been kidnapped in his native Iraq because of Al Mashhadani's anti-corruption efforts and wanted to come to America for his own safety.

Now, prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia say Al Mashhadani lied about being kidnapped and about his own connection to a vicious kidnapper.

On Tuesday, Al Mashhadani, his brother Adil Hasan, and Hasan's wife, Enas Ibrahim, appeared in court on charges of naturalization fraud.

All three live in Fairfax County; they moved here from Iraq in 2008. But when they applied to become lawful permanent U.S. residents, none of them acknowledged a relationship to Majid Al Mashhadani, a convicted kidnapper who is Yousif Al Mashhadani and Hasan's brother, an affidavit from FBI agent Sean MacDougal said.

In November 2004, U.S. contractor Roy Hallums [was kidnapped](#) in Iraq and kept in an underground bunker with other captives. They were [freed in a raid](#) after spending nearly a year bound and blindfolded in cells below the earth. Majid Al Mashhadani was arrested in Iraq in connection with the kidnapping but was released from prison in 2007, according to the court documents.

Federal authorities said one of Yousif Al Mashhadani's fingerprints was found on a document recovered during the raid to free the captive. But they did not elaborate on whether they believe he played a role in the incident.

He and his brother and sister-in-law eventually told FBI agents, prosecutors say, that they left Majid Al Mashhadani off their family trees because they did not want to hurt their chances of being admitted as refugees.

Hasan and his wife allegedly stopped using the last name "Al Mashhadani" to obscure the connection.

Yousif Al Mashhadani and Hasan also admitted that they made up a story about Hasan being kidnapped because Yousif Al Mashhadani was involved in anti-corruption efforts, and about Hasan being released after

Yousif Al Mashhadani dropped his efforts, prosecutors say. They also allegedly made up stories of being threatened and coerced.

The family said Hasan was once detained for five hours by members of a Sunni militia in Taji, Iraq, according to the affidavit, but released when they failed to find a Green Zone access card showing he had worked with coalition forces.

In court Tuesday, family members cried as the charges were read. All three defendants proclaimed that they had not lied on any government forms.

Their original claims were processed not by U.S. officials but by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Al Mashhadani and Hasan were detained until a hearing Friday. Ibrahim, who has young children with Hasan, was released on a personal recognizance bond. They each face a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison if convicted.

Family members and an attorney for the defendants declined to comment.

Their arrests come as President Trump continues to argue that more “[extreme vetting](#)” of travelers and refugees from several predominantly Muslim countries is necessary. His [second executive order](#) temporarily banning all travel from those countries has been blocked by courts in Hawaii and Maryland. Unlike his first attempt, that order [does not include Iraqis](#), but it does suspend admittance of all refugees.

This story has been updated to reflect that Yousif Al Mashhadani claimed his brother was kidnapped, not that he had been kidnapped.

 **73 Comments**

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Rachel Weiner tries to cover Alexandria's federal court from a small windowless room with no cellphone access. She sometimes ventures outside to write about crime in Alexandria and Arlington. [Follow](#) 
