

# Legal counsellor gets three years for crucial data leak

Meraas Capital employee revealed firms' secrets to a rival company

- By Bassam Za' za', Senior Reporter
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Dubai: A legal counsellor, who formerly worked for Meraas Capital, has been sentenced to three years in jail, after a court convicted him of disclosing confidential data about the company.

The Dubai Court of First Instance yesterday sentenced the 37-year-old American legal counsellor to three years, in absentia, after he failed to appear in court since March.

Pronouncing yesterday's judgment, Presiding Judge Fahmi Mounir said the accused will be deported after serving his punishment [after he surrenders or is arrested by the police].

Meraas Capital's legal representative in civil right, advocate Essam Al Tamimi, had lodged a civil lawsuit against the defendant seeking Dh200,000 in temporary compensation against his client's damages.

Presiding Judge Mounir also ordered the accused to pay the temporary compensation amount to Meraas Capital.

Prosecutors had charged 37-year-old J.C., with abusing his public service as a legal counsellor at Meraas Capital, a subsidiary of Meraas Holding, and revealing secrets to a rival company. Meraas Holding belongs to the engineering office of the Ruler's Court.

## **Tell tales**

According to the chargesheet, prosecutors said J.C. disclosed confidential information about Meraas Capital's financial situation, names of its clients, conditions of its employees and state of the execution of its projects to a competitor.

Records claimed that he disclosed to a female employee at the rival company confidential information about the overall situation of Meraas Capital's finances, clients' names and alleged failure in the execution of some of its projects.

The defendant can still lodge an objection request against yesterday's ruling and seek a retrial.

An Emirati legal counsellor, R.A., testified that the defendant disclosed the company's secrets during February 2009 after inspecting his company outlook.

"We discovered that J.C. received an email from the legal counsellor of the Abu Dhabi-based rival company.

"The sender was enquiring about confidential data from Meraas Capital. He replied in an email and disclosed confidential information. He also claimed [in an email] that Meraas was shutting down and that he was looking for a job in Abu Dhabi or Qatar.

He was summoned by a disciplinary committee [from Meraas Capital] for questioning, and instead of answering them, he resigned," R.A. said.

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