

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

WhatsApp, LLC v. Muhammad Atif, Gbwhata
Case No. D2026-1251

1. The Parties

The Complainant is WhatsApp, LLC, United States of America ("United States"), represented by Perkins Coie LLP, United States.

The Respondent is Muhammad Atif, Gbwhata, Pakistan.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <gbwhata.net> (the "Domain Name") is registered with Hosting Concepts B.V. d/b/a Registrar.eu. (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on March 23, 2026. On March 24, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the Domain Name. On March 25, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the Domain Name which differed from the named Respondent (REDACTED FOR PRIVACY, gbwhata) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on March 27, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amendment to the Complaint on March 30, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amendment to the Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Policy" or "UDRP"), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Rules"), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Supplemental Rules").

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on April 2, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was April 22, 2026. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on April 27, 2026.

The Center appointed Ian Lowe as the sole panelist in this matter on May 4, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is a United States limited liability company that operates the WhatsApp messaging and voice-over-IP service and mobile application. WhatsApp is a global leader in messaging services for mobile devices, with over two billion users in more than 180 countries. The Complainant offers text messaging, voice and video calling, file sharing, and associated services, as well as the WhatsApp Business application and WhatsApp Business Platform for commercial users.

The Complainant has used the WHATSAPP mark in commerce since 2009. It holds numerous trademark registrations for the WHATSAPP and WHATS word marks, and associated stylized logos, in jurisdictions throughout the world. These include United States trademark number 3939463 WHATSAPP registered on April 5, 2011, European Union trademark number 009986514 WHATSAPP registered on October 25, 2011 and the comparable United Kingdom trademark number 909986514 WHATSAPP created following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, and also treated as registered on October 25, 2011; and European Union trademark number 017923676 WHATS registered on March 8, 2019 and the comparable United Kingdom trademark number 917923676 also created following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, and treated as registered on March 8, 2019.

The Complainant operates its official website at "www.whatsapp.com" and maintains a substantial portfolio of domain name registrations incorporating the WHATSAPP trademarks across various generic and country-code Top-Level Domains.

The Domain Name was registered on October 8, 2024. An attempt by the Panel to access the website at the Domain Name results in a webpage warning that the website in question is infected with malicious code. The Complainant has adduced evidence that at the time of preparation of the Complaint, the Domain Name resolved to a website that prominently promotes and purports to offer for download a modified, unauthorized version of the Complainant's WhatsApp mobile application, referred to throughout the website as "GB WhatsApp." The website makes extensive use of the Complainant's WHATSAPP word mark and displays a logo that closely replicates the Complainant's iconic green and white design mark. The website uses the Complainant's color scheme and design elements to achieve a similar look and feel to the Complainant's own official properties. The website contains statements such as: "GB WhatsApp is the modified version of WhatsApp, developed by third-party developers. It offers more advanced features like hiding blue ticks, hiding view status, freezing last seen, sharing large files, downloading status, and many more remarkable features with customizations."

The Domain Name and the website have been flagged as malicious by multiple independent cybersecurity vendors, as reflected in Iris Investigate and VirusTotal reports submitted in evidence. The Respondent's website's own Disclaimer page acknowledges that the service may pose security risks to users, including potential data breaches or unauthorized access to personal information. The website maintains a purported "Contact Us" page that provides no actual means of contact.

The website displays a footer disclaimer stating: "All logo images and media related to GB WhatsApp are the property of their respective brand and are displayed solely for educational purposes." This disclaimer does not identify the Complainant by name and is positioned at the bottom of the webpage.

The Complainant sent cease-and-desist correspondence and takedown notices to the Respondent in January 2026. The Respondent did not reply to any of this correspondence.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that the Domain Name is confusingly similar to its WHATSAPP and WHATS trademarks, that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Domain Name and that the Respondent registered and is using the Domain Name in bad faith within the meaning of paragraph 4(b)(iv) of the Policy.

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

For this Complaint to succeed in relation to the Domain Name, the Complainant must prove that:

- (i) the Domain Name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark in which the Complainant has rights; and
- (ii) the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Domain Name; and
- (iii) the Domain Name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("[WIPO Overview 3.1](#)"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.2.1.

Ignoring the generic Top-Level Domain ".net", the Domain Name comprises the term "gb", which may well refer to the ISO Code for the United Kingdom, followed by the term "whata". The Panel notes that although this term and the Complainant's WHATS trademark are phonetically distinct, "whata" is a minor typographical alteration from the WHATS trademark and comprises the dominant element "what" together with the letter "a". In addition, although the [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), Section 1.15 notes that content of the website at the disputed domain name is usually disregarded under the first element, "In some instances, panels have taken note of the content of the website associated with a domain name to confirm confusing similarity whereby it appears prima facie that the respondent seeks to target a trademark through the disputed domain name." In this case, the evidence shows that the Respondent's website explicitly promotes a service called "GB WhatsApp," making abundant use of the Complainant's WHATSAPP mark and design elements.

The Panel finds that the Domain Name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's WHATSAPP and WHATS trademarks and that the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of “proving a negative”, requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. Accordingly, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.1.

The Complainant has made out a strong prima facie case that the Respondent could have no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Domain Name. The Respondent has used the Domain Name not in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services, but for a website making excessive use of the Complainant’s WHATSAPP trademarks and stylized design elements and promoting the download of an unauthorized modification of the Complainant’s WhatsApp platform. In addition, the modified application it promotes has been independently flagged as malicious by multiple cybersecurity vendors. There is no suggestion that the Respondent has ever been known by the Domain Name. The Respondent’s use of “Gbwhata” as the organization name when registering the Domain Name does not confer any rights or legitimate interest on the Respondent under the circumstances of the case. The Respondent has chosen not to respond to the Complaint or to take any steps to counter the prima facie case established by the Complainant. In the circumstances, the Panel finds that the Respondent does not have any rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Domain Name.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

In the present case, in light of the nature of the Domain Name and the use to which the Respondent has put the Domain Name for a website making excessive use of the Complainant’s WHATSAPP trademark and promoting the download of an unauthorized version of the Complainant’s WhatsApp platform, the Panel is in no doubt that the Respondent had the Complainant and its rights in its WHATS and WHATSAPP trademarks in mind when it registered the Domain Name.

Furthermore, the offers for downloading an unauthorized modified version of the WhatsApp application indicate that the Respondent registered and uses the Domain Name primarily with the intention of attempting to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to its website by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant’s trademarks as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of such website.

In addition, panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegitimate activity, here claimed distributing malware, constitutes bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.4.

Finally, the Panel notes that in *WhatsApp LLC v. Hussain Ali and Muhammad Atif*, WIPO Case No. [D2025-3950](#), the Respondent was found to have registered the domain names <nawatsapp.com> and <nawatsapp.com> in bad faith.

Having reviewed the evidence, the Panel finds the Respondent’s registration and use of the Domain Name constitutes bad faith under the Policy.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the Domain Name <gbwhata.net> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Ian Lowe/

Ian Lowe

Sole Panelist

Date: May 13, 2026