ARBITRATION
AND
MEDIATION CENTER

WIPO
WORLD
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
ORGANIZATION

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION
WhatsApp, LLC v. Muhammad Suleman Khan
Case No. D2026-4302

1. The Parties

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

The Respondent is Muhammad Suleman Khan, Pakistan.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <whatsapp-username.com> is registered with GoDaddy.com, LLC (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on September 24, 2026. On September 24, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On September 24, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Registration Private, Domains By Proxy, LLC) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on September 25, 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 September 29, 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 October 1, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was October 21, 2026. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on October 22, 2026.

The Center appointed Mireille Buydens as the sole panelist in this matter on November 3, 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 operates the WhatsApp messaging and voice-over-IP service and mobile application. The Complainant is a global leader in messaging services for mobile devices, with over three billion monthly active users worldwide. The WhatsApp mobile application has in recent years ranked among the top apps in the market and is available in sixty different languages. The Complainant has a strong online presence under its WHATSAPP trademark and is active on various social-media platforms.

The Complainant has a large portfolio of registrations for the WHATSAPP trademark, including (inter alia) the following (hereafter "the WHATSAPP Trademark"):

- Indian trademark registration number 2149059 for WHATSAPP (word mark), registered on May 24, 2011;
- United States trademark registration number 3939463 for WHATSAPP (word mark) registered on April 5, 2011.
- International trademark registration number 1085539 for WHATSAPP (word mark) registered on May 24, 2011.
- European Union trademark registration number 017923676 for WHATS (word mark), registered on March 8, 2019.

The Complainant is the owner of numerous domain names comprising its WHATSAPP Trademark, under various generic Top-Level Domains ("gTLDs"), including <whatsapp.com> (resolving to its official website) as well as under many country code Top-Level Domains.

The disputed domain name was registered on July 8, 2026. The disputed domain name resolves to a website depicting the WHATSAPP Trademark and logo, and using the Complainant's green color, for distributing information relating to the creation and use of WhatsApp usernames services. The website under the disputed domain name contains, at the bottom of the last page, a copyright notice formulated as follows: "© 2026 WhatsApp Username. All rights reserved. Not affiliated with WhatsApp Inc. or Meta Platforms.". There is also a disclaimer at the bottom of the "about us" section and another disclaimer in the "disclaimer" section mentioned in the right upper side of the home page. In these sections, the website explains that it is not linked to the Complainant.

In July 2026, the Complainant sent notifications to the Registrar and webhost of the disputed domain name, which resulted in the content being temporarily removed. In September 2026, the Complainant became aware that the content had been restored, and instructed its representatives to send renewed notifications, which did not result in the removal of the website.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

First, the Complainant contends that it owns prior trademark rights in the WHATSAPP Trademark and that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to this Trademark, as it reproduces the Complainant's WHATSAPP Trademark in its entirety, followed by a hyphen and the term "username". The addition of this

term does not prevent confusing similarity, and the Complainant contends it directly references a new feature of the Complainant's services, the "WhatsApp Username," thereby reinforcing the association with the WHATSAPP Trademark rather than distinguishing the disputed domain name from the Trademark. The gTLD ".com" may be disregarded for the purposes of assessment under the first element.

Second, the Complainant contends that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. There is no evidence to suggest that the Respondent is commonly known by the disputed domain name or has any rights in the disputed domain name. To the best of the Complainant's knowledge, the Respondent has neither acquired nor applied for a trademark registration for "whatsapp-username" or any variation thereof. The Respondent is not a licensee of the Complainant, nor is the Respondent affiliated with the Complainant in any way. The Complainant further contends that the Respondent has composed the disputed domain name by combining the WHATSAPP Trademark in its entirety, followed by a hyphen and the descriptive term "username," which directly references the WhatsApp's username feature launched in June 2026, clearly intending to target the Complainant's services and users. Thus, the composition of the disputed domain name, coupled with the Respondent's website content specifically targeting the Complainant, entails a high risk of implied affiliation with the Complainant. The Complainant further asserts that the Respondent is not currently making a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name, as the disputed domain name resolves to a website which is likely to confuse users into believing that the disputed domain name and the Respondent's services are operated by, approved of, or affiliated with the Complainant.

The Complainant finally contends that the Respondent registered and uses the disputed domain name in bad faith. Concerning the registration in bad faith, the Complainant submits that the Respondent knew of the Complainant's rights to the WHATSAPP Trademark when it registered the disputed domain name as the WHATSAPP Trademark is inherently distinctive and well-known throughout the world and has been continuously and extensively used by the Complainant since 2009. The Complainant further refers to the timing of the registration of the disputed domain name, which was registered nine days after the Complainant announced its new username feature (the possibility to reserve usernames for use on WhatsApp), which confirms that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant and its new service.

Concerning the use in bad faith, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain name resolves to a website that holds itself out as an information resource concerning the Complainant's username service and invites visitors to subscribe for updates on WhatsApp Usernames. The website makes pervasive use of the WHATSAPP Trademark and reproduces the Complainant's WhatsApp logo, such that a visitor would reasonably believe they are dealing with the Complainant or with a service authorized by it. The only disclaimer appears at the foot of the website, reached, if at all, only after the visitor has been exposed to the infringing content and invited to submit their personal information. The Respondent has thereby intentionally used the disputed domain name to attract visitors by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's WHATSAPP Trademark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation or endorsement of the website, which constitutes use in bad faith.

B. Respondent

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

6. Discussion and Findings

Dealing with the Respondent's failure to file a response to the Complaint, paragraph 14(b) of the Rules provides that if a party, in the absence of exceptional circumstances, does not comply with a provision of, or requirement under these Rules, the panel shall be entitled to draw such inferences from this omission, as it considers appropriate.

Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy provides that the Complainant must prove each of the following three elements in order to succeed in its Complaint:

(i) the disputed 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 disputed domain name; and
(iii) the disputed 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.

The Panel finds the WHATSAPP Trademark is recognizable within the disputed domain name. The disputed domain name reproduces said Trademark in its entirety with the addition of the term "username" preceded by a hyphen. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the WHATSAPP Trademark for the purposes of the Policy. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.7.

Although the addition of other terms, here "username", may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such terms does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the Trademark for the purposes of the Policy. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.8.

Further, the gTLD ".com" is a standard registration requirement and is typically disregarded in the confusing similarity test. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.11.1.

The Panel finds 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 that 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. As such, 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.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant's prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

According to the Complaint, the Respondent is not licensed by, nor affiliated with, the Complainant in any way. The Respondent is not an authorized dealer, distributor, or reseller of the Complainant. There is no evidence that the Respondent is commonly known by the disputed domain name, either. The Respondent's name does not bear any resemblance to the disputed domain name. According to the Complaint, the Respondent has no trademark registration or similar right for WHATSAPP or any variation as reflected in the disputed domain name.

Nor is the Respondent currently making a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name. The disputed domain name resolves to a website suggesting affiliation with the complainant (using the same combination of green and white, prominently depicting the WHATSAPP Trademark and the Complainant's green logo). A respondent's use of a domain name will not be considered "fair" if it falsely suggests affiliation with the trademark owner (WIPO Overview 3.1, section 2.5). Further, beyond looking at the domain name itself and the nature of any additional terms (in particular where the term does not give a clear distinguishing signal, which is the case here as the additional term is "username"), panels will assess whether the overall facts and circumstances of the case support a fair use (WIPO Overview 3.1, Section 2.5.2). To facilitate this assessment, panels have found various factors illustrative, including whether it is clear to Internet users visiting the respondent's website that it is not operated by the complainant especially where this is readily apparent from the site look-and-feel and content (which may include the use of a reasonably clear and prominent/visible disclaimer). In the present case, in the Panel's view, the website under the disputed domain name reproduces the WHATSAPP Trademark, the Complainant's well-known logo and iconic green color and, from the site look-and-feel and content, it is not clear to Internet users visiting the Respondent's website that it is not operated, or at least approved or sponsored, by the Complainant. On the contrary, it is likely that most Internet users will believe, from the composition of the disputed domain name and the look-and-feel of the website, that it is linked to the Complainant and will not visit the "about us" section or the "disclaimer" page, nor notice the bottom page of the last website's page. The Panel also notes that the Respondent did not file any response to claim fair use of the disputed domain name.

Considering the foregoing, the Panel considers that the Respondent is using the disputed domain name to exploit the goodwill and reputation associated with the Complainant's WHATSAPP Trademark by creating a false impression of association with the Complainant. Internet users are falsely induced to believe that the website under the disputed domain name is somehow affiliated or endorsed by the Complainant.

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.

Concerning the registration in bad faith, the Panel notes that the Respondent has composed the disputed domain name by reproducing the well-known WHATSAPP Trademark in its entirety with the mere addition of the descriptive terms "username" (preceded by a hyphen). Taking into account the reputation of the Complainant's WHATSAPP Trademark, registered long before the disputed domain name and widely used and known worldwide (including on the Internet), as well as the subsequent use discussed further below, the Panel takes the view that the Respondent was well aware of the Complainant's WHATSAPP Trademark when it registered the disputed domain name and registered it with the intention to mislead Internet users into believing that the disputed domain name is affiliated with, or endorsed by, the Complainant. This is reinforced by the fact that the disputed domain name was registered shortly after the Complainant's launch of its new "WhatsApp Username" feature.

Concerning the use in bad faith, the Panel notes that the disputed domain name resolves to the Respondent's website offering information and tips concerning the use of WhatsApp new username feature while reproducing the look-and-feel of the Complainant's official website and the Complainant's WHATSAPP Trademark and logo. The website includes a disclaimer page, accessible on the first page, explaining that

the website is not linked to the Complainant, and the information is also contained in the “about us” section, and in the copyright notice at the bottom of the last page. However, the Panel is not convinced that the Internet users will consult these pages as the look-and-feel of the website under the disputed domain name clearly refers to the Complainant and its official website, and the disputed domain name itself also raises the impression that the website is operated or sponsored by the Complainant (use of the WHATSAPP Trademark, logo, colors…). In the Panel’s view, these elements demonstrate that the disputed domain name is being used for inducing Internet users into the false belief that the disputed domain name resolves to a website operated or endorsed by the Complainant. As a result, the Panel concludes that the Respondent is using the disputed domain name in bad faith by unfairly passing itself off as the Complainant; in this case the mere existence of the disclaimer cannot cure such bad faith and rather suggests that the Respondent was aware users may be confused.

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 disputed domain name <whatsapp-username.com> be transferred to the Complainant**.**

/Mireille Buydens/
Mireille Buydens
Sole Panelist
Date: November 5, 2026