

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

WhatsApp LLC v. belal obeid
Case No. DIO2026-0039

1. The Parties

The Complainant is WhatsApp LLC, United States of America, represented Hogan Lovells Cadwalader (Paris) LLP, France.

The Respondent is belal obeid, Türkiye.

2. The Domain Name(s) and Registrar(s)

The disputed domain name <watsap.io> is registered with Hostinger Operations, UAB (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on July 28, 2026. On July 29, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On July 29, 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 and contact information in the Complaint (REDACTED, Privacy service provided by Hostinger). The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on July 30, 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 amended Complaint on August 3, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the .IO Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy”), the Rules for .IO Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for .IO 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 August 14, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was September 3, 2026. The Respondent sent an email communication to the Center on August 3, 2026. Following the Respondent’s email communication, the Center inquired the Parties on their interest in suspending the proceedings for settlement discussions.

On August 11, 2026, the Complainant informed the Center it wished the proceedings to continue. Thus, on September 4, 2026, the Center notified the Parties of the Commencement of Panel Appointment Process.

The Center appointed Knud Wallberg as the sole panelist in this matter on September 8, 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 the provider of the WhatsApp application, a popular mobile messaging application allowing users to exchange messages via smartphones without having to pay for short message service (SMS) messages. The Complainant was founded in 2009, and its WhatsApp application now has over three billion active users worldwide.

The Complainant has registered numerous trademarks consisting of the term “WhatsApp” in many jurisdictions throughout the world, including International Registration No. 1085539, WHATSAPP, registered on May 24, 2011, for goods and services in international classes 9, and 38; and European Union Trademark Registration No. 009986514 WHATSAPP, registered on October 25, 2011, in international classes 9, 38, and 42.

The Complainant is also the owner of numerous domain names, consisting of the WHATSAPP trademark, under various generic Top-Level Domains (“gTLDs”) as well as under many country code Top-Level Domains (“ccTLDs”).

The disputed domain name was registered on March 4, 2025.

At the time of the filing of this Complaint the disputed domain name resolved to an active website which was described as “your comprehensive WhatsApp Marketing Platform”.

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.

Notably, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the trademarks in which it has rights.

The Complainant further contends that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent is not using the disputed domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services. The Respondent is not affiliated with the Complainant in any way. The Complainant has not granted any authorization for the Respondent to make any use of its WHATSAPP trademark, in a domain name or otherwise. There is no evidence to suggest that the Respondent is commonly known by the disputed domain name as contemplated by paragraph 4(c)(ii) of the Policy, nor is the Respondent making a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name, without intent for commercial gain to misleadingly divert consumers within the meaning of paragraph 4(c)(iii) of the Policy, since the disputed domain name resolves to a website that offers a paid subscription-based WhatsApp marketing platform called “watsap.io” that purports to provide additional functionality on the Complainant’s WhatsApp platform for prices including USD 10 per month and USD 100 per year.

The Complainant finally contends that the disputed domain name was registered and is being used in bad faith. The Complainant submits that given the Complainant's renown and goodwill worldwide, the Respondent had actual knowledge of the Complainant and its rights at the time of registration of the disputed domain name.

B. Respondent

The Respondent sent an email communication on August 3, 2026, in which the following was stated: "I would like to inform you that I do [...] not wish to contest this complaint. I initially registered this domain for an experimental project that failed and is no longer active.

Therefore, I agree to unconditionally transfer the domain name to the Complainant to resolve this matter amicably and as quickly as possible.

Please let me know if there are any specific steps you need me to take on my end to facilitate the transfer".

6. Discussion and Findings

According to paragraph 15(a) of the Rules, the Panel shall decide the Complaint in accordance with the Policy, the Rules and any rules and principles of law that it deems applicable and on the basis of the statements and documents submitted by the Parties.

In accordance with paragraph 4(a) of the Policy, the Complainant must prove that each of the three following elements is satisfied:

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

Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy states that the burden of proving that all these elements are present lies with the Complainant. At the same time, in accordance with paragraph 14(b) of the Rules, if a party, in the absence of exceptional circumstances, does not comply with any provision of, or requirement under, the Rules, or any request from the Panel, the Panel shall draw such inferences there from as it considers appropriate.

Regarding the settlement proposed by the Registrant

In response to the Center's inquiry on the Parties' interest in the suspension of the proceedings for settlement discussion, the Complainant sent the below email on August 11, 2026: "Further to the Center's email below, please continue with the procedure. The Complainant does not wish to explore settlement at this time and would like a full decision on the merits."

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](#)")¹, section 1.7.

¹ In light of the substantial similarities between the Policy and the UDRP, the Panel will refer to UDRP precedents and the WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("[WIPO Overview 3.1](#)") when relevant. See *Alibaba Group Holding Limited*

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 that the WHATSAPP mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), Section 1.7. The omission of letters “h” and “p” does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the Complainant’s mark and the disputed domain name and is considered by the Panel as typographical variations of the Complainant’s mark, which remains recognizable.

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 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. The Panel notes that the Respondent’s claim of registering the disputed domain name “for an experimental project that failed and is no longer active” is vague and completely unsupported.

The disputed domain name is used for a website purportedly offering, on a commercial basis, an additional functionality of the Complainant’s platform. Such website prominently displays the Complainant’s mark and logo and contains no disclaimer as to the absence of relationship with the Complainant. Such use cannot be regarded as a bona fide offering as it indicates that the Respondent’s intention is to profit from the likelihood of confusion with the Complainant’s mark, and as such, no rights or legitimate interests can be found for the Respondent.

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

C. Registered or 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.

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy sets out a list of non-exhaustive circumstances that may indicate that a domain name was registered and used in bad faith, but other circumstances may be relevant in assessing whether a respondent’s registration and use of a domain name is in bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.2.1.

v. *Rajeev Singh*, WIPO Case No. [DIO2026-0011](#) (“Noting the substantive similarities between the Policy and the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (‘UDRP’), the Panel has referred to prior UDRP cases and the [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), where appropriate”).

Given the circumstances of the case, including the evidence on record of the use of the Complainant's trademark WHATSAPP, and the distinctive nature and reputation of this mark, it is inconceivable to the Panel in the current circumstances that the Respondent registered the disputed domain name without prior knowledge of the Complainant and the Complainant's mark.

The Panel therefore finds that the disputed domain name was registered in bad faith.

The disputed domain name has been used to host a website, which was described as "your comprehensive WhatsApp Marketing Platform" and which inter alia claimed to provide the user with an "Integrated WhatsApp Chat feature". The Panel therefore finds that there can be no doubt that the disputed domain name has been used in bad faith to intentionally attempt "to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to the Respondent's website or other online location, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the Respondent's website". Paragraph 4(b)(iv) of the Policy, and [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.1.4.

Noting the above; that the disputed domain name incorporates a misspelling of the Complainant's distinctive trademark WHATSAPP; that the Respondent suggested transferring the disputed domain name to the Complainant; that the Complainant did not wish to explore the proposed settlement of the matter; and considering all the facts and evidence of the case, the Panel finds that the requirements of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy are also fulfilled in this case.

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, <watsap.io> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Knud Wallberg/

Knud Wallberg

Sole Panelist

Date: September 22, 2026