

## **Ruling keeps ex-USF teacher in jail**

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### **Body**

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Tampa resident Mazen Al-Najjar's request to get out of jail while he fights deportation has been denied on appeal.

In a decision released Wednesday, the Board of Immigration Appeals dismissed Al-Najjar's argument that he is being illegally detained on secret evidence.

MAZEN

Al-Najjar's appeal of his deportation is still pending.

The board's **ruling** means the Palestinian and longtime U.S. resident, jailed for 16 months, will stay there.

It frees him, however, to seek relief in federal district court, since he has exhausted all avenues of relief in the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service system. Federal court judges may consider whether constitutional rights have been violated and other issues outside the jurisdiction of the INS and its judges.

A former University of South Florida **teacher**, Al-Najjar was arrested in May 1997 on an expired visa, then denied bail based on secret evidence alleging he associates with terrorists.

No charges have been filed in the three-year-old investigation. Federal investigators say a USF-affiliated think tank was used by Al-Najjar and others as a front for aiding terrorists.

Al-Najjar is one of about two dozen immigrants nationwide, all of them Arab or Muslim, jailed or accused on secret evidence. Use of secret evidence is unconstitutional and bigoted, say rights groups lobbying for changes.

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