

May 10, 2019

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO
David Weinberg, Washington Director for International Affairs
Erika Moritsugu, Vice President for Government Relations
ADL Washington DC
1100 Connecticut Ave NW
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Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Jonathan Greenblatt, David Weinberg, and Erika Moritsugu:

We urge you to cancel your astonishing May 14th event “celebrating tolerance” with the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates. The UAE is a brutal monarchy with a bloody record of human rights violations, repression at home, and support for anti-democratic forces abroad. The ADL event in question is scheduled for this Tuesday, May 14th, at 2:30 PM, in your offices in Washington DC.

This joint ADL / UAE event shockingly confers human rights legitimacy to a brutal monarchy that bears responsibility for the deaths of thousands. We call on the ADL to cancel this event until the UAE’s rulers end their extraordinary violations of human rights. We also call on the ADL to clearly state your own position on the UAE’s major human rights violations, including those listed below. Lastly, we urge the ADL to disclose whether you have received any funding from the UAE, whether directly or through intermediary accounts.

UAE’s Bloody Record on Human Rights:

The UAE’s bloody record includes killing civilians in Yemen, imprisoning human rights activists, opposing basic labor rights, backing anti-democratic forces in Libya and Sudan, and even reportedly running a campaign of political assassinations. Not only that, but the UAE spends large sums of money to obscure these ugly realities by pushing their propaganda and policy positions here in the United States.

It is stunning that ADL would describe the following record as “celebrating tolerance:”

1. **Slaughter of civilians in Yemen:** The UAE and Saudi Arabia have led a brutal campaign of airstrikes, militia wars, and blockades in Yemen. These actions have killed thousands and fueled famine conditions for millions. A UN-commissioned report predicts 233,000 Yemeni deaths by the end of 2019 in the war between the UAE / Saudi-led coalition and Houthi rebels.¹

2. **Imprisoning reformers at home:** The UAE has imprisoned multiple government critics, giving prominent human rights defenders Dr Nasser bin Ghaith and Ahmed Mansoor both 10 year prison sentences.^{2 3}
3. **Opposing unions:** Migrant workers make up the vast majority of the UAE's private workforce, and they face significant exploitation and abuse. The UAE bans trade unions, denies migrant workers collective bargaining rights, and penalizes striking workers with deportation.⁴
4. **Backing anti-democratic forces:** The UAE is backing the anti-democratic Libyan general Khalifa Haftar in Libya's civil war.⁵ The UAE has also supported continued military rule in Sudan, following public protests that forced the removal of dictator Omar al-Bashir from power.⁶
5. **Conducting political assassinations:** According to a recent prominent news report, the UAE has employed US mercenaries in an assassination campaign against political and religious opponents in Yemen.⁷

Buying influence in the US:

While driving an agenda so hostile to human rights, the UAE has spent significant sums of money in the US to advance its political agenda and obscure its brutality. As documented by the Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative of the Center for International Policy, UAE has provided millions of dollars in funding to major US think tanks.

Between 2014-2018, the UAE funded six of the top 50 U.S. think tanks (Aspen Institute, Atlantic Council, Brookings Institution, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Center for American Progress, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies) to a minimum combined amount of over \$8.6 million. These only represent those think tanks have disclosed funding, which many organizations have declined to do at all, and even then only provide donation thresholds, not specific amounts, meaning these figures could be higher.

For this reason, we urge the ADL to disclose whether you have received any funding from the UAE, whether directly or through intermediary accounts.

It is deeply disturbing to see the Anti-Defamation League align itself with the rulers of the United Arab Emirates, a government that is so incredibly hostile to human rights. We urge you to cancel this event immediately, clearly state your own positions on the UAE's long record of opposition to human rights and freedom, and state whether or not the ADL has received any funding from UAE sources.

We look forward to your reply. We can be reached at (202) 750-5133 or yemencampaign@freedomforward.org.

Sincerely,

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Director
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Salih Booker
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Center for International Policy

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Jehan Hakim
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Isaac Evans-Frantz
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Hala Aldosari
Scholar, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice
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Sources:

¹ "Assessing the impact of war on development in Yemen," Jonathan D. Moyer, David Bohl, Taylor Hanna, Brendan R. Mapes, Mickey Rafa; United Nations Development Programme; Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver; 2019, Page 7, <http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/crisis-response0/assessing-the-impact-of-war-on-development-in-yemen-.html>.

² "UAE: Prominent academic jailed for 10 years over tweets in outrageous blow to freedom of expression," Amnesty International. March 29, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/uae-prominent-academic-jailed-for-10-years-over-tweets-in-outrageous-blow-to-freedom-of-expression/>

³ “UAE: Free Rights Defender Ahmed Mansoor.” Human Rights Watch, April 12, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/12/uae-free-rights-defender-ahmed-mansoor>

⁴ “United Arab Emirates 2017/2018,” Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/united-arab-emirates/report-united-arab-emirates/>

⁵ “Trump Has a New Favorite Strongman in Khalifa Haftar,” Samer Al-Atrush, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, May 3, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-03/trump-backed-libyan-strongman-haftar-holds-out-for-regime-change>

⁶ “UAE backs Sudan's transitional military ruler,” *The National*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/africa/uae-backs-sudan-s-transitional-military-ruler-1.848780>

⁷ “A Middle East Monarchy Hired American Ex-Soldiers To Kill Its Political Enemies. This Could Be The Future Of War.” Aram Roston, *BuzzFeed News*, October 16, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/aramroston/mercenaries-assassination-us-yemen-uae-spear-golan-dahlan>