

July 23, 2019

Patrick Galbraith, President & Chairman of the Board
Gordon Smith, Executive Director & CEO
US Tennis Association
70 West Red Oak Lane
White Plains, New York 10604

Dear Mr. Galbraith and Mr. Smith,

On behalf of our millions of members across the US and worldwide, we write to urge the US Tennis Association to end its affiliation with the brutal monarchy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). We call on the USTA to cancel the UAE monarchy's sponsorship of the US Open via the Emirates airline brand.

The UAE monarchy has a long record of human rights violations, including repression at home, support for anti-democratic forces abroad, and war crimes in Yemen. Emirates is a wholly owned airline of the UAE monarchy, via the UAE's Investment Corporation of Dubai. The chairman of this investment fund is the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.¹

It is deeply unfortunate that US tennis is being used as a public relations tool by a monarchy that is responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians in Yemen. The UAE's human rights record is so bad that the US House of Representatives just voted to cut off US military support in response to the UAE and Saudi Arabia's mass slaughter in Yemen.² Not only is the UAE driving war and suffering in the Middle East, but many of the monarchy's investments derive directly from UAE fossil fuel exports that are accelerating global climate change.

The USTA's US Open website prominently lists the UAE's Emirates airline as an official sponsor.³ In addition, Emirates' own website lists the US Open series as one of its main tennis sponsorships.⁴ By accepting the UAE's Emirates airline as a sponsor of the US Open, the USTA is enabling a destructive family dictatorship to promote its interests in the US when that monarchy should instead be facing accountability for its human rights crimes.

UAE's Bloody Record on Human Rights:

The UAE's bloody record includes killing thousands of 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.

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.⁵ Today, even as the UAE claims that it is withdrawing from Yemen, the monarchy reportedly maintains militias in the tens of thousands across the war-torn country.

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.^{6 7}

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.⁸

4. Backing anti-democratic forces:

The UAE has backed the anti-democratic Libyan general Khalifa Haftar in Libya's civil war.⁹ The UAE has also supported military leaders in Sudan who violently attacked the democracy activists who forced the removal of dictator Omar al-Bashir from power.¹⁰

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.¹¹

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. Sponsoring the US Open is one example of this, but UAE-driven propaganda in the US goes much further. 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 in the monarchy's drive to influence US politics and foreign policy.¹²

No major sporting event should bear the name of the UAE monarchy's brands until the rulers of UAE fully embrace human rights and are held accountable for their actions. We urge the US

Tennis Association to end its affiliation with the UAE monarchy and drop Emirates airline as a sponsor of the US Open.

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

Sincerely,

Sunjeev Bery
Director
Freedom Forward

Will Davies
Campaigner
Avaaz

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Jodie Evans, Co-Founder
Medea Benjamin, Co-Founder
CODEPINK

David Segal
Executive Director
Demand Progress Education Fund

Hassan El-Tayyab
Co-Director
Just Foreign Policy

Shireen Al-Adeimi
Assistant Professor of Education
Michigan State University

Paul Kawika Martin
Senior Director, Policy and Political Affairs
Peace Action

Jehan Hakim
Chair
Yemeni Alliance Committee

Isaac Evans-Frantz

Director
Action Corps

Grace Fernandes
Student Director
STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities

Lola Jusidman
Cofounder
NYU for Yemen

Sources:

¹ "Investment Corporation of Dubai," <https://www.icd.gov.ae/transportation/> and <https://www.icd.gov.ae/about-icd/board-of-directors/>.

² "House Votes to Block Arms Sales to Gulf Nations, Setting Up Trump's Third Veto," Catie Edmondson, July 17, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/17/us/politics/saudi-arms-vote.html>.

³ "US Open," https://www.usopen.org/en_US/about/sponsors.html.

⁴ "Tennis," <https://www.emirates.com/us/english/about-us/sponsorships/tennis/>.

⁵ "Assessing the impact of war on development in Yemen," Jonathan D. Moyer, David Bohl, Taylor Hanna, Brendan R. Mapes, Mickey Raza; United Nations Development Programme; Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver; 2019, p 7, <http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/crisis-response0/assessing-the-impact-of-war-on-development-in-yemen-.html>.

⁶ "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/>

⁷ "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>

⁸ "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/>

⁹ “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>

¹⁰ “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>

¹¹ “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>

¹² “US Foreign Policy Is for Sale,” Ben Freeman, *The Nation*, February 21, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/us-foreign-policy-sale-think-tanks/>.