



One Hundred and Nineteenth Congress
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

April 27, 2026

Adam Silver, Commissioner
National Basketball Association
645 5TH Avenue
New York, NY

Dear Commissioner Silver,

We are writing as Co-Chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to ask that the National Basketball Association take a position of moral leadership and end its association with the state-owned Emirates airline in response to the United Arab Emirates's (UAE) role in abetting genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing in Sudan by arming one faction in that country's civil war.

Sudan is not just another country facing turmoil. President Trump said that Sudan "has become the most violent place on earth and ... the single biggest Humanitarian Crisis."¹ The scale of suffering, hunger and displacement in Sudan is massive.

As determined by the U.S. government,² the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) are responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and the RSF is responsible for genocide. While other countries also provide arms and other support to the warring parties, the UAE's direct arming of the genocidal RSF has been particularly egregious. Multiple independent reports, U.S. intelligence reports, and Members of Congress have confirmed that the UAE has been supplying weapons to the RSF.³ The consequences of this were seen most recently in El Fasher, where tens of thousands of people are believed to have been killed amid widespread sexual and ethnically targeted violence.⁴

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/trump-says-he-will-work-sudan-saudis-request-2025-11-19/>

² <https://2021-2025.state.gov/genocide-determination-in-sudan-and-imposing-accountability-measures/>

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/sudan-advanced-chinese-weaponry-provided-by-uae-identified-in-breach-of-arms-embargo-new-investigation/>; <https://www.wsj.com/world/how-u-a-e-arms-bolstered-a-sudanese-militia-accused-of-genocide-781b9803>; <https://www.vanhollen.senate.gov/news/press-releases/van-hollen-jacobs-confirm-uae-providing-weapons-to-rsf-in-sudan-in-contradiction-to-its-assurances-to-us>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/meeting-summaries/2025/11/human-rights-council-calls-urgent-inquiry-recent-alleged-violations?sub-site=HRC>

Given this context, the fact that the NBA retains a commercial branding relationship with Emirates airline, owned by the government of the UAE, is very troubling. This association, which includes holding pre-season games in Abu Dhabi and sponsorship of the Emirates NBA Cup, serves to give the UAE government public relations cover to obscure and whitewash its role in fueling the genocide and crimes against humanity in Sudan.

The NBA has shown a public commitment to social justice and has done much good through its NBA Africa, NBA Cares and youth programs. We do not believe that the NBA's branding relationship with the UAE is consistent with these efforts, and that it threatens to overshadow them. We note calls by numerous Sudanese, human rights, and humanitarian groups for the NBA to end its Emirates branding partnership.⁵

We urge you to reconsider your partnership with the UAE and instead use the NBA's offices to express concern to the UAE about its material support for the RSF and to use the league's public platform to express solidarity with the Sudanese people. Further, we urge that the NBA align its global business practices with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.⁶

We respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss this matter. Thank you for your attention to our request.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Co-Chair, TLHRC



Christopher H. Smith
Co-Chair, TLHRC

⁵ [Human Rights Groups Urge NBA to End Future Emirates NBA Cup Sponsorship Over UAE's Role in Sudan Atrocities - Refugees International](https://www.refugeesinternational.org/news/2022/05/24/human-rights-groups-urge-nba-to-end-future-emirates-nba-cup-sponsorship-over-uae-s-role-in-sudan-atrocities)

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/reference-publications/guiding-principles-business-and-human-rights>