



One Hundred and Nineteenth Congress
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

April 27, 2026

Roger Goodell, Commissioner
National Football League
345 Park Avenue,
New York, NY 10154.

Dear Commissioner Goodell,

We are writing as Co-Chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to ask that the National Football League take a position of moral leadership and end its marketing, fan engagement, international commercial rights, and foreseeable seasonal game presence in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), in response to the UAE government's role in abetting genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing in Sudan by arming one faction in that country's civil war.¹

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."² The scale of suffering, hunger and displacement in Sudan is massive.

As determined by the U.S. government,³ 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.⁴ The consequences of this were

¹ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2025/03/31/nfl-international-games-dubai-abu-dhabi/82742107007/>

² <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/trump-says-he-will-work-sudan-saudis-request-2025-11-19/>

³ <https://2021-2025.state.gov/genocide-determination-in-sudan-and-imposing-accountability-measures/>

⁴ <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>

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.⁵

Given this context, it is deeply troubling that the National Football League is partnering with a UAE-based company to expand its presence in the country, by granting the San Francisco 49ers, Los Angeles Rams, and Washington Commanders international marketing rights in the UAE, and even potentially considering the staging of regular-season games there. This partnership serves to give the UAE government public relations cover to obscure and sportswash its role in fueling the genocide and crimes against humanity in Sudan.

The NFL has shown a public commitment to social justice and has done much good through its philanthropic efforts through the NFL Foundation and various initiatives aimed at improving communities, supporting youth, and promoting social justice. We do not believe that the NFL's international marketing rights with the UAE are consistent with these efforts, and that it threatens to overshadow them.

We urge you to reconsider your partnership with the UAE and instead use the NFL'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 NFL 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 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/meeting-summaries/2025/11/human-rights-council-calls-urgent-inquiry-recent-alleged-violations?sub-site=HRC>

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