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David Lappartient, President
Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)
Allée Ferdi Kübler 12
1860 Aigle
Switzerland

25 June 2026

Dear President Lappartient,

Ahead of the forthcoming Tour de France, we are writing to request that the UCI immediately suspend the license of UAE Team Emirates XRG due to the involvement of the government of the United Arab Emirates in the ongoing genocide in Sudan. We would also request that the UCI conduct an immediate review of its licensing policy to take account of the dangers that state-linked teams pose to the reputation of the sport.

UAE Team Emirates is under the financial and political control of the UAE state. The team has stated that it “has the aim of representing an entire nation, the UAE”, and that it represents “a symbol of sporting success for the UAE”. It is financed and branded by state-owned companies in the United Arab Emirates. The team's principal sponsors are two state-controlled entities. Emirates airline is owned by the government of the emirate of Dubai, and XRG is the investment wing of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, which is owned by the government of the emirate of Abu Dhabi. Two state-linked institutions also serve as prominent sponsors of the team - First Abu Dhabi Bank, and E&, an Emirati telecommunications company. When Team UAE was set up in 2017, one of its founding sponsors was the UAE military contractor, International Golden Group, which a UN Panel of Experts had identified four years previously as having provided weapons to armed groups in Libya in violation of a United Nations arms embargo. Although it does not appear that International Golden Group is currently a sponsor of Team UAE, its logo featured on Team UAE jerseys as late as 2021, and it was identified in a 2025 investigation by France 24 as having been involved in diverting weapons to Sudan, also in violation of a United Nations arms embargo.

The France 24 investigation into the role of the founding sponsors of Team UAE in Sudan forms one part of what is now irrefutable evidence that the UAE government, which controls Team UAE, is the primary financial backer and arms supplier to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) who are committing genocide in Sudan, leading to what the United Nations has called “the world’s largest displacement and worst humanitarian crisis”.

The UN has accused the RSF of unleashing “a wave of intense violence ... shocking in its scale and brutality” in acts which show “the hallmark of genocide” during its takeover of the city of El-Fasher in Sudan last year. A report published by Human Rights Watch in May 2026 found that Colombian private military contractors have been deployed in Sudan to fight for the RSF, with apparent support from the UAE’s government. Despite denials by the UAE government of its association with the RSF, there is an abundance of evidence from multiple credible sources, including the UN Panel of Experts on the Sudan, Amnesty International, the U.S. intelligence community, as well as reporting by the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and Reuters. As outlined in a complaint that FairSquare filed with the UK government in April 2026, there is a wealth of credible evidence that UAE has used numerous routes to provide the RSF with weapons and supplies.

The UAE’s actions in this regard have prolonged and exacerbated the conflict in Sudan in which more than 150,000 people have been killed, with documented indiscriminate attacks on civilians, and more than 30 million people left in need of humanitarian aid. Both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF have been accused of war crimes and attacks on civilians, killing an estimated 30,000 to 100,000 people in and around El Fasher last year in a matter of weeks, as families were massacred and women raped. Nathaniel Raymond, Executive Director of the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab, estimates that between 30,000 and 100,000 people may have been killed in six weeks, with 60,000 as a plausible midpoint - a pace of killing that Raymond said would be unrivaled since the Rwanda genocide of 1994.

“We want to eliminate anything black from Darfur,” RSF fighters declared, according to witnesses interviewed by a UN independent fact-finding mission. “If we find Zaghawa [a non-Arab ethnic group in Darfur], we will kill them all.” The RSF continues to operate with impunity and there is a clear danger of further escalation and attacks. On 20 June, the UN Security Council warned of the risk of further and imminent mass atrocities by the RSF in El Obeid, following reports of substantial military reinforcements in that area.

It is clear that the team and its participation in Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) events acts as a prominent vehicle for the international branding and promotion of the UAE. The UAE has used its financial strength to create the best-resourced and most successful team in world cycling. The team has been ranked number one in the UCI World Tour since 2023 and Tadej Pogacar has won the Tour de France five times, the Giro d’Italia once, in addition to regularly

winning one-day 'classics'. After Pogacar's victory in the 2025 Tour de France in Paris, he and his UAE team mates, all emblazoned in UAE kit, locked arms and chanted "UAE! UAE!"

Cycling's most prominent and celebrated races have become a very public platform that the UAE state is using to project a positive image of the UAE, which stands in marked contrast to the violence and repression that underpins its power. The UCI has a responsibility to respect human rights throughout all its operations. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights sets out these responsibilities, including the expectation that businesses will adopt specific policies and conduct due diligence to identify any risks of contributing to human rights harm. Such harm may include helping a country's reputation in a way that helps distract from its human rights abuses.

The UAE's appalling domestic human rights record, where activists and dissidents including Ahmed Mansoor, Loujain Al-Hathloul, and Abdulrahman al-Qaradawi have felt the full force of the UAE's repression ought to have been a cause for concern to the UCI long before now, but its support for the RSF and the scale and gravity of the violence unleashed calls for stern action, in the form of an immediate suspension of its license until it cuts off support to the RSF.

We also call on the UCI to conduct an immediate review of its licensing policies. The UCI's code of ethics acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the integrity and reputation of cycling throughout the world and its "duty of neutrality" in their dealings with governments. In this context, the participation of teams established, funded, or promoted by governments facing persistent allegations of serious human rights violations raises questions about the processes undertaken by the UCI in the granting of licenses. When Team UAE was instituted in 2017, it should not have escaped the attention of the UCI that one of the team's three sponsors had been cited by a UN Panel of Experts in 2013 as having funneled weapons to armed groups credibly accused of committing war crimes in Libya.

Moreover, Team UAE is not the only state-owned team with links to serious human rights abuses that the UCI has granted a license. Team Bahrain Victorious is also set to compete at the upcoming Tour De France and has direct links to the government of Bahrain, which since 2011 has clamped down on dissent, arresting opposition leaders, dissolving opposition political parties and effectively ending freedom of expression within the country. In this regard we would note that the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy wrote to the UCI in 2019 urging the UCI to disclose the findings of the ethical review conducted into the team and to consider human rights concerns in any future renewal. The UCI responded stating that "the question of whether the government of Bahrain mistreats its citizens and its athletes in particular, is clearly beyond the jurisdiction of our Commission". The controversy surrounding the Israel team at the 2025 Vuelta is evidence, should any be required, of the dangers of allowing state-owned teams to participate in UCI events.

We would be happy to discuss any of the issues addressed in this letter with UCI representatives either by telephone or in person.

We look forward to your response.

FairSquare
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