

October 20, 2023

Adam Silver
Commissioner
National Basketball Association
Olympic Tower, 645 Fifth Avenue
New York
NY 10022
By email: asilver@nba.com
Cc: rbuchanan@nba.com

Re: The National Basketball Association and Qatar

Dear Commissioner Silver:

On behalf of the Counter Extremism Project¹ (“CEP”), I am writing to urge your rejection of the reported 5% purchase by the Qatari Investment Authority (“QIA”) in Monumental Sports & Entertainment, the owner of the D.C.-based Washington Wizards NBA franchise. Notwithstanding rule changes implemented in November 2022 permitting sovereign wealth funds to purchase “passive, non-controlling, minority” stakes in NBA franchises, we understand that the NBA is currently in the process of due diligence requiring “significant vetting”² before final approval. For the reasons explained below, I strongly encourage you to reject the State of Qatar’s effort to “sportswash” its long and dark history of promoting extremism, funding terrorism, and providing luxury accommodations to terrorist leaders—particularly now that some of those terrorist leaders on Qatar’s payroll have orchestrated the murder of at least 30 Americans and taken hostage at least another 20 Americans.

The State of Qatar is the long-time host to the top leaders of the U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (“FTO”) Hamas, which recently surpassed ISIS in its barbarity on October 7. During a single day, more than 1,000 Hamas terrorists perpetrated an atrocity of inconceivable savagery, butchering, burning and shooting to death 1,400 people in villages and Kibbutzim across southern Israel. Whole families, including elderly grandparents and infants, were locked inside houses and immolated. Hundreds of teenagers and young people in attendance at an open-air music festival were slaughtered en-masse, many at point-blank range, others simply mown down in hails of machine-gun fire. As dead friends lay strewn around them, Hamas terrorists proceeded to rape teenage girls repeatedly. President Biden has attested to instances of decapitated babies still wearing blood-stained diapers. Today, Israeli first responders have provided horrifying

¹ CEP is a bi-partisan, non-profit international policy organization formed in 2014 to confront the growing threat from extremist groups and extremist ideology. <https://www.counterextremism.com/>

² ESPN, “[The Hoop Collective: Sovereign wealth funds signal new era in NBA ownership?](#)” December 6, 2022.

accounts of the dismemberment and eye-gouging of live infants in front of their parents. A full accounting of the slaughter will take months if not years to finalize.

Among the dozens of nationalities caught up in the orgy of violence, thirty Americans are dead. At this very moment, two weeks later, Hamas is holding at least 201 hostages and threatening their executions, including babies as young as four months old, autistic children, and Holocaust survivors, inside the Hamas-governed Gaza territory. While Hamas has apparently just released two hostages, it is telling that the Hamas spokesman reportedly gave credit to Qatar for their release. Rather than absolve Qatar, this proves that the nation harboring and bankrolling Hamas leaders has the power to force the release of hostages—yet it took 13 days for fewer than 1% of the hostages taken by Hamas to be released.³

While Qatar-sponsored Hamas holds at least 20 of our American brothers, sisters and children hostage in Gazan dens,⁴ the NBA conducts due diligence on Qatar's sovereign wealth fund to determine its suitability as an investor in a major sports franchise. No serious due diligence process would find the State of Qatar and its sovereign wealth fund an acceptable investor and it is inconceivable that the NBA would authorize this investment.

Qatar has played a major role in the October 7 brutality by hosting and funding the very same Hamas leaders responsible for its formulation. But even in the days following the horror, Qatar has neither accepted any responsibility, provided even the most minor censure of Hamas, nor suspended its platforming of Hamas propagandizing and incitement from Qatar:

- *On October 7*, mere hours after whole families had been slaughtered, Qatar's foreign ministry claimed to "hold Israel solely responsible for the ongoing escalation [i.e. the massacre of Israeli women and children by Hamas] due to its ongoing violations."⁵
- *On October 11*, the Qatar-based Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, ordered his followers around the world to ramp up violence and destruction directed against Jews and Israel – in a televised address proudly aired by Qatar propaganda vehicle, Al-Jazeera.⁶
- *On October 12*, Haniyeh's call was echoed October 12 fellow Hamas leader—and Qatar resident—Khaled Meshaal, who demanded a "Day of Rage" for October 13.⁷
- *On October 14*, in Doha, Haniyeh met with the Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, another major Hamas patron, who congratulated Haniyeh for executing its despicable act.⁸

³ Reuters, "[Hamas says it releases two US hostages 'for humanitarian reasons' after Qatari efforts](#)," October 20, 2023.

⁴ Reuters, "[Hamas hostages: what we know so far](#)," October 19, 2023.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Qatar, "[Qatar Expresses Concern over the Developments in Gaza Strip and Calls for De-escalation](#)," October 7, 2023.

⁶, "Fo

⁷ Daily Mail, "[Former Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal calls for day of jihad on Friday the 13th, and tells Muslims to 'take to the streets' in protest against Israel](#)," October 12, 2023.

⁸ Reuters, "[Iran warns of 'far-reaching consequences' if Israel not stopped](#)," October 14, 2023.

- *On October 16*, the Qatari Prime Minister stated in a press briefing that Qatar would not be closing Hamas’ political office, nor detaining any senior Hamas figures.
- *On October 19*, while in Qatar, Meshaal flatly and repeatedly refused to acknowledge any harm inflicted upon Israeli civilians in a TV interview with Al-Arabiya and referred to the massacre as “an ingenious moment.”⁹

To reiterate: Qatar and the Al Thani Royal Family have played host to Hamas leadership for many years. Haniyeh,¹⁰ the chairman of Hamas’ Political Bureau and a U.S. designated Specially Designated Global Terrorist (“SDGT”), his predecessor Khaled Meshaal,¹¹ also an SDGT, and other Hamas leadership all lead luxuriantly appointed lifestyles in five-star accommodation in Doha, Qatar. Ali al-Qaradaghi, residing in Qatar, is the highest religious authority of Hamas, providing the organization with an alleged pretext (in the form of Fatwa) for their terror acts. He replaced the late Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a long-time resident of Qatar—and former longtime television personality on Qatar-owned *Al Jazeera*—who encouraged and advocated for all their atrocities and provided religious sanction to suicide attacks. Haniyeh is regularly hailed by Qatari leaders, including the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. In return, Haniyeh offers his constant gratitude to Qatar for its “official and popular support.”



Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh (L) with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha, Qatar, July 2017 (Al-Jazeera)

In addition to Haniyeh and Meshaal, Qatar is harboring multiple other sanction-designated or wanted individuals, including U.N-sanctioned Taliban operatives, and several al-Qaeda financiers. Although such individuals are sanctioned by the United States or United Nations, or are the subject of INTERPOL arrest warrants, they are able to live freely – and in most cases, in luxury – within Qatar.

⁹ Jerusalem Post, “[‘ Hamas is being compared to ISIS,’ former Hamas chief challenged by Arab news host,](#)” October 20, 2023.

¹⁰ Counter Extremism Project, “[Ismail Haniyeh](#)”

¹¹ Counter Extremism Project, “[Khaled Meshaal](#)”

Qatar's patronage for Hamas not only extends to providing opulent accommodations and unswerving public support. Even before this heinous event, Qatar has stained its reputation through a long history of vast financial and material support for terrorism and internationally designated terrorists.¹² Qatar's financial support of Hamas dates back to at least 2008, when Doha pledged \$250 million to Hamas one year after the terror group seized control of the Gaza Strip.¹³ In 2012, Qatar's then-emir Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani pledged more than \$400 million to Hamas for infrastructure projects.¹⁴ In July 2016, the Qatari government announced that it would give \$30 million to Hamas in order to help pay the salaries of Gazan public sector workers.¹⁵ The following month, Hamas's then-deputy leader Haniyeh said that Qatar's donations would also go toward paying Hamas's "military personnel." Today, and since at least 2018, Qatar funds Hamas to the tune of between \$360 million to \$480 million each year.¹⁶



Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (R) with Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh (C), in Doha, Qatar, May, 2021 (Middle East Monitor)

CEP has been calling upon Qatar to end its support to Hamas since July 2017, in both direct correspondence and multiple public campaigns, conveying the precise same concerns as

¹² The Qatari government has long provided critical support to a wide array of terrorist and extremist groups including not only Hamas but also al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula ("AQAP"), the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Taliban – including direct money loans, ransom payments, and supplies transfers. Former Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen described Qatar as a "permissive terrorist financing environment" that enables "private fundraising networks" to operate within its borders. According to Cohen, Qatar "has for many years openly financed Hamas, a group that continues to undermine regional stability. Press reports indicate that the Qatari government is also supporting extremist groups operating in Syria."

¹³ Al Monitor, "[Hamas Ties to Qatar Have Cost](#)," April 22, 2013.

¹⁴ New York Times, "[Qatar's Emir Visits Gaza, Pledging \\$400 million to Hamas](#)," October 23, 2012.

¹⁵ Reuters, "[Qatar says gives \\$30 million to pay Gaza public sector workers](#)," July 22, 2016; Times of Israel, "[Haniyeh seeks to pay Hamas 'military personnel' with Qatar's money](#)," August 2, 2016.

¹⁶ Associated Press, "[Qatar pledges \\$360 million in aid to Hamas-ruled Gaza](#)," January 31, 2021; Haaretz, "[Qatar is Hamas' Patron. Its Moderate Rebranding is a Dangerous Delusion](#)," May 9, 2022.

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delineated herein. There is, as such, simply no excuse for Qatar to continue along this path, while the successors to Osama bin-Laden walk freely in their midst. The QIA, a prospective investor in the NBA, is effectively the personal fund of the al-Thani family, who have in turn disbursed billions to the perpetrators of the October 7 outrage. Qatar's key role must be exposed and roundly denounced.

Naturally, Qatar has engaged in a lavishly-funded campaign to whitewash its crimes, most notably through huge investments in flagship U.S. properties, enterprises and now, sports franchises – especially and not coincidentally in our nation's capital. But Qatar's unabashed attempts to co-opt and/or suborn U.S. interests through such investing in our country's most cherished sporting institutions should neither mask nor exonerate its gross misconduct at home.

At this juncture, we would additionally direct you to CEP's October 16 statement regarding its launch of a global campaign for a Qatar asset freeze:¹⁷

Given Qatar's patronage of Hamas, Qatar's responsibility for surrendering Hamas leadership to relevant authorities and ensuring the immediate release of the hostages is absolute. Qatar's responsibility for the suffering of thousands of victims and their loved ones is unmistakable and absolute. We will unrelentingly work toward seizing Qatar's international assets.

Commissioner: you have personally and within the past twelve months taken a commendably strong public stance against antisemitism.¹⁸ You now have an historic opportunity to put those fine words into globally significant action: few decisions could be more meaningful and impactful at this precise moment in time. Your decision to bar the QIA's investment would send a uniquely powerful message that the NBA stands squarely with the kidnapped hostages and the civilized world over the forces of barbarism.

To be clear: Qatar can immediately relieve our calls for global ostracization and economic isolation by taking the following steps: arrest Hamas leaders including Haniyeh resident in Qatar for remand into U.S. or Israeli custody; shutter the Qatar-based Hamas political office; and use the billions of dollars disbursed by Qatar to ensure the immediate release of every single hostage unharmed. Short of these actions, Qatar and the QIA are simply not suitable counterparties for any responsible business, much less a beloved national institution.

Please let us hear from you at your earliest opportunity. Thank you for your kind attention.

Very truly yours,



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

¹⁷ Counter Extremism Project, "[CEP LAUNCHES GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR QATAR ASSET FREEZE](#)," October 16, 2023.

¹⁸NBC, "[NBA Commissioner Adam Silver speaks out against Kyrie Irving's antisemitic posts](#)," November 3, 2022.