



Date : 08/10/2021

## **AOHR UK condemns Saudi Arabia's takeover of Newcastle United**

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK ([AOHR UK](#)) condemns the takeover of [Newcastle United](#) football club by a consortium led by the Saudi Arabian government.

Saudi Arabia has one of the most brutal records on human rights in the world - from murdering dissidents to committing war crimes in [Yemen](#) - and its £300 million takeover of Newcastle United is just the latest in its attempts to "sportswash" its image globally.

Saudi Arabia now owns 80% of the prestigious club. The Premier League has insisted that the deal does not mean that the Saudi government would run the day-to-day activities of Newcastle United - but that is not the issue. The Saudi regime wants to appear to be a normal, modern state - and owning an English team is excellent PR, helping to avert attention away from its brutality.

There have also been claims that as the deal was with the Saudi public investment fund (PIF), not de facto ruler crown prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the Saudi government is somehow distant from the deal. This is also untrue. PIF is absolutely under the control of the absolute dictatorship led by MBS.

PIF provided the planes that took the assassins of Washington Post journalist [Jamal Khashoggi](#) to the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, where they went on to murder him on 02 October 2018.

PIF is also behind [Neom](#), the \$500 billion megacity vanity project being built in Saudi Arabia, which is displacing thousands of members of [the Huwaitat community](#), detaining and in at least one case murdering those who dared to voice opposition to the project.



There is no democracy in Saudi Arabia, and anyone who disagrees with MBS - or indeed does not agree forcefully enough - is liable to be detained, [tortured](#) or even executed.

This is not the first time the regime has attempted to “sportswash” its image. When the Royal Spanish Football Federation allowed Real Madrid, Barcelona and others to compete in matches in Saudi Arabia, its broadcasts were boycotted by Spanish television on the grounds of the Gulf state’s appalling [human rights record](#).

And golfing legend Tiger Woods refused to be a part of the Saudi International tournament, having been offered \$3 million to attend, while fellow golfer Rory McIlroy said “morality” was one of the reasons he also refused to take part.

AOHR UK calls on Newcastle United players and supporters to follow these brave examples and stand up for human rights and against one of the most brutal dictatorships in the world.

AOHR UK also calls on the UK’s Premier League to disallow this takeover - surely the body must understand how their implicit endorsement of the Saudi regime negatively affects their image.

Football - the “beautiful game” as it is known in our country - is about ordinary people coming together to celebrate their community and enjoy sports. With this Saudi takeover of Newcastle United, money from tickets, merchandise and broadcasting rights will find its way into the decidedly ugly pockets of the Saudi regime, where it will be spent on murder, [torture](#) and oppression.

AOHR UK calls on all football fans - of whatever colour stripes - to keep our game beautiful and fight to kick Saudi Arabia out of football.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)