

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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January 2, 2020

Jean-Etienne Amaury
Chairman at Amaury Sport Organisation
42, Quai du Point-du-Jour
Boulogne-Billancourt, Île-de-France 92100, FR

Re: Amaury Sport Organisation and the Adoption of a Human Rights Policy

Dear Mr. Amaury,

We are writing to ask Amaury Sport Organisation (A.S.O) to adopt a human rights policy to abide by existing international human rights norms and standards. As an organization that manages ninety mega sporting events in twenty-five countries, such as the Tour de France and the Dakar Rally, it is essential that these events do not contribute to human rights abuses.

In April 2019, A.S.O signed a five-year deal with Saudi Arabia to host the Dakar Rally, which will begin on January 5, 2020. As the rally nears, the implementation of human rights in A.S.O's practices is even more urgent.

Over the past two decades, the signatory organizations have [documented](#) the increasingly repressive rights climate in Saudi Arabia. Since Mohammed bin Salman was appointed Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in June 2017, there have been new, ongoing, arbitrary and [abusive practices](#) by Saudi authorities. These practices have targeted dissidents and activists, and there has been a total lack of accountability for abuses, including for alleged torture of detainees at unofficial places of detention such as the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh, or for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

In 2019, the world's top human rights body, the United Nations Human Rights Council, has unprecedentedly scrutinized Saudi Arabia's record. In March, Iceland, on behalf of 36 States, delivered the first-ever joint [statement](#) on Saudi Arabia which, *inter alia*, called for the release of ten named women's rights activists from detention and accountability for the extrajudicial killing of Jamal Khashoggi. In June, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Ms. Agnes Callamard, [presented](#) the conclusions of her investigation into Khashoggi's killing, which found the State of Saudi

Arabia responsible and highlighted that the killing reflected a broader crackdown against defenders, journalists, and dissenters, as well as a culture of impunity at the highest levels. In September, Australia delivered another joint [statement](#) that set out a list of measures that the Saudi government should take to improve its human rights record.

Currently, A.S.O has over 10,000 journalists and 1,500 media broadcasters covering the organization's sporting events. For the last three years, the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) and [Reporters Without Borders](#) have documented how Saudi Arabia has become an increasingly oppressive environment for journalists – and international sports journalists are not exempt.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia [arrested](#) the country's most prominent women's rights advocates, and in March 2019 the authorities referred them to court for trial for their peaceful human rights [activities](#), including calling for an end to Saudi Arabia's discriminatory [male guardianship system](#) and [driving ban](#). Though some have been released pending the outcome of their trials, four women's rights defenders, including Loujain al-Hathloul, Samar Badawi, Nassima al-Sadah, and Nouf Abdulaziz, remain behind bars.

Although A.S.O [states](#) that the organization “involves constantly developing new environmentally friendly and community-minded solutions,” a human rights policy that enshrines the [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) (“Guiding Principles”) will help A.S.O increase transparency and accountability, and respond to such abuses.

The implementation of human rights into your organization could affect millions of people in the A.S.O sports and media ecosystem – from the youngest cyclist, to female rally racers, to LGBT+ fans watching the Tour Voile, and journalists. The ability of civil society to operate where A.S.O holds events is essential to upholding your company's credibility and avoiding any contribution or linkage to human rights violations.

In addition, adopting a human rights policy is consistent with the actions of other sports organizations, including the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In 2017, FIFA adopted a [Human Rights Policy](#) to combat worker abuses, discrimination, and inequality. That same year, FIFA announced the establishment of an [independent Human Rights Advisory Board](#) to help strengthen the Federation's efforts to ensure respect for human rights. Similarly, in 2018, the IOC set up an [Advisory Committee on Human Rights](#), which is currently chaired by Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In light of Saudi human rights abuses listed above, and your [five-year contract with Saudi Arabia](#) to host the Dakar Rally, we urge A.S.O to enshrine human rights in your

global operations. With the Dakar Rally launching in January – along with the upcoming Saudi cycling tour in February and the Ladies European Tour in March – we hope you agree now is the time to adopt a human rights policy, which is wholly in line with the Guiding Principles and emerging global business standards.

Yours sincerely,

1. ACAT-France (Action by Christians against Torture)
2. ALQST
3. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
4. ARTICLE 19
5. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
6. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
7. European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights
8. Front Line Defenders
9. Human Rights Watch (HRW)
10. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
11. MENA Rights Group
12. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
13. Transparency International Germany