



International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
Unión internacional de trabajadores de la alimentación, agrícolas, hoteles, restaurantes, tabaco y afines
Union internationale des travailleurs de l'alimentation, de l'agriculture, de l'hôtellerie-restauration, du tabac et des branches connexes
Internationale Union der Lebensmittel-, Landwirtschafts-, Hotel-, Restaurant-, Café-, und Genussmittelarbeiter-Gewerkschaften
Internationella unionen för livsmedels-, njutningsmedels- och lantarbetareförbund samt förbund inom hotell- och restaurangbranschen

Rampe du pont-Rouge 8

CH-1213 Geneva/Petit-Lancy Switzerland

E-mail: iuf@iuf.org

Tel (+41) 22 793 22 33

Fax (+41) 22 793 22 38

President
Mark Lauritsen

General Secretary
Sue Longley

J.W. Marriott, Jr.
Executive Chairman
and Chairman of
the Board
Marriott International
10400 Fernwood Road
Bethesda, MD 20817

sl/mf/0064

Geneva, July 17, 2018

CONCERNS: Use of the Ritz Carlton and Courtyard, Diplomatic Quarter as temporary detention centers

Dear Mr. Marriott,

We were disturbed to read reports that last November two of your hotels in Riyadh Saudi Arabia, the Ritz Carlton and Courtyard, Diplomatic Quarter, had been turned into temporary detention centers where some detainees were allegedly tortured and/or held against their will until they agreed to forfeit billions of dollars worth of investments over to authorities.

There is much about this episode that remains shrouded in mystery, including the extent to which Marriott officials were aware of what was happening inside the hotels, the extent to which the company protested or complained about the extra-legal proceedings taking place within its properties, and whether any hotel employees witnessed the detentions or the alleged torture. Similarly, it is not clear whether Marriott's apparent failure to publicly condemn the extra-legal detentions was in any way related to Marriott's announcement in February, shortly after the hotels reopened for business, that the company was embarking on a \$2 billion expansion that would nearly double the number of hotel rooms it operates in Saudi Arabia.¹

The IUF is the global trade union federation representing workers in agriculture, food, tobacco, hotels, restaurants and catering. We have 414 affiliated trade unions in 128 countries. On behalf of the millions of hospitality workers that we represent, we call on Marriott to shed what light it can on this episode and inform us of what steps, if any, have been taken to help any workers traumatized by these events or to protect them from further exposure to traumatic violence.

¹ Marwa Rashad, "Marriott to attract \$2 billion investment in Saudi over four years: executive," *Reuters*, 2/26/2018.

From press accounts we understand that:

- Beginning on Nov. 4, 2017, and continuing for at least three months, 380 wealthy businessmen, including some members of the Saudi Royal family or their staff,² were rounded up and detained at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Riyadh.
- Guests staying at the hotel were awakened and relocated to other nearby hotels.³
- In the initial days of the detention, according to the *New York Times*, at least 17 people “were hospitalized for physical abuse and one later died in custody.” Although Saudi officials have denied these allegations, the *New York Times* cited a doctor who treated some of the alleged victims and an American official. The *Times* also reported that the torture allegations “were deemed credible by officials from two western governments.”⁴
- A special medical facility was set-up in the Courtyard property to treat alleged victims.⁵
- Shortly after the hotels had been converted to detention centers, a Marriott International spokesperson said simply: “The Ritz-Carlton, Riyadh and the Courtyard, Diplomatic Quarter are not operating as traditional hotels for the time being.”⁶
- With respect to rooms at the Ritz used for detentions, the *Times* reported that “glass shower doors and curtain rods had been removed to prevent suicide attempts.”⁷
- Most of the detainees were released, reportedly after agreeing to hand over billions of dollars worth of assets to the government.⁸ Others may have been transferred to a maximum security prison south of Riyadh.⁹

² According to Human Rights Watch, Saudi Arabia’s attorney general announced in late January 2018 that 381 detainees had been released. From: “HRW: Saudi Ritz Carlton torture needs investigating,” *Middle East Monitor*, 3/14/2018.

³ Jack Moore, *Newsweek*, “Saudi Arabia’s Princely Prisoners Have Been Downgraded to A Four Star Hotel,” 11/10/2017.

⁴ Ben Hubbard, David D. Kirkpatrick, Kate Kelly and Mark Mazzetti, “Saudis Said to Use Coercion and Abuse to Seize Billions,” *New York Times*, 3/11/2018.

⁵ Summer Said and Asa Fitch, “At the Ritz in Riyadh, Detained Saudis Negotiate for Freedom,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11/21/2017.

⁶ Summer Said and Asa Fitch, “At the Ritz in Riyadh, Detained Saudis Negotiate for Freedom,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11/21/2017.

⁷ Ben Hubbard, David D. Kirkpatrick, Kate Kelly and Mark Mazzetti, “Saudis Said to Use Coercion and Abuse to Seize Billions,” *New York Times*, 3/11/2018.

⁸ Summer Said and Asa Fitch, “At the Ritz in Riyadh, Detained Saudis Negotiate for Freedom,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11/21/2017; and Ben Hubbard, David D. Kirkpatrick, Kate Kelly and Mark Mazzetti, “Saudis Said to Use Coercion and Abuse to Seize Billions,” *New York Times*, 3/11/2018.

⁹ Summer Said and Asa Fitch, “At the Ritz in Riyadh, Detained Saudis Negotiate for Freedom,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11/21/2017. Also: sources quoted by Al-Araby Al-Jadeed news website said about 60 detainees were relocated to the maximum security Al-Ha’ir Prison south of Riyadh. (cited in Cii Radio| Ayesha Ismail| 16 January 2018.)

<https://ciiradio.com/2018/01/16/saudi-billionaire-moved-from-ritz-to-maximum-security-prison-after-refusing-to-pay-6bn/>

- Even some of those released, according to reports, remained under what amounted to house arrest, unable to leave the country. Some were reported to be wearing ankle bracelets that monitored their movements.¹⁰
- The round-up and detention operation was spearheaded by Saudi Arabia's 32-year-old Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, ostensibly as a crack-down on corruption. According to the *New York Times*, "part of the campaign appears to be driven by a family feud." The *Times* also reported the government "has refused to specify the charges against individuals and, even after they were released, to clarify who was found guilty or innocent, making it impossible to know how much the process was driven by personal score settling."¹¹
- According to Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, "the alleged mistreatment at the Ritz Carlton is a serious blow to Mohammad bin Salman's claims to be a modernizing reformist. While MBS jaunts across Western capitals to gin up foreign investments, investors should think twice about the Saudis' cavalier dismissal of the rule of law and fundamental rights."¹²

Questions regarding Ritz Carlton and Courtyard, Diplomatic Quarter workers

According to the *New York Times*, some of the detainees held at the Ritz "could watch television and order room service, but had no internet or phones." This begs the question: who made the meals and who delivered them to detainees? Who cleaned the rooms and changed the linens? Here are some specific questions we believe deserve answers:

- Were Marriott employees working in the hotels between Nov 4, 2017 and Feb 11, 2018 (when the hotels were reportedly reopened to the public)?¹³ If so how many? What were their nationalities? If not, who cleaned the rooms and cooked the meals for those who were detained?
- If they did perform work, were employees compensated? And if so, by whom?
- Were they free to come and go?
- Were they in contact with their families?
- Were the rooms paid for? If so, by whom?
- Were managers present in the hotels at any time while they were being used as detainment centers or medical facilities? If so, what were the nationalities of any such managers?
- Were affected employees given access to counseling or other trauma services?

¹⁰ Ben Hubbard, David D. Kirkpatrick, Kate Kelly and Mark Mazzetti, "Saudis Said to Use Coercion and Abuse to Seize Billions," *New York Times*, 3/11/2018.

¹¹ Ben Hubbard, David D. Kirkpatrick, Kate Kelly and Mark Mazzetti, "Saudis Said to Use Coercion and Abuse to Seize Billions," *New York Times*, 3/11/2018.

¹² Saudi Arabia: Allegations of Abuse, Death in Custody, Human Rights Watch, 3/14/2018.

¹³ Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel reopens after serving as gilded prison during Saudi Arabia's anti-corruption drive," *Reuters*, 2/11/2018.

Questions about Marriott's response to the detentions

Other than a brief acknowledgement that the two hotels were “not being operated as traditional hotels for the time being,” Marriott has been curiously silent about the extra-judicial detentions that occurred in its hotels.

Less than three weeks after the hotels were reopened for guests, Alex Kyriakidis, Marriott's president and managing director for the Middle East and Africa, told Reuters that Marriott was embarking on a \$2 billion expansion of its operations in Saudi Arabia, and that work was already underway to increase the number of Marriott-managed hotels in the Kingdom from 23 to 52.¹⁴ According to a Marriott press release, the expansion was the result of Marriott's commitment to “Saudi Vision 2030,” part of the Saudi government's plan to diversify its economy away from oil. According to the press release,

“Marriott International's future growth strategy is testament to the Kingdom's vision to achieve a thriving economy, vibrant society and an ambitious nation largely achieved by the raising of non-oil revenue to \$160 billion by 2020 up from \$43.5 billion last year.”¹⁵

Saudi Vision 2030 was initiated by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTNH), under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz, brother of the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the man behind the anti-corruption purge and detentions. Shortly after Saudi Vision 2030 was unveiled in 2016, Muin Serhan, General Manager of the Riyadh Marriott, said: “The Marriott family promotes and expresses solidarity with plans of Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in a manner, which has no parallel in the hospitality industry.”

While such praise may be customary, in light of subsequent events one wonders whether the solidarity expressed on behalf of the Marriott family has limits. Specifically, we would like to know:

- Did Marriott lodge a complaint with Saudi authorities?
- Did Marriott notify and seek advice from any diplomatic consulate while the detentions were underway?
- Does Marriott have policies, procedures or protocols that it is supposed to follow when a government attempts to commandeer its facilities? If so, can you please describe them?
- Did Marriott contact any independent third party, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, to visit detainees while they were imprisoned at the Ritz-Carlton?
- Did Marriott call for an outside investigation under the auspices of any international human rights organization?
- Who will own the hotels currently under development?
- Has Marriott obtained any assurances from Saudi officials that the hotels will not be used as detention centers in the future?

¹⁴ Marwa Rashad, “Marriott to attract \$2 billion investment in Saudi over four years: executive,” *Reuters*, 2/26/2018.

¹⁵ “Marriott International Reinforces Its Commitment To Vision 2030 At First Saudi Arabia Hotel Investment Conference,” Marriott International Press Release, 2/26/2018.

- If Marriott has not obtained such assurances, will it nonetheless press ahead with its expansion plans?

The United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises require enterprises to perform continual human rights due diligence with the aim of preventing adverse human rights impacts resulting from or connected to their business operations, and to remediate adverse impacts once they have occurred. The need for human rights due diligence increases in environments with inadequate human rights safeguards in which there is a heightened risk of adverse impacts, such as Saudi Arabia. What is Marriott doing to ensure the necessary human rights due diligence policies and procedures are in place, with regard to this specific incident and to the company's operations in Saudi Arabia generally?

We believe these are important questions the company should put to rest as it continues its global expansion. As the largest hospitality company in the world, Marriott could set an example of how ethical corporations conduct themselves in locations where democratic norms and human rights conventions are not always respected by authorities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,



Sue Longley
General Secretary

cc: Alex Kyriakidis, President and Managing Director for the Middle East and Africa
Tricia Primrose, Global Chief Communications Officer