



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

November 29, 2018

Arne Sorenson
President and Chief Executive Officer
Marriott International
10400 Fernwood Road
Bethesda, MD 20817-1102

Dear Mr. Sorenson,

Since the disappearance and presumed murder of Saudi dissident and journalist Jamal Khashoggi, many US businesses have been re-examining their ties to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whose de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is alleged to be involved in Khashoggi's disappearance and alleged murder. The Crown Prince denies those allegations.

Several prominent corporate leaders - including JP Morgan's Jamie Dimon, the head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, Glencore chairman Tony Hayward, and Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi, pulled out of the Future Investment Initiative held at the Riyadh Ritz Carlton last month, as did many of the sponsors or invited participants from the media, including CNN, Fox Business, the owner of Los Angeles Times, and the editors of the Economist and the New York Times.^[1]

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently triggered a so-called Magnitsky Act investigation of the Khashoggi disappearance, which requires the President to "make a determination on the imposition of sanctions pursuant to the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act with respect to any foreign person responsible for such a violation related to Mr. Khashoggi."^[2]

As members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, we echo the strong support for such an investigation expressed by our Chairman and Ranking Member, and we agree with their decision to call on US Treasury Secretary Mnuchin to cancel his planned participation^[3] in the Future Investment Initiative, which he subsequently did.

Despite the troubling allegations surrounding Mr. Khashoggi's disappearance, the Future Investment Forum was held in Riyadh as scheduled. Incredibly, the Initiative occurred at the Marriott-operated Ritz Carlton in Riyadh, one of two Marriott-operated hotels that were temporarily closed for

^[1]Ed Pilkington, "Sir Richard Branson suspends Saudi business talks over Khashoggi affair," *the Guardian*, 10/11/2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/oct/11/sir-richard-branson-suspends-saudi-business-talks-over-khashoggi-affair>

^[2]"Corker, Menendez, Graham, Leahy letter triggers global Magnitsky investigation into disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Press Release, 10/10/2018. <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/corker-menendez-graham-leahy-letter-triggers-global-magnitsky-investigation-into-disappearance-of-jamal-khashoggi>

^[3]"Royce, Engel press for swift action following disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi," House Foreign Affairs Committee, Press Release, 10/12/2018. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/press-release/royce-engel-press-for-swift-action-following-disappearance-of-jamal-khashoggi/>

business last November and used as detention centers for two and a half months, and where, under the direction of the Crown Prince, 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.

In the initial days of the detentions, according to the *New York Times*, at least 17 people “were hospitalized for physical abuse and one later died in custody.”^[4] A special medical facility was set-up in the Marriott-operated Courtyard property to treat alleged victims.^[5]

Shortly after the hotels reopened for business, Marriott announced a \$2 billion expansion plan to nearly double the number of hotel rooms it operates in Saudi Arabia.^[6] 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.^[7]

Even after the Khashoggi disappearance and resulting scandal, a top Marriott official for Africa and the Middle East reiterated your company’s commitment to Saudi Vision 2030, telling Gulf News Tourism that “we’re very optimistic” and “we are stakeholders in the future of the kingdom.”^[8]

We find this stance short-sighted and troubling. Many businesses with even deeper ties to Saudi Arabia have hit the pause button – waiting for all the facts to emerge before deciding whether to make additional investments.

In the meantime, we urge you to conduct your own investigation, and to place your expansion plans on hold until and unless you can determine that neither the Crown Prince nor his retinue were in any way responsible for the disappearance or death of Mr. Khashoggi.

Sincerely,



BRIAN FITZPATRICK
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress

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

^[7] “Marriott International Reinforces Its Commitment To Vision 2030 At First Saudi Arabia Hotel Investment Conference,” Marriott International Press Release, 2/26/2018.

^[8] “Difference of Vision Led to Habtoor Split: Marriott President,” Gulf News, 10/26/2018.

<https://gulfnews.com/business/sectors/tourism/difference-of-vision-led-to-habtoor-split-marriott-president-1.2294023>