

*for immediate release*

## **US Government slams Saudi Arabia in Special 301 Report and designates beoutQ a “Notorious Market” as international pressure intensifies on Saudi piracy regime**

***On the same day, urgent demands are made in Parliament for UK Government to take action against Saudi Arabia’s theft of world sport and entertainment***

**WASHINGTON DC, LONDON, PARIS, DOHA – 26 April 2019** – In a major governmental escalation of the global battle against the theft of world sport and entertainment by the Saudi Arabia-based pirate operation “beoutQ”, the US Government published two reports yesterday that directly condemned and called for an end to the rampant Saudi-based piracy operation. On the same day, the UK Government was also directly challenged in UK Parliament to take decisive action against beoutQ’s unchecked piracy of content from the UK’s creative industries.

On Thursday, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (“USTR”), part of the Executive Office of the US President and the agency responsible for advancing US trade policy, published two major annual reports. First, the “2019 Special 301 Report”, which identifies governments that fail to protect and enforce intellectual property around the world; and second, the “2018 Notorious Markets List”, which names and shames prominent piracy and counterfeiting marketplaces that cause significant financial losses for US rights-holders and legitimate businesses.

In the **2019 Special 301 Report**, USTR placed Saudi Arabia on the “Priority Watch List”, for its failure to address longstanding IP concerns and the further deterioration of IP protection and enforcement within its borders. In the report, Saudi Arabia joined the short list of countries with the worst records for protecting intellectual property rights, alongside China, Indonesia, Russia, Venezuela and a handful of other nations. In highlighting how rampant satellite and online piracy is a major and ever-increasing concern in Saudi Arabia, the report specifically singled-out beoutQ and Arabsat, the Saudi-based satellite provider that is distributing the illegal service:

*“BeoutQ, an illicit service for pirated content whose signal is reportedly carried by Saudi Arabia-based satellite provider Arabsat, continues to be widely available in Saudi Arabia and throughout the Middle East and Europe. While Saudi officials have confirmed the illegal nature of BeoutQ’s activities and claim to be addressing this issue by seizing BeoutQ set-top boxes, such devices nevertheless continue to be widely available and are generally unregulated in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia also has not taken sufficient steps to address the purported role of Arabsat in facilitating BeoutQ’s piracy activities.”*

In the **2018 Notorious Markets List**, USTR named beoutQ as one of only 33 online markets from around the world to make the black list. In underlining beoutQ’s unprecedented sophistication as both a satellite and a streaming pirate, the report stated:

*“BeoutQ is an example of a single entity pirating content in multiple ways. It is suspected of satellite and online piracy, as well as supporting piracy devices and related services such as apps and illicit streaming devices (ISDs) that allow access to unlicensed movies and television productions, including sports events. As highlighted in the 2017 List, ISDs provide illegal access to movie and television content through a variety of means, including downloading content and unauthorized streaming of live television and sporting events. USTR strongly urges trading partners to report and take effective action against piracy facilitated by apps, ISDs, and satellite signals.”*

The report also added that beoutQ “has been widely available in Saudi Arabia and throughout the Middle East region and Europe”.

Highlighting the importance of intellectual property rights to the US economy, in particular, a USTR official explained yesterday that IP-intensive industries “support 45.5 million jobs and contribute to approximately 30 percent of the US Gross domestic product”.

A whole host of US rights holders made submissions to the US Government detailing the unabated Saudi theft of world sport and entertainment, as part of the consultation process behind USTR's two reports. beIN MEDIA GROUP and MIRAMAX film studio provided the most detailed submission to USTR for the Special 301 Report, filing 138 pages of comprehensive description and evidence; while separate submissions were made by:

- the Audiovisual Anti-Piracy Alliance (representing 26 leading audiovisual organisations);
- the Sports Coalition (on behalf of six major US sports leagues);
- the NBA and US Tennis Association;
- the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (the world's largest business federation);
- the International Intellectual Property Alliance (a coalition of seven trade associations representing US companies that produce copyright-protected material); and
- international broadcasters Sky and Canal+.

USTR's two reports are publicly available on its website: <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2019/april/ustr-releases-annual-special-301>, and the submissions on beoutQ and Arabsat made to the US Government by sports and entertainment bodies, trade associations and international broadcasters are available on the Regulations.gov website: <https://www.regulations.gov/>.

On the same day the US Government's reports were published, the UK Government was directly taken to task in UK Parliament, as beoutQ was specifically raised in the House of Commons. **Alistair Carmichael MP, formerly the Secretary of State for Scotland**, stated in the chamber that: "*A number of United Kingdom-based companies have had their intellectual property stolen by beoutQ, a Saudi Arabian-based pirate broadcaster*", before asking the UK Government "*What steps are we taking to protect the intellectual property rights of UK businesses and sports interests, and will we use our trade policy to hold to account countries such as Saudi Arabia that are allowing the theft of our country's intellectual property in that way?*". Mr Carmichael further added that "*The Government have got to challenge their friends in Saudi Arabia and get them to take more action to protect the future of the sports and entertainment industries, and ensure that the football teams which we all love can continue to thrive.*"

**George Hollingbery, the UK Government Minister of State for Trade Policy**, promised that the UK Government would "*continue to make representations to Saudi Arabia on that point*". Mr Hollingbery added that "*The UK intellectual property regime is respected around the world, and our local, European and international commitments produce one of the tightest and most respected regulatory regimes for IP worldwide. We believe that is the right system, and we will insist that it is honoured by others, particularly if we are to do trade deals with them.*"

Commenting on the various governmental statements, **Yousef Al-Obaidly, CEO of beIN MEDIA GROUP** said, "*These latest developments in the global fight against beoutQ are hugely significant, as they represent a critically important public call by the US Government – and a direct call for the UK Government – to intervene with the Saudi Government to stop the continued daily theft of the commercial rights of the most famous and valuable brands in US and UK sports and entertainment. With the European Commission also fully aware of the matter and the World Trade Organization having established a dispute settlement panel to investigate it, the weight of the international community is coming to bear on Saudi Arabia to stop breaking the rule of law and to end its safe haven for piracy that has now spread across the Middle East, Europe, the US and around the world.*"

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#### ABOUT beIN MEDIA GROUP

**beIN MEDIA GROUP**, chaired by Nasser Al-Khelaifi, is an independent company established in 2014 with a vision to become a leading global sport and entertainment network. Today, beIN distributes an unrivalled array of entertainment, live sport action, and major international events across 5 continents, in 43 countries, and in 7 different languages spanning Europe, North America, Asia, Australia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

beIN MEDIA GROUP'S sports network beIN SPORTS covers the best and most exciting sports in the world including football (all top global leagues and competitions), basketball (NBA and Euroleague), American football (NFL), cricket, rugby, tennis, cycling, volleyball, motor sports, college sports and more. beIN MEDIA GROUP also provides subscribers in the MENA region and Turkey a vast portfolio of proprietary and third-party entertainment channels through beIN and Digiturk platforms. Through its iconic MIRAMAX film studio, beIN also holds an extensive library of legendary Hollywood blockbusters and a growing presence in series and movies production.

beIN MEDIA GROUP recently launched the first 24-hour 4K channel in the MENA region – beIN 4K – that broadcasts the biggest sports matches and events exclusively in breath-taking 4K quality.

#### ABOUT beIN MENA

**beIN MENA**, an owned subsidiary of beIN MEDIA GROUP with headquarters in Doha, Qatar is a multi-genre platform providing exclusive access to prime sporting competitions including: the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League, FIFA Confederations Cup, Copa America, Africa Cup of Nations, CAF Champions League, AFC Champions League, AFC Cup, AFC Asian Cup 2019, and domestic football leagues across Europe including The Premier League, LaLiga, Serie A, Ligue 1 and the Bundesliga. beIN's unrivalled library of exclusive content also includes tennis (Roland-Garros, US Open, Australian Open and Wimbledon), motorsports, cycling (Tour de France), rugby (Six Nations) and NBA, NFL and MLB matches, among others.

beIN MENA also goes beyond sports to offer a complete spectrum of entertainment programming with more than 180 channels available to subscribers including access to blockbuster movies, television series and children's programming. beIN MENA also offers an extensive movie library through its "video on demand" service.

For more information on **beIN MEDIA GROUP**, please contact: [mediaoffice@bein.net](mailto:mediaoffice@bein.net)