

UK MPs call for “robust attack” on beoutQ as Parliamentary Committee condemns Saudi Arabia’s commercial theft of “100 UK based TV channels”, including the BBC

Secretary of State confirms that the UK Government is “pursuing this matter”

LONDON – 11 May 2019 – A Committee of UK MPs has called for a “robust attack” on beoutQ, the Saudi Arabia-backed pirate TV operation, after it was revealed in Parliament that the illegal operation steals content from “100 UK based TV channels”, including the BBC.

Giles Watling, a Member of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (“DCMS”) Select Committee led a chorus of voices questioning Saudi Arabia’s daily theft of intellectual property from some of the most famous UK sports and entertainment companies, and asked the Secretary of State “*What is the Government doing to prevent them [beoutQ and Arabsat] from misappropriating our industries?*” In response, Mr Jeremy Wright QC, DCMS Secretary of State, confirmed that a number of UK government departments are “*pursuing this matter*” and “*the [UK] embassy in Riyadh is speaking to the Saudis on this subject*”.

Mr Watling highlighted the scale of beoutQ’s brazen theft of UK entertainment content, with its illegal streaming apps providing access to around 100 UK TV channels including the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, Sky and others; while Mr Wright focused on beoutQ’s impact on UK sports rights holders, explaining that the “*Premier League and others are concerned about intellectual property*” in the MENA region.

The Secretary of State continued, “*If we want to see good quality sport, we have to make sure that people are able to protect those rights so they can carry on delivering it to us; and those that are seeking to undermine those rights of course undermine that process. So that’s why we take an interest, it’s why we understand and sympathise with the concerns the Premier League and others have expressed and as I say there is activity underway.*”

The Chairman of the DCMS Committee, Mr Damian Collins MP, added more pressure on the Government, saying that “*the issue of beoutQ is straightforward piracy*” and went on to question whether the Government was taking appropriate independent action by adding, “*I’d be slightly concerned if our interest in this issue, and addressing it, is being balanced with other trade interests in the region.*”

beoutQ was first mentioned in the House of Commons two weeks ago by Alistair Carmichael MP, the former Secretary of State for Scotland. Speaking about the illegal operation, he said: “*Their piracy is widespread across FIFA, UEFA, AFC, Premier League, LaLiga, and the Bundesliga; and the Government have got to work with intellectual property holders to protect sports. 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.*”

This was shortly followed by the US Government publishing two major reports last week – the 2019 Special 301 Report and the 2018 Notorious Markets List – that directly condemned and called for an end to the rampant Saudi-backed beoutQ piracy operation. Also last week, Charles Rivkin, Chairman and CEO of the powerful Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), singled out beoutQ as a rogue illegal operation which is damaging Hollywood and impacting content creators around the world.

Commenting on the various governmental statements, Yousef Al-Obaidly, CEO of beIN MEDIA GROUP said, “*This latest development in the global fight against beoutQ is hugely significant, as it represents a critically important call from a Parliamentary Committee of MPs for the UK Government to intervene with the Saudi Government to stop the continued daily theft of valuable UK brands. With the US Government and 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, UK, Europe, the US and around the world.*”



- The DCMS Committee Session can be seen in full here: <https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/76c845c1-9f22-4ce0-869c-5c42e40358e7> (beoutQ is discussed from 16:35:05)
- The comments from Charles Rivkin, Chairman and CEO of Motion Picture Association of America, can be viewed here: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/intellectual-property-why-works-all-us-charles-rivkin/>

- NOTES TO EDITORS -

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beIN MEDIA GROUP's flagship sports network, **beIN SPORTS**, holds the single largest portfolio of sports rights of any global broadcaster; and through its iconic **MIRAMAX** film studio, beIN holds an extensive library of Hollywood blockbusters while having a growing presence in series and movies production and distribution, as well as in the digital space. beIN MEDIA GROUP acquired **Digiturk**, the leading pay-tv operator in Turkey, in August 2016; and now has over 55 million subscribers worldwide.

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