

## AIPS condemns threat to Al Jazeera and BeIn

Lausanne, June 28, 2017

The AIPS Executive Committee, during a teleconference on Monday, assessed the peremptory request of the coalition of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and UAE for Qatar to shut down Al Jazeera and all its connected networks including the sports network BeIn, and unanimously ruled that such a demand is in no way acceptable.

AIPS will never accept the principle that politics can limit the freedom of expression and free initiative in the field of information in any part of the world. As has been emphasized, the sports media cannot be subjected to any condition by any authority who wants to control it.

Additionally, AIPS cannot accept the behavior of coaches and players who have refused to speak with journalists representing BeIn during international events. In its primary role of defending the professionalism and dignity of sports journalists everywhere, AIPS strongly condemns such behavior. The public is the main judge of sports media, and those dedicating their profession hold their work to the highest of ethical principles.

In this delicate moment for journalism and sports journalism alike, it is necessary to defend our rights. In this case, it is also necessary to defend the jobs of hundreds of colleagues employed by Al Jazeera and BeIn Sports.

For this reason, the AIPS Executive Committee is of the hope that international diplomacy can create the groundwork for loosening pressure throughout the region and arriving at a solution that would avoid further political controversy.

AIPS president Gianni Merlo, highlighted some important details: "AIPS has had excellent experiences in the Gulf. Qatar has hosted two AIPS Congresses, in 2006 and 2016, two Executive Committee meetings, and three Young Reporters Program, with the latest in June of this year in cooperation with the IAAF Diamond League.

In the United Arab Emirates, AIPS has also organized a Young Reporters Program and one of the most important event ever organized by our association: the Sport Media Pearl Awards in 2015 in collaboration with Abu Dhabi Media. On that occasion the journalistic content shown and the openness towards freedom of expression was remarkable. An indefinable experience for us.

Bahrain was the host of another AIPS Executive Committee meeting, while we have also participated in events in Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia, demonstrating the positive relationships AIPS has with its Gulf associations.

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In recent years, we have been able to see the positive evolution of sport journalism in these countries, which means that we cannot accept that this evolution is blocked indefinitely by a political storm.

A generation of young colleagues is likely to suffer, which is unacceptable. We are certain that this is a point we can all agree on and we hope that dialogue will overwhelm dangerous winds of war.”

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