

International Team Project: United Arab Emirates, Spring 2011

**International Sporting Events and the Future of the Dubai
“Brand”**

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The goal of this paper is to explore the legal issues surrounding the past and future of the Dubai brand and international sporting events, especially with regards to the question of Israeli participation. The first part of this paper will explore the history of branding in Dubai and its close relationship with international sporting events. This section will study why the government of Dubai has aggressively launched its “brand” since independence and how the government has formed state-sponsored businesses to perpetuate this brand. Additionally, this part will demonstrate how the government and its sponsored-Dubai Duty Free have utilized sport as a means of branding. The key legal issue of this section is the interplay between the political/government structure of Dubai and these sporting events.

The second section of this paper will address how certain international sporting events in Dubai have resulted in conflict between local custom and international politics. This part will highlight the visa issues that Israeli athletes have faced at international tennis and swimming events in Dubai. Additionally, this section will briefly address the discriminatory history Israeli athletes have faced since Israel gained independence and will demonstrate how politics has influenced sport for Israeli athletes. Also, this part will discuss the negative impact these visa conflicts have had on the Dubai brand.

The third section of the paper will address the legal outcomes of these conflicts between international sporting organizations and Dubai regarding the Israeli athletes. This part will look at the legal options the international sporting organizations have used or can use in the future in settling disagreements over Israeli athlete participation; these options include the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), fines, and legal contracts. This portion of the paper will focus on what happens legally when state governments and international sporting bodies clash.

Finally, the last portion of this paper will consider the future of international sporting events and the Dubai brand given the recent scandals and legal conflicts. This part will compare and contrast how Qatar—an emerging powerhouse in the Gulf region and neighbor of Dubai—has handled the question of Israeli athletes and has also infringed on the Dubai brand. The goal of this section is to offer plausible strategies for Dubai in maintaining and perpetuating its brand while learning how to balance local culture and custom with the expectations of the international political and legal communities.