August 29, 2016

Horacio Muratore (Argentina)
President
International Basketball Federation
Route Suisse, 5
P.O. Box 29
1295 Mies - Switzerland

Via Email: communications@fiba.com; info@fibaericas.com; info@fibaasia.net; communication@fibafrica.com; media@fibaurope.com; info@faboceansia.com

Dear Mr. Muratore:

We, the undersigned, are calling on the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) to revise its policies that prohibit otherwise qualified athletes from pursuing a professional career as basketball players due to religious restrictions beliefs that require requiring them to wear a head-covering.

Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir and Darsh Preet Singh are two of numerous American players who have been specifically impacted by this policy as it stands. Singh made history in 2004 to become the first Sikh-American basketball player to compete on the collegiate level wearing the turban—an important article of faith for Sikhs. Abdul-Qaadir made history in 2010 to become the first Muslim-American basketball player to compete on the collegiate level wearing the Islamic headscarf.

Despite demonstrating impressive skills and sportsmanship, they have had to defer their dreams in order to not compromise their faith because of Article 4.2.2 of the FIBA Official Basketball Rules’ ban on “headgear.” The provisional period approved by your federation in 2014 that temporarily halted the ban during national competitions is set to end this month.

We understand FIBA is expected to announce a permanent decision in the near future on whether the ban on religious accommodations will be enforced. We believe this rule, as it stands, violates basic religious rights of athletes like Singh and Abdul-Qaadir, and countless others, and defies international human rights norms.

FIFA’s International Football Association Board has acknowledged the religious rights of athletes by changing its rules to allow hijabs and Sikh turbans.

We request that FIBA follow suit and amend this discriminatory policy to allow athletes of all faiths to compete while maintaining religious principles.
No athlete should be forced to choose between faith and sport. Muslim women and Sikh men seeking to participate in sporting activities like anyone else should not face superficial and arbitrary barriers to that participation.

We urge you to address the issue of religious attire for athletes successfully in a mutually-agreeable manner that maintains the legitimate rights and needs of all parties.

Sincerely,

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Arab American Association of New York
Auburn Seminary
Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice
CAIR-Arizona
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CelebrateMercy
Center for Islam and Religious Freedom
Coalition Preserve Human Dignity
Communities for Just Schools Fund
Coney Island Islamic Center
Convergenceus.org
Cornerstone Counseling
Council on American-Islamic Relations
DeManda Democratic School
Institute of Knowledge
Interfaith Action for Human Rights
Islamic Leadership Council of Metropolitan New York
Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center
Islamic Society of Central Jersey
Islamic Society of North America
M.E.D.I.N.A.
Masjid At-Taqwa
Masjid Omar Ben Abdel-Aziz
Middle Collegiate Church
MPower Change
MSA National
Muslim Aid America
Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA)
Muslim Alliance of Indiana
Muslim American Society
Muslim American Society of Brooklyn and Staten Island
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative
Muslim Community Center
Muslim Community Network
Muslim Democratic Club of New York
Muslim Justice League
National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)
NNAAC
NYS Immigrant Action Fund
Palestinian American Community Center
Sikh American Legal Defense & Education Fund (SALDEF)
Sikh Coalition
Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice
The Episcopal Church
The Gathering for Justice
The Islamic Center at NYU
The Nation's Mosque Masjid Muhammad
United Voices for America
United We Dream
Windsor Islamic Association
Zaytuna College