

How Congress Can Find Justice for Jamal Khashoggi and Protect Others Like Him

Accountability for Khashoggi's Murder is a Must

On October 2, 2018, a team of Saudi government agents murdered *Washington Post* columnist and Virginia resident Jamal Khashoggi after luring him to Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. Khashoggi's premeditated killing and subsequent dismemberment occurred in direct response to his criticism of Saudi Arabia's human rights record.

In December, following briefings on the murder from Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Gina Haspel, the Senate [voted unanimously](#) to condemn the killing and name Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) as ultimately responsible. More recently, UN expert Agnes Callamard released her exhaustive [report on the killing](#), which similarly found MBS culpable.

Despite these findings, the Trump Administration has yet to hold MBS and other high-ranking Saudi officials accountable for the killing. In fact, President Trump has gone out of his way to obscure MBS's role in the murder, [stating recently](#) that "nobody has directly pointed a finger" at MBS, despite the conclusions found in the UN report and the findings of both the CIA and the National Security Agency (NSA).

Khashoggi's killers must be held accountable for the gruesome crime. Failing to do so would potentially signal a green light to autocrats around the world that they can murder dissidents and journalists without repercussion, even if those dissidents seek shelter in the United States.

A Long History of Serious Violations

The murder of Khashoggi is not an isolated incident; it is rather indicative of a larger pattern of severe human rights abuses perpetrated by the Saudi government internal and external to its borders.

These abuses include:

- ☑ **Contributing to thousands of potential war crimes in Yemen.** According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights November 2018 report, airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen have [resulted in an estimated 10,852 civilian casualties](#) that may amount to [war crimes](#). In addition, the State Department's most recent Trafficking in Persons Report claims that Saudi Arabia may fund Yemeni militias that use [child soldiers](#).
- ☑ **Using extreme measures against political dissidents at home.** According to the State Department's latest Human Rights Report, these have included [seeking the death penalty](#) against [children](#) as young as 13, [arbitrary arrests](#), [forced disappearances](#), and [the torture of prisoners](#).
- ☑ **Tracking and threatening political dissidents abroad.** Since Khashoggi's killing, U.S. and Norwegian intelligence and law-enforcement officials reportedly [notified](#) several prominent Saudi dissidents living

abroad that, like Khashoggi, they may be harmed for their activism. These dissidents are tracked by surveillance and targeted by the Saudi government through [spyware](#).

- Arresting multiple prominent female activists in 2018, some of whom remain in prison without charge.** Reports have surfaced that the activists have [endured](#) ill-treatment, torture, and sexual abuse while being held. Three detained human rights activists are known to be [American citizens](#).
- Discriminating against women in the Saudi legal system.** The country's guardianship system requires [every woman to have a male relative as her guardian](#), who, among other things, has the legal authority to approve her foreign travel. In addition, women cannot transmit citizenship to their children nor marry non-Muslims, and [face unequal legal standards under family and inheritance law](#).
- Being one of only six countries in the world that imposes the death penalty for consensual same-sex acts.** According to the same State Department Report, the Saudi government also continues to allow discrimination in employment, housing, access to education and healthcare, harassment, and physical violence [against LGBTQ individuals](#).
- Abusing migrant workers, including through forced labor.** Under Saudi Arabia's [kafala system](#), which ties employer sponsorship to migrant worker residency, many suffer exploitation in the form of passport confiscation, withheld wages, and physical, verbal, and sexual abuse, sometimes leading to conditions of forced labor.

NDAAs Amendment Provides a Path Forward

The bipartisan [Saudi Arabia Human Rights and Accountability Act of 2019](#), introduced as an amendment to H.R. 2500, the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act, provides a measured, tailored response to Khashoggi's killing and other grievous Saudi human rights abuses. Unanimously voted out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on June 26 on a bipartisan basis, the amendment is [supported](#) by a large coalition of human rights and press freedom organizations that believe that it adequately balances the need for accountability with the need to maintain the United States' strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia.

The bill's provisions include:

- A required determination concerning those responsible for Khashoggi's murder;
- Visa restrictions on those determined to have been involved in the killing, subject to a presidential national interest waiver; and
- An "off-ramp" of steps Saudi authorities can take to ensure that any visa restrictions imposed not be permanent, including steps such as ceasing the torture and detention of women's rights activists.

With these provisions, Congress can send a strong message that the murder of dissidents by U.S. security partners cannot be tolerated, while offering Saudi officials a clear path toward improving their human rights record and strengthening the U.S.-Saudi bilateral relationship.