

Did the Saudis Kidnap and Murder Journalist Jamal Khashoggi?

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On October 2, prominent Saudi journalist/critic Khashoggi disappeared after entering the Saudi kingdom's Istanbul, Turkey consulate, needing documents for his upcoming wedding, scheduled for this week.

He hasn't been seen or heard from since, likely victimized by foul play. Turkish officials believe he was murdered by a Saudi hit squad sent from the kingdom to eliminate him.

According to Turkish police, 15 Saudis, including several officials, arrived in Istanbul on October 6. They entered the consulate when Khashoggi was believed alive inside.

On October 7, Turkish/Arab Media Association head Turan Kislakci cited unconfirmed reports that he was killed in the consulate, his body dismembered, then removed undetected.

Istanbul's chief prosecutor initiated an investigation into what happened, including an examination of all video surveillance footage of consulate entrances, along with checking all inbound and outbound flights since Khashoggi's disappearance.

On Monday, Turkey's Foreign Ministry asked permission to conduct a forensic search of the consulate, after Saudi envoy to the country Waleed AM El-Hereiji was summoned to the ministry for the second time.

Last year, Khashoggi fled Saudi Arabia over harsh crackdowns on regime critics. Friction between him and its despotic ruling family surfaced after saying the kingdom should be "nervous about a Trump presidency."

He opposed Saudi aggression in Yemen, its unacceptable policies toward Qatar, and harshness against critics.

Banned from writing and speaking out publicly, he self-exiled himself to America, saying

"I have left my home, my family and my job, and I am raising my voice," adding:

"To do otherwise would betray those who languish in prison. I can speak when so many cannot."

Earlier this year, he said Saudi intellectuals and journalists risk imprisonment for criticizing ruling family policies.

“(N)obody...dare(s) speak and criticize reforms” initiated by MBS. “I haven’t heard him make even the slightest inference that he would open the country for power-sharing, for democracy.”

The State Department was largely silent on Khashoggi’s disappearance, a statement saying it’s aware of reports and seeks more information.

Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) is ruthlessly intolerant of regime criticism. If proved responsible for Khashoggi’s death, relations with Turkey will likely worsen.

They deteriorated markedly in recent years. Saudi consul-general Mohammad al-Otaiba claimed Khashoggi “is not at the consulate nor in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the consulate and the embassy are working to search for him.”

His fiancée Hatice Cengiz waited for him outside the consulate. She disbelieves the regime’s explanation about his disappearance.

Kingdom assassins likely murdered him. Its ruling authorities contemptuous of civil and human rights, along with disdaining the rule of law.

GOP Senators Bob Corker, Lindsey Graham, and Ben Cardin called for honest answers on what happened to Khashoggi, Graham tweeting:

“We agree that if there was any truth to the allegations of wrongdoing by the Saudi government it would be devastating to the US-Saudi relationship, and there will be a heavy price to be paid — economically and otherwise.”

Senator Chris Murphy said if reports about US resident Khashoggi’s murder by the kingdom is true,

“it should represent a fundamental break in our relationship with Saudi Arabia.”

Khashoggi is a Washington Post columnist. Commenting on his disappearance, its editorial page editor Fred Hiatt said

“(i)f the reports of (his) murder are true, it is a monstrous and unfathomable act.”

Separately the broadsheet accused kingdom authorities of unlawfully “carry(ing) out hundreds of arrests under the banner of national security, rounding up clerics, business executives and even women’s rights advocates.”

Khashoggi was likely abducted and murdered to silence his criticism. If proved, it’s unlikely to disrupt longterm bilateral relations America – notably strong since Franklin Roosevelt met with king Abdul Aziz in 1945.

Around the same time, the State Department called Middle East oil riches, mainly Saudi ones, “a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in

world history.”

The kingdom’s likely responsibility for whatever happened to Khashoggi isn’t likely to change longterm US/Saudi relations.

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