

State Sponsorship of Terrorism? US Judge Allows 9/11 Lawsuits against Saudi Arabia to Proceed

By [Middle East Eye](#)

Global Research, March 30, 2018

[Middle East Eye](#) 28 March 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice, Terrorism](#)

A US judge in New York on Wednesday rejected Saudi Arabia's request to dismiss lawsuits accusing it of helping in the 9/11 attacks.

The cases are based on the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (Jasta), [a 2016 law](#) that provides an exemption to the legal principle of sovereign immunity, allowing families of the victims to take foreign governments to court.

The families point to the fact that the majority of the hijackers were Saudi citizens, and claim that Saudi officials and institutions "aided and abetted" the attackers in the years leading up to the 9/11 attacks, according to court documents.

US District Judge George Daniels in Manhattan said the plaintiffs' allegations "narrowly articulate a reasonable basis" for him to assert jurisdiction under Jasta.

Still, Daniels dismissed claims against two Saudi banks and a Saudi construction company for allegedly providing material support to al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden to carry out the attacks, saying he lacked jurisdiction.

The Saudi government has long denied involvement in the attacks in which hijacked planes crashed into New York's World Trade Center, the Pentagon outside Washington, DC and a Pennsylvania field. Almost 3,000 people died.

Riyadh and its Gulf allies had strongly opposed Jasta, which was initially vetoed by then-President Barack Obama. The US Senate overturned the veto by overwhelmingly adopting the legislation.

Critics of the law say it is politically motivated and an infringement on the sovereignty of foreign nations.

Wednesday's ruling comes during Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to the US. President Donald Trump heaped praise on the Saudi royal during a meeting at the White House last week.

Jim Kreindler, a lawyer for about 850 victims' families in the case against the Saudi government, said his clients are watching bin Salman's visit to Washington carefully.

He added that they are "aware of the many US-Saudi issues at play," including the possible listing of Saudi state oil giant Aramco on the New York Stock Exchange, a potential nuclear

deal and further arms sales.

“It remains to be seen whether he is going to take a step in accepting Saudi accountability for 9/11,” Kreindler [told](#) MEE earlier this month.

Kreindler told Reuters on Wednesday he is “delighted” that the judge dismissed Saudi Arabia’s motion.

“We have been pressing to proceed with the case and conduct discovery from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, so that the full story can come to light, and expose the Saudi role in the 9/11 attacks,” he added.

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