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Coordinates: 41.0860°N 29.0121°E

Assassination of Jamal Khashoggi

The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi dissident, journalist for *The Washington Post* and former general manager and editor-in-chief of Al-Arab News Channel, occurred on 2 October 2018 at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey and was perpetrated by agents of the Saudi Arabian government. The exact cause of his death is unknown since his body has not been located or examined. Government officials of several countries, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, believe Khashoggi was murdered. Turkey in particular believes it was premeditated murder, and anonymous Saudi officials have admitted that agents affiliated with the Saudi government killed him. Government killed him.

Khashoggi had entered the consulate in order to obtain documents related to the marriage he and his fiancée were planning. Because no security camera footage of him exiting the building could be found, he was declared a missing person amid news reports claiming that he had been assassinated and dismembered inside the consulate. When the disappearance of Khashoggi was first reported by the news media, Saudi Arabia claimed he had left the consulate and denied having any knowledge about his fate. Turkish media published evidence suggesting that Khashoggi never came out of the consulate. Saudi Arabia subsequently denied any involvement in his disappearance.

The international community called for accountability of those responsible for the killing and more clarity on the case from Saudi authorities.^[15] Meanwhile, the Turkish authorities reported various findings to news media from the ongoing investigation of the case that

Assassination of Jamal Khashoggi



Jamal Khashoggi in March 2018



Location of the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, where the assassination took $\mathsf{place}^{[1]}$

Location	Saudi consulate in
	Istanbul, Turkey
Coordinates	41.0860°N 29.0121°E
Date	2 October 2018
	Some time after 1 p.m
	when Khashoggi

refuted Saudi claims.^[16] Saudi Arabia was placed under unprecedented scrutiny, and economic and political pressure from the international community to disclose the facts.^[17] An inspection of the consulate, by Saudi and Turkish police, took place on 15 October. Turkish prosecutors reported they found evidence of tampering during the inspection and evidence that supported the belief that Khashoggi had been killed.^[18] 18 days later the Saudi government changed their position from no involvement, and admitted that

Inquiry	prominent dissident and critic of the Saudi leadership ^{[1][3]} Ongoing
Motive	Allegedly to remove a
Victim	Jamal Khashoggi
	entered the Saudi consulate ^{[1][2]}

Khashoggi died inside the consulate due to strangulation after an argument and fistfight.^[14] Saudi Arabia's foreign minister called it a "rogue operation".^{[19][6]}

Eighteen Saudis were arrested by Saudi authorities, including the team of 15 operatives which an anonymous Saudi official claimed General Ahmad Asiri sent to confront Khashoggi and, if necessary, detain him for return to Saudi Arabia. [20][21][22] On 19 October, the Saudi prosecutor stated that the Saudi-Turkev joint team of investigators found evidence indicating the suspects acted with premeditated intent. The Saudi Royal family have denied ordering or sanctioning the killing.^[6] On 31 October, Istanbul's chief prosecutor released a statement stating that Khashoggi had been strangled as soon as he entered the consulate building, and that his body was dismembered and disposed of. [23] On 15 November 2018, the Saudi prosecutor's office said eleven Saudi nationals had been indicted and charged with murdering Khashoggi and that five of them could face the death penalty, since it had been determined they were directly involved in "ordering and executing the crime". It alleged that shortly after Khashoggi entered the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, he was bound and then injected with a fatal sedative overdose. His body was dismembered and removed from the consulate by five suspects and given to a local collaborator for disposal. Saudi officials continued to deny that the Saudi Royal Family was involved in, ordered, or sanctioned the killing.^{[24][25]}

Turkish officials released an audio recording of Khashoggi's killing that they alleged contained evidence that Khashoggi had been assassinated on the orders of the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.^[4] Several days later, on 16 November, Central Intelligence Agency members who internally analyzed multiple sources of intelligence concluded that Mohammed bin Salman ordered Khashoggi's assassination.^[1] On 20 November, US President Donald Trump disputed the CIA assessment and stated that the investigation into Khashoggi's death had to continue.^[26] Muhammad Bin Salman denied that he had ordered the killing of Jamal Khashoggi but said that he bears all responsibility because it happened under his watch.

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Victim

Khashoggi was a Saudi journalist,^[5] author, and a former general manager and editor-inchief of Al-Arab News Channel.^[8] He also served as editor for the Saudi newspaper *Al Watan*, turning it into a platform for Saudi progressives.^[27]

Khashoggi fled Saudi Arabia in June 2017 and went into self-imposed exile in the US. He became a frequent contributor to publications like the *Washington Post's* global opinions section and continued to criticize the Saudi government from afar. He had been sharply critical of Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammad bin Salman, and the country's king, Salman of Saudi Arabia.^[5] He also opposed the Saudi Arabian-led intervention in Yemen.^[28]

He said, "The government banned me from Twitter when I cautioned against an overly enthusiastic embrace of then-President-elect Donald Trump." [29] In September 2017, the

Washington Post published its first column by Khashoggi, in which he criticized the prince and the kingdom's direction and advocated for reform in his country. Once Khashoggi's collaboration with the Washington Post started, he was harassed via Twitter from pro-regime bot accounts commonly known as "the electronic flies". [30] The "lord of the flies", the man who ran social media for crown prince Mohammed, was Saud al-Qahtani. The crown prince Mohammed ordered a zero-tolerance campaign against dissents, spearheaded by Qahtani, who is implicated in the murder of Khashoggi. [31][32]

Just before his assassination, Khashoggi was launching projects to combat online abuse in an attempt to consolidate the opposition and accuse crown prince



4 June 2009 – after his speech *A New Beginning* at Cairo University, U.S. President Obama participates in a roundtable interview with, among others, Jamal Khashoggi, Bambang Harymurti, and Nahum Barnea

Mohammed of mismanaging the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Khashoggi collaborated with Omar Abdelaziz, one of most visible public critics of the Saudi regime abroad who had received asylum in Canada, on a range of projects. One project was named Geish al-Nahl جيش النحل (Army of the Bees or The Bees Army). They wanted to create a counterpoint to the regime's propaganda machine – "a network of pro-democracy activists who would post and amplify one another's messages about Saudi political issues". [33] Abdulaziz said they wanted "to talk about the dissidents, the political prisoners, freedom of speech, human rights" and "make people aware of what's really happening". [33] And the Bee Movement should also provide cybersecurity to "people living in Saudi Arabia and other oppressive regimes in the Middle East" in need of a safe way to express themselves. [34] As Khashoggi wrote in his last, posthumously published, column, he was of the opinion that "What the Arab world needs most is free expression". [35][36]

Khashoggi and Abdelaziz were also working on a short film, showing how the Saudi leadership was dividing the country, a website tracking human rights and the new foundation "Democracy for the Arab World Now" (DAWN) Khashoggi was forming. They tried to keep their work secret from Saudi persecution. In late September 2018, Khashoggi met with friends in London to discuss his various plans.^[37]

In summer 2018, Abdulaziz's cellphone was infected with a surveillance tool. This was first revealed on 1 October 2018 in a detailed forensic report by Citizen Lab,^[38] a University of Toronto project that investigates digital espionage against civil society. Citizen Lab concluded with a "high degree of confidence" that his cellphone was successfully targeted with NSO Group's Pegasus spyware and attributed this infection to an operator linked to "Saudi Arabia's government and security services". [38] NSO's Pegasus, of which KSA has emerged as one of its biggest operators, is one of the most advanced spyware tools available.

It is designed to infect cell phones without being detected. Among other known cases, KSA is believed to have used NSO software to target London-based Saudi dissident Yahya Assiri, a former Royal Saudi Air Force officer and founder the human rights organisation ALQST and an Amnesty International researcher.^{[39][40]}

Through their sophisticated spyware attack on Abdulaziz's phone, the Saudi regime would have had a direct line into Khashoggi's private thoughts, and access to hours of conversations between the two men. Abdulaziz recalled: "Jamal was very polite in public, but in private, he spoke more freely – he was very very critical of the crown prince."^[41]

On 21 September, just eleven days before Khashoggi was murdered in the Saudi consulate, he made a declaration of support for the Bees Movement. Using the Bee Army's first hashtag "what do you know about bees" he tweeted "They love their home country and defend it with truth and rights". [34]

Marc Owen Jones, an assistant professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Doha who researched Arab propaganda and has monitored Saudi Twitter bots for two years, said he has seen a massive surge in pro-regime Twitter activity, and in the creation of troll accounts, since Khashoggi went missing: "There was such a huge spike in October in bot accounts and the use of the hashtags praising the crown prince, it's absurd". [34]

After Khashoggi's assassination, the Saudi cyber-operations were the focus of global scrutiny. The Government of Canada started an investigation in to those malicious cyberattacks.^[42]

In December 2018 Omar Abdulaziz granted CNN access to his text messages with Jamal Khashoggi, where the two discussed their sharp criticism and political opposition to Mohammed bin Salman.^{[43][44]} Abdulaziz filed a lawsuit against an Israeli company NSO Group Technologies that allowed his smartphone to be taken over and his communications to be spied on by the Saudi regime.^[45]

US intelligence reports

The Washington Post reported on 10 October 2018 that U.S. intelligence intercepted communications of Saudi officials discussing a plan ordered by the Crown Prince Bin Salman, to capture Khashoggi from his home in Virginia. [46][47] The intercepted communications were regarded as significant because Khashoggi had bought a home in McLean, Virginia, where he lived after fleeing the KSA. Khashoggi had obtained an O visa – also known as the "genius" visa, that offers individuals of "extraordinary ability and achievement" in the sciences, arts, education, and other fields and are recognized internationally – he had applied for permanent residency status, and three of his children were US citizens. [49][50] As a legal resident of the United States Khashoggi was entitled to

protection. Under a directive adopted in 2015, the US intelligence community has a "duty to warn" people – including those who are not US citizens – who are at risk of being kidnapped or killed. This directive was a central aspect of the conversation about the US's response to Khashoggi's disappearance.

Khashoggi had applied for U.S. citizenship^[51] and was offered and he accepted a position as a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (or Wilson Center), located in Washington, D.C.^[52]

According to the National Security Agency (NSA) officials, the White House was warned of this threat through official intelligence channels.^[53] The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) of Dan Coats declined to comment on why Khashoggi was not warned.^[50] 55 members of Congress demanded in a letter clarity from DNI Dan Coats on what the intelligence community knew about the risk Khashoggi faced before his disappearance and whether American officials attempted to notify him that his life was in danger. In the letter, they sought insight into everything the NSA knows about phone calls and emails from Saudi officials on the Khashoggi case.^[54]

The Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University filed a lawsuit against five US intelligence services "seeking immediate release of records concerning U.S. intelligence agencies' compliance or non-compliance with their 'duty to warn' reporter Jamal Khashoggi of threats to his life or liberty". The Committee to Protect Journalists joined the legal effort. [55][56]

Disappearance

Over the year 2017, the House of Saud appealed to Khashoggi to return to Riyadh and resume his services as a media advisor to the royal court. But he declined in fear that it was a ruse and that upon returning he would be imprisoned or worse. Khashoggi met with crown prince Mohammed's brother Prince Khalid at the Saudi embassy in Washington, in "early 2018 or late 2017."^[57] In September 2018 Khashoggi visited the Saudi embassy in Washington to retrieve paperwork for his pending marriage to his Turkish fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, he tried to complete everything in the U.S. but was instead lured to the Saudi Arabian consulate in Turkey, where his fiancée lived. ^{[58][59]}

Khashoggi's first visit to the Saudi consulate in Istanbul was on 28 September 2018 – where he showed up



Saudi Arabian activist Ghanem al-Dosari at a protest outside the Natural History Museum, London 11 October 2018, after the disappearance of Jamal Kashoggi. The Saudi embassy was holding a Saudi National Day celebration at the museum

Assassination of Jamal Khashoggi - Wikipedia

unannounced. Having divorced his wife, who had remained in Saudi Arabia, he went to the consulate to obtain a document certifying that he was no longer married so he could marry his Turkish fiancée. Before that visit he "sought assurances about his safety from friends in the US" and instructed his fiancée to contact Turkish authorities if he failed to emerge.^[60] He received a warm welcome from officials, and was told to return to the consulate on 2 October. "He was very pleased with their nice treatment and hospitality", she later said.^[61] On 29 September Khashoggi traveled to



The Saudi consulate in Istanbul, 16 October 2018, after Khashoggi's disappearance

London and spoke at a conference. On 1 October Khashoggi returned to Istanbul, and he told a friend that he was worried about being kidnapped and sent back to KSA.^[62]

Meanwhile, at around 16:30, a three-person Saudi team arrived in Istanbul on a scheduled flight, checked in to their hotels then visited the consulate, according to President Erdogan. Another group of officials from the consulate traveled to a forest in Istanbul's outskirts and to the nearby city of Yalova on a "reconnaissance" trip. Erdogan said a "road map" to kill Khashoggi was devised in Saudi Arabia during this time. In the night of 2 October, a 15-member group arrived from Riyadh on two private Gulfstream jets. [63]

On 2 October 2018 CCTV showed the suspected agents entering the consulate around noon. Khashoggi arrived about an hour later, accompanied by his fiancée Cengiz, whom he entrusted with two cell phones while she waited outside for him.^{[62][64][65]} He entered the consulate, through main entrance, at around 1 pm.^[2] As he had not come out by 4 pm, even though the working hours of the consulate were until 3:30 pm,^[66] Cengiz contacted the authorities, phoning Khashoggi's friend, Yasin Aktay, an adviser to President Erdogan,^[67] reported him missing and the police then started an investigation.

The Saudi government said that he had left the consulate^{[68][69][70]} via a back entrance.^[71] The Turkish government first said that he was still inside, and his fiancée and friends said that he was missing.^[72]

Turkish authorities have claimed that security camera footage of the day of the incident was removed from the consulate and that Turkish consulate staff were abruptly told to take a holiday on the day Khashoggi disappeared while inside the building.^[73] Turkish police investigators told the media that the recordings from the security cameras did not show any evidence of Khashoggi leaving the consulate.^[74] A security camera was located outside the consulate's front which showed him entering but not leaving, while another camera installed at a preschool opposite the rear entrance of the consulate also did not show him leaving.^[74]

The disappearance presented Turkish officials with a sharp diplomatic challenge. Jamal

Elshayyal reported Turkish authorities were trying to walk a fine line so as not to damage the Turkish-Saudi relationship: "There is an attempt by the Turkish government to try to find a way out of this whereby there isn't a full collapse of diplomatic relations, at least a temporary freeze between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Because, if indeed, Turkish authorities can prove unequivocally that Saudi agents essentially murdered a journalist inside the consulate in Istanbul, it would require some sort of strong reaction." [64] Analysts have suggested that Khashoggi may have been considered especially dangerous by the Saudi leadership not because he was a long-time dissident, but rather, a pillar of the Saudi establishment who had been close to its ruling circles for decades, had worked as an editor at Saudi news outlets and had been an adviser to a former Saudi intelligence chief Turki bin Faisal Al Saud. [3]

Assassination

According to numerous anonymous police sources, the Turkish police believe that Khashoggi was tortured and killed inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul^{[75][76]} by a 15-member team brought in from Saudi Arabia for the operation.^{[77][78]} One anonymous police source claimed that the dead body was "cut into pieces" and quietly moved out of the consulate, and that all of this was "videotaped to prove the mission had been accomplished and the tape was taken out of the country".^[76] *Middle East Eye* cited an anonymous Saudi who said the Tiger Squad brought Khashoggi's fingers to Mohammad bin Salman in Riyadh as other evidence that the mission was successful.^[79]

On 7 October, Turkish officials pledged to release evidence showing that Khashoggi was killed. [78] Aktay initially said he believed Khashoggi had been killed in the consulate, [76] but on 10 October he claimed that "the Saudi state is not blamed here", something that a journalist for *The Guardian* saw as Turkey trying not to harm lucrative trade ties and a delicate regional relationship with Saudi Arabia. [73] Turkey then claimed to have audio and video evidence of the killing occurring inside the consulate. [80] U.S. President Donald Trump said the United States had asked Turkey for the recordings. [81] According to "people familiar with the matter", the audio was shared with Central Intelligence Agency agents; a CIA spokeswoman declined to comment. [82]

CNN reported on 15 October that Saudi Arabia was about to admit to the killing, but would claim that it was an "interrogation gone bad", as opposed to a targeted death squad killing. [83][84] This claim drew criticism from some, considering that Khashoggi was reportedly dismembered and that his killing was allegedly premeditated, and the circumstances, including the arrival and departure of a team of 15, included forensic specialists presumed to have been present to hide evidence of the crime, on the same day. [85]

The next day, *Middle East Eye* reported that, according to an anonymous Turkish source, the killing took about seven minutes and forensic specialist Salah Muhammed al-Tubaigy,

who had brought along a bone saw,^[86] cut Khashoggi's body into pieces while Khashoggi was still alive, as he and his colleagues listened to music.^[87] The source further claimed that "Khashoggi was dragged from consul general Mohammad al-Otaibi's office at the Saudi consulate ... Tubaigy began to cut Khashoggi's body up on a table in the study while he was still alive," and "There was no attempt to interrogate him. They had come to kill him."^[86]

The Turkish pro-government newspaper *Daily Sabah* reported on 18 October that neighbours to the consul's residence had observed an unusual barbecue party, which the paper suggested might have been to smoke-screen the smell from the incineration of the dismembered corpse: "We have been living here for twelve years but I have never seen them having a barbecue party. That day, they had a barbecue party in the garden." [88]

The Wall Street Journal published reports from anonymous sources that Khashoggi was tortured in front of top Saudi diplomat Mohammad al-Otaibi, Saudi Arabia's consul general. [89][90] Reuters reported that al-Otaibi left Istanbul for Riyadh on 16 October. His departure came hours before his home was expected to be searched in relation to the journalist's disappearance. [91]

On 20 October, the Saudi Foreign Ministry reported that a preliminary investigation showed that Khashoggi had died at the consulate while engaged in a fight, the first Saudi acknowledgement of Khashoggi's death.^[17] On 20 October Saud al-Qahtani and Ahmad Asiri were announced fired by Saudi Arabia for involvement in Khashoggi's killing according to the BBC.^[92]

On 21 October, an anonymous Saudi official said Khashoggi had been threatened with drugging and kidnapping by Maher Mutreb, had resisted and was restrained with a chokehold, which killed him.^[93]

On 22 October, Reuters cited a Turkish intelligence source and a high-ranking Arab with access to intelligence and links to members of Saudi's royal court and reported that Saud al-Qahtani, the then-top aide for Mohammed bin Salman, had made a Skype call to the consulate while Khashoggi was held in the room. Qahtani reportedly insulted Khashoggi, who responded in kind. According to the Turkish source, Qahtani then asked the team to kill Khashoggi. Qahtani instructed: "Bring me the head of the dog". According to both sources, the audio of the Skype call is currently with Erdogan. [94]

According to Nazif Karaman of the *Daily Sabah*, the audio recording from inside the consulate revealed that Khashoggi's last words were: "I'm suffocating... take this bag off my head, I'm claustrophobic."^[95] On 10 December, the details of the transcript of the audio were described to CNN by an anonymous source.^[96]

On 16 November, a *Hürriyet* columnist reported that Turkey has more evidence, including a second audio recording from the consulate, where the Saudi team review the plan how to

execute Khashoggi. He also reported that: "Turkish officials also did not confirm [Saudi prosecutor's claim] that Khashoggi was killed after they gave him a fatal dose of drug. They say that he was strangulated with a rope or something like a plastic bag." [97]

Investigation

Hatice Cengiz begged the US government to take action in helping to find her fiancé. In her *Washington Post* op-ed on 9 October, Cengiz wrote, "At this time, I implore President Trump and first lady Melania Trump to help shed light on Jamal's disappearance. I also urge Saudi Arabia, especially King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to show the same level of sensitivity and release CCTV footage from the consulate."^[51]

Sabah reported on 11 October that Turkish officials were investigating whether Khashoggi's Apple Watch would reveal clues as to what happened to him inside the Saudi consulate, examining whether data from the smartwatch could have been transmitted to the cloud, or his personal phone, which was with Cengiz.^[98]

On the evening of 14 October, President Erdoğan and King Salman announced that a deal had been made for a "jointing working group" to examine the case.^[99] On 15 October the Turkish Foreign Ministry announced that an "inspection" of the consulate, by both Turkish and Saudi officials, would take place that afternoon. ^{[100][101]} According to an anonymous source from the Attorney General's office, Turkish officials found



Police cordon, in front of the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, after Khashoggi's disappearance



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meets with King Salman on 16 October 2018

evidence of "tampering" during the inspection, and evidence that supports the belief Khashoggi was killed.^[18] President Erdoğan said that "investigation is looking into many things such as toxic materials and those materials being removed by painting them over".^[102]

According to anonymous sources, Turkish police have expanded the search, as Khashoggi's body may have been disposed of in nearby Belgrad Forest or on farmland in Yalova Province, as indicated by the movement of the Saudi vehicles, [103] and DNA tests of samples from the Saudi consulate and the consul's residence are being conducted; [104] *Al Jazeera* reported that according to anonymous sources, fingerprints of one of the alleged perpetrators, Salah Muhammad al-Tubaigy, were found in the consulate. [105]

Confirmation of death

On 20 October, the Saudi Foreign Ministry reported that a preliminary investigation showed that Khashoggi had died at the consulate while engaged in a fight, the first Saudi acknowledgement of Khashoggi's death.^[17]

On 22 October, six US and Western officials^[106] stated they believed that the crown prince Mohammad bin Salman, because of his role overseeing the Saudi security apparatus, was ultimately responsible for Khashoggi's disappearance, and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Gina Haspel, departed for Turkey to work on the investigation^[107] "amid a growing international uproar over Saudi's explanation of the killing".^[108] The Governor of İstanbul's office said that Khashoggi's fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, had been given 24-hour police protection.^[109]

Also on 22 October, CNN aired CCTV law enforcement footage from the Turkish authorities, showing the Saudi agent Mustafa al-Madani, a member of the 15-man team, leaving the consulate by the back door.^[110] He was dressed up in Khashoggi's clothes, except for the shoes. Madani had also put on a fake beard that resembled Khashoggi's facial hair, his glasses and his Apple Watch.[111][93][112] Madani, who was of similar age, height, and build to Khashoggi, left the consulate from its back door.^[110] He was later seen at Istanbul's Blue Mosque, where he went to a public bathroom and changed back to his own clothes and discarded Khashoggi's clothes.^[110] Later he was seen dining with another Saudi agent, and the footage shows him smiling and laughing. [113] An anonymous Turkish official believes that Madani was brought to Istanbul to act as a body double and that "You don't need a body double for a rendition or an interrogation. Our assessment has not changed since October 6. This was a premeditated murder, and the body was moved out of the consulate."[110] The use of the body double might have been an attempt to lend credence to the Saudi government's first version of events: that Khashoggi walked out through the back not long after he arrived. But "it was a flawed body double, so it never became an official part of the Saudi government's narrative", a Turkish diplomat told *The Washington Post*.[114]

The body double footage bolstered Turkish claims that the Saudis always intended either to kill Khashoggi or move him back to Saudi Arabia. Ömer Çelik, a spokesman for Turkey's ruling AKP, stated: "We are facing a situation that has been monstrously planned and later tried to be covered up. It is a complicated murder."^[115]

Saudi Arabia has vowed it will conduct a thorough criminal investigation and deliver justice for Khashoggi, Turkish investigators have been faced with several delays from their Saudi counterparts. On 22 October, BBC reported that Turkish police had found a car with diplomatic number plates, abandoned in an underground car park in Istanbul. The car belonged to the Saudi consulate and permission was sought from the Saudi diplomats to search the car.^[7] Turkish media published a video from 3 October (day after the

disappearance) that apparently showed the staff of the consulate burning documents.^[7]

Search of Saudi consul's residence

On Sunday 7 October, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Saudi Arabian Ambassador Waleed A. M. Elkhereiji to demand for the second time permission to search the consulate building. [116] Saudi officials continued to refuse that Turkish police could search the well in the Saudi consul's garden, [117][118] but granted permission on 24 October (22 days after the assassination). [119][120][121] Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* reported on 26 October that police had found no DNA traces of Khashoggi in water samples taken from the well. [122][123]

Calling for an international investigation, at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York City on 25 October, Agnes Callamard, UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, explained the Saudi officials implicated in the death of Khashoggi "are high enough to represent the state". [124] "Even Saudi Arabia has admitted that the crime was premeditated ... From where I sit, this bears all the hallmarks of extrajudicial executions. Until I am proven otherwise I must assume that this was the case. It is up to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to prove that it was not." [125]

Saudi public prosecutors visit

Saudi public prosecutor Saud al-Mojeb arrived in Istanbul on 28 October, days after he contradicted weeks of official Saudi statements by saying that Khashoggi's murder was premeditated. His trip came amid Turkish suggestions of "a lack of cooperation by the Saudi side" and alleged "attempts to spoil evidence".[126] Mojeb held talks on 29 October with Istanbul's chief prosecutor Irfan Fidan at the Çağlayan courthouse. During the meeting Saudi officials asked for the complete investigation folder, including evidence, statements and footage. The Turkish investigators presented the probe findings in a 150-page dossier, but refused to share all the evidence they have compiled in the murder. And they repeated the request for the extradition of the 18 suspects to Turkey, although the Saudi foreign minister Adel al-Jubeir insisted on 27 October that the men would be tried on Saudi soil. They also repeated requests for confirmation on the whereabouts of Khashoggi's body, the identity of the "local cooperator" that the Saudis claim disposed of the body, and an update on the progress of a Saudi investigation of the 15 Saudi operatives who visited the Istanbul consulate at the time of the murder. Due the lack of trust between the two countries the meeting lasted only 75 minutes. Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stated that "The whole truth must be revealed" and the visit will help in that direction. He also asked Saudis to complete the investigation sooner. [127][128]

Mojeb held a second round of talks with Fidan on 30 October, before inspecting the Saudi consulate in the Levent neighbourhood, where he left after spending a little over an

hour.^{[129][130]} According to a source at the prosecutor's office, Fidan asked Mojeb to conduct another joint search at the consul-general's residence, because when Turkish investigators first entered the building in mid-October they were not allowed to search three locked rooms and were also not allowed to search a 20-metre (66 ft)-deep well. The Saudis did not let firefighters descend into the well, and the search ended with police only able to obtain some water samples.^[126]

President Erdoğan said the investigation needs to be completed swiftly: "This needs to be solved now; there is no point in excuses", and wants an extradition request for 18 suspects detained in KSA to be put on trial in Istanbul. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, also urged Saudi Arabia to reveal the location of Khashoggi's body: "I urge the Saudi authorities to reveal the whereabouts of his body without further delay or prevarication."^[130] Mojeb was accused by Erdoğan of refusal to cooperate during his visit to discuss the investigation. Erdoğan stated that, "The prosecutor came to Turkey to make excuses, make things difficult." Mojeb had not shared any information to the Turkish investigators but wanted to take Khashoggi's mobile phone that was left outside the consulate with his fiancée when he entered.^[131]

Disposing the body

On 31 October a senior Turkish official told *The Washington Post* that Turkish authorities were investigating the theory that Khashoggi's body was destroyed in acid on the grounds of the consulate or at the nearby residence of the Saudi consul general. The "biological evidence" discovered in the consulate garden supported the theory. [132] Echoing the claim, Yasin Aktay, an adviser to Erdoğan in his ruling AK Party and a friend of Khashoggi, hinted in an article in the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet*, published on 2 November, that the body was destroyed by dismembering and dissolving in acid: "We now see that it wasn't just cut up, they got rid of the body by dissolving it". [133][134][135]

On 4 March 2019, Al Jazeera Arabic released a documentary on the investigation of Khashoggi's murder and the subsequent coverup. In its coverage, the network states that the body was likely disposed of by being burnt in an oven at the Saudi consulate general's residence. An interview with the oven's builder revealed that it was designed to be "deep", and capable of withstanding temperatures over 1000 degrees Celsius. The burning took three days and happened in parts. Afterwards, a large quantity of barbecue meat was prepared to cover the evidence of cremation.

In a *Washington Post* op-ed Erdoğan described the murder as "inexplicable" and as a "clear violation and a blatant abuse of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations", arguing that not punishing the perpetrators "could set a very dangerous precedent." He criticised Saudi inaction against the consul general Mohammad al-Otaibi, who had misled the media and had fled the country shortly afterwards. He warned that no-one should dare commit "such

acts on the soil of a NATO ally again" and wrote: "As responsible members of the international community, we must reveal the identities of the puppet masters behind Khashoggi's killing and discover those in whom Saudi officials – still trying to cover up the murder – have placed their trust... We know that the order to kill Khashoggi came from the highest levels of the Saudi government." He urged the international community to uncover the whole truth.^[137]

Tampering of evidence

On 5 November, *Daily Sabah* quoted a Turkish official that an 11-member "investigative team" had been sent by Saudi Arabia to Istanbul on 11 October.^[138] Chemist Ahmad Abdulaziz Aljanobi and toxicology expert Khaled Yahya al-Zahrani were sent as a part of the investigative team to erase the evidence and cover up.^[139] This was mentioned by the Turkish official as a sign of awareness about the crime among the top Saudi officials.^[131] The Saudi team had visited the consulate everyday between 11 and 17 October.^[139] On 15 October, Turkish police were allowed for the first time to enter the consulate.^[139]

Audio tapes

Speaking ahead of his departure for Paris to attend the World War I Armistice centenary Erdoğan acknowledged the existence of audio recordings in a televised speech on 10 November to maintain the pressure from the international community on KSA to reveal who ordered the murder of Khashoggi. He said: "We gave the tapes. We gave them to Saudi Arabia, to the United States, Germans, French and British, all of them." It was the first time that he disclosed that the three European Union states had heard the recordings. Reuters reported, quoting two sources with knowledge of the issue, that Turkey had multiple audio recordings. [131] These recordings document Khashoggi's tortures and death and also the conversations from the days prior to the incident that Turkey had uncovered during the course of its investigation. Based on these recordings, Turkey had concluded from an early stage that the killing was premeditated. Saud al-Qahtani was reported as having a major role throughout the recording. [131]

While attending the World War I Centennial commemorations in France, Erdoğan discussed with President Donald Trump how to further respond to the killing. And a further closed-door meeting with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of the United Nations took place. [140] President Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron agreed that more details were needed from KSA on Khashoggi's murder. Accordingly, they also agreed that the case should not cause further destabilization in the Middle East; and fallout from the Khashoggi affair could create a way forward to find a resolution to the ongoing War in Yemen. [141]

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave public confirmation that Turkey had shared

audio of the killing with world governments.^{[142][143]} The German government also confirmed it had received information from the Turkish authorities, but declined to elaborate.^[144] The British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt paid an official visit to KSA and called for its cooperation with a "credible" investigation into Khashoggi's killing.^[145]

One of the assassins was heard saying "I know how to cut" on the audio tape. [146]

Charges

On 15 November 2018, the Saudi Prosecutor's Office stated that 11 Saudi Nationals had been indicted and charged with murdering Khashoggi and that five of the individuals who were indicted would face the death penalty, since it had been determined they were directly involved in "ordering and executing the crime". Prosecutors alleged that shortly after Khashoggi entered the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul he was bound and then injected with an overdose of a sedative that resulted in his death. The prosecutors also alleged that his body had been dismembered and removed from the consulate by five of those charged in the killing and given to a local collaborator for disposal. Saudi officials continued to deny that the Saudi Royal Family was involved in, ordered, or sanctioned the killing. [24][25]

On 16 November 2018, several news organizations including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* reported that CIA was unequivocal in assessing with "high confidence" that the crown prince Mohammad bin Salman ordered Khashoggi's assassination. The agency examined multiple sources of intelligence, including an intercepted phone call that the crown prince's brother Khalid bin Salman – the then Saudi ambassador to the United States – had with Khashoggi. A conclusion that contradicted previous Saudi government claims that the crown prince was not involved. A CIA spokesman and both the White House and the US State Department declined to comment. The Saudis issued a denial. [1][147]

On 20 November 2018, Trump issued the statement "On Standing with Saudi Arabia" and without citing further evidence he denied the CIA's conclusion: "Our intelligence agencies continue to assess all information, but it could very well be that the Crown Prince had knowledge of this tragic event – maybe he did and maybe he didn't!". [149][26][150] In a series of interviews President Trump said the crown prince denies his involvement "vehemently" and the CIA only has "feelings" and there is "no smoking gun" in the death. [151] The next day Hürriyet columnist Abdulkadir Selvi wrote that the "CIA holds 'smoking gun phone call' of Saudi Crown Prince on Khashoggi murder" and that the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency Gina Haspel has possession of an intercepted phone call in which crown prince Mohammad gives an order to his brother Khalid "to silence Jamal Khashoggi as soon as possible". "The subsequent murder is the ultimate confirmation of this instruction." [153][154][155]

Citing the leaked CIA assessment, The Wall Street Journal reported that Mohammed bin

Salman sent at least 11 text messages in the hours before and after the assassination on 2 October to his closest adviser Saud al-Qahtani who supervised the 15-man kill-team that was sent to Istanbul, and that Qahtani was in direct communication with the team's leader in Istanbul. The assessment also noted that Mohammed bin Salman had told his agents back in August 2017 that Khashoggi could be lured to a third country, if he could not be persuaded to return to the KSA.^[156] However, the message-exchange element of the report was contested by Saudi Arabia based on a confidential Saudi-commissioned investigation conducted by the private security firm Kroll. The investigation, which focused on a forensic examination of a cellphone belonging to Saud al-Qahtani, found that none of the messages exchanged on the day of the murder between Prince Mohammed and Mr. Qahtani concerned the murder.^[157]

In September 2019, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman appeared in an interview with the CBS "60 Minutes" program that was aired on 29 September 2019, denying that he had ordered the killing of Jamal Khashoggi or that he had prior knowledge about it but said that he bears all responsibility for the killing of Jamal Khashoggi because the incident took place under his watch. He also said that "once charges are proven against someone, regardless of their rank, it will be taken to court, no exception made." [158][159]

Aftermath

Three weeks to the day after the death of Khashoggi, on 22 October, his son and brother were summoned to a photo op with King Salman and the heir to the throne, at the Palace of Yamamah, in Riyadh. Salah bin Jamal Khashoggi and his uncle Sahel were received by the royals. Pictures of the event went viral, amid reports that Salah, who lives in Jeddah, has been banned from leaving the country since 2017. A family friend, Yehia Assiri, described the event as "a serious assault on the family". [160][161] Nick Paton Walsh, a senior international correspondent, described it as "a remarkable display of the sustained and catastrophic disconnect between Riyadh and the outside world. As if PR is something you shoot yourself in the foot with." [162] On 24 October, Salah Khashoggi, who holds dual Saudi-US citizenship, and his family left Saudi Arabia for the US. [163]

On December 8, *Newsweek* reported allegations that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, had "maintained unofficial communications via a WhatsApp chat for the past two years and...continued to speak in the wake of Khashoggi's killing."^[164]

Alleged perpetrators

Al-Waqt news quoted informed sources as saying that Mohammad bin Salman had assigned Ahmad Asiri, the deputy head of the Saudi intelligence agency Riasat Al-Mukhabarat Al-A'amah^[165] and the former spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, with the

mission to execute Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Another military officer with a great deal of experience in dealing with dissidents was the second candidate for the mission.^[166] On the same day, Turkish media close to the President published images of what it described as a 15-member "assassination squad" allegedly sent to kill Khashoggi, and of a black van later traveling from the Saudi consulate to the consul's home. [167] On 17 October the Daily Sabah, a news outlet close to the Turkish president, published the names and pictures of the 15-member Saudi team apparently taken at passport control.[168] Additional details about identities were also reported along with their aliases.^[169] According to one report, seven of the fifteen men suspected of killing Khashoggi are Mohammed bin Salman's personal bodyguards.[170] The Daily Sabah outlet named and detailed:

- Maher Abdulaziz Mutreb (Arabic: ماهر عبد العزيز مطرب) (born 1971): a former diplomat in London, was photographed with Mohammad bin Salman on trips to Madrid, Paris, Houston, Boston and New York.[171] [172][173]
- Salah Mohammed al-Tubaigy (Arabic: صلاح محمد) (born 1971): the head of the Saudi Scientific Council of Forensics. [172]



Ahmad Asiri (right) and Mohammed bin Salman (left) in 2016



Salah Mohammed Al-Tubaigy at Istanbul Airport

- Abdulaziz Mohammed al-Hasawi (Arabic: عبد العزيز محمد الحساوي) (born 1987): works as one of Mohammed bin Salman's personal bodyguards.^[172]
- Thaer Ghaleb al-Harbi (Arabic: ثائر غالب الحربي) (born 1979): a member of the Saudi Royal Guard.^[172]
- Mohammed Saad al-Zahrani (Arabic: محمد سعد الزهراني) (born 1988): a member of the Saudi Royal Guard. [172]
- Meshal Saad al-Bostani (Arabic: مشعل سعد البستاني) (born 1987, died 2018): according to Al Jazeera, a Lieutenant in the Saudi Air Force. [174] According to Turkish media, he died in a car accident in Riyadh on return to Saudi Arabia. [175][176][177]
- Naif Hassan al-Arefe (Arabic: نايف حسن العريفي) (born 1986)
- Mustafa Mohammed al-Madani (Arabic: مصطفى محمد المدني) (born 1961): Khashoggi's body double leaving the Saudi consulate by the back door, dressed in Khashoggi's clothes, a fake beard, and his glasses. The same man was seen at the Blue Mosque, in an attempt to show that Khashoggi had left the consulate unharmed. [111][113][112]
- Mansur Uthman Abahussein (Arabic: منصور عثمان أباحسين) (born 1972)

- Waleed Abdullah al-Shehri (Arabic: وليد عبد الله الشهري) (born 1980)
- Turki Musharraf al-Shehri (Arabic: تركى مشرف الشهري) (born 1982)
- Fahad Shabib al-Balawi (Arabic: فهد شبيب البلوي) (born 1985)
- Saif Saad al-Qahtani (Arabic: سيف سعد القحطاني) (born 1973)
- Khalid Aedh al-Taibi (Arabic: خالد عايض الطيبي) (born 1988)
- Badir Lafi al-Otaibi (Arabic: بدر لافي العتيبي) (born 1973)

Other alleged abduction attempts

Following Jamal Khashoggi's killing and mutilation, several other exiled Saudi activists reported that the Saudi regime attempted to lure them into their embassies. [178][179]

Exiled Saudi activist Omar Abdulaziz said he was approached earlier in 2018 by Saudi officials who urged him to visit the Saudi embassy in Ottawa, Canada with them to collect a new passport. The Saudi activist stated that the officials from the Saudi regime, "They were saying 'it will only take one hour, just come with us to the embassy.' "After Omar Abdulaziz refused, Saudi authorities arrested two of his brothers and several of his friends in Saudi Arabia. [179] Abdulaziz secretly recorded his conversations with those officials, which were several hours long, and provided them to *The Washington Post*. [180]

Opposition Saudi scholar Abdullah Alaoudh (son of Salman al-Ouda) said he was subjected to a similar plot when he sent in a passport renewal application to the Saudi Embassy in Washington. Alaoudh said, "They offered me a 'temporary pass' that would allow me to return to Saudi Arabia." Alaoudh suspected a trap and just let his passport expire. [178][179]

Prominent Saudi women's rights activist Manal al-Sharif also separately reported a similar event during her exile in Australia, having said: "If it weren't for the kindness of God I would have been [another] victim." [178][179]

Tiger Squad

Middle East Eye published claims from an unnamed source with knowledge of Saudi intelligence agencies that the murder is part of a larger operation of silently murdering critics of Saudi government by a death squad named "Tiger Squad", composed of the most trusted and skilled intelligence agents. [79] According to the source, the Tiger Squad assassinates dissidents using varying methods such as planned car accidents, house fires, or poisoning clinics by injecting toxic substances into opponents when they attend regular health checkups. The alleged group members are recruited from different branches of the Saudi forces, directing several areas of expertise. [79] According to Middle East Eye, five members were part of the 15-member death squad who were sent to murder Khashoggi. [79]

The source interviewed by *Middle East Eye* also said the team planned to kill Omar Abdelaziz and claimed prince Mansour bin Muqrin was assassinated by the squad by shooting down his personal aircraft as he was fleeing the country on 5 November 2017 and made to appear as an accidental crash.^[79]

The Tiger Squad also reportedly killed Suleiman Abdul Rahman al-Thuniyan, a Saudi court judge who was murdered by an injection of a deadly virus into his body when he had visited a hospital for a regular health checkup. "One of the techniques the Tiger Squad uses to silence dissidents or opponents of the government is to 'kill them with HIV, or other sorts of deadly viruses'". [79]

Reactions

For 18 days, Saudi Arabian officials denied Khashoggi had died in the consulate, before indicating a team of Saudi agents had overstepped their orders to capture him when a struggle ensued leading to his death.^[181] Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said he believes the killing was premeditated and approved by the Saudi government, and sought extradition of the suspects.^[182] The United States' president, Donald Trump, expressed support for the Saudi government, reserving judgment about culpability.^[99] This created a bipartisan uproar in Congress, and 22 senators petitioned Trump to consider investigating whether Saudi Arabia should be sanctioned for human rights violations.^[183] Several countries called for a transparent investigation and condemned the killing. Allied Arab countries characterized the aftermath as a media campaign against Saudi Arabia.^[184]

Germany, Norway and Denmark^[185] stopped the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia over the incident. Canada considered freezing its \$13 billion General Dynamics arms deal,^[186] but so far has chosen to proceed with the deal.^{[187][188]}

According to a U.S. senator, the Trump administration granted authorizations to US companies to share sensitive nuclear power information with Saudi Arabia shortly after the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi.^[189] In July 2019, President Trump vetoed three bipartisan Congressional resolutions that would have halted arms sales.^[190]

On 11 December 2018, Khashoggi was named as a person of the year by *Time* magazine for his work in journalism, along with other journalists who faced political persecution for their work. *Time* referred to Khashoggi, and the others, as a "Guardian of the Truth". [191][192][193]

See also

- Freedom of the press
- Pegasus (spyware)
- Human rights in Saudi Arabia

- Israa al-Ghomgham Saudi human rights activist who documented the 2017–18
 Qatif unrest and faces execution by beheading
- Sheikh Baqir al-Nimr dissident cleric executed for criticism of the Saudi regime
- Ali Mohammed Baqir al-Nimr, (Sheikh Baqir al-Nimr's nephew), participated in the protests during the Arab Spring, arrested at the age of 17 and sentenced to death, to be carried out by beheading and crucifixion
- Salman al-Ouda cleric in the city of Riyadh, urged the Saudi monarchy to launch democratic reforms, sentenced to death in September 2018^[194]
- Raif Badawi imprisoned Saudi dissident, writer and activist
- Hamza Kashgari pro-democracy activist and columnist imprisoned for blasphemy
- Dina Ali Lasloom imprisoned Saudi asylum seeker
- Samar Badawi imprisoned Saudi activist
- Fahad al-Butairi abducted in Jordan and taken to be imprisoned in Saudi Arabia
- Manal al-Sharif Saudi human rights activist
- Loujain al-Hathloul imprisoned Saudi activist
- Mishaal bint Fahd bin Mohammed Al Saud Saudi princess executed for alleged adultery
- Sara bint Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud exiled Saudi princess and regime critic
- 2016 Saudi Arabia mass execution
- 2017 Saad Hariri affair

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