

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 839

To protect journalists and other members of the press from gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, and for other purposes.

---

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 4, 2021

Mr. SCHIFF (for himself, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. KHANNA, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. NEGUSE, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. COHEN, Mr. SIRES, Mr. DEUTCH, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. NORTON, Ms. PORTER, Mrs. DEMINGS, Mr. HASTINGS, and Mr. MOULTON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

---

## A BILL

To protect journalists and other members of the press from gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Jamal Khashoggi  
5 Press Freedom Accountability Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) A free and independent press is necessary  
4 for citizens to make informed choices on issues of  
5 public concern, to have the information necessary to  
6 recognize truth from falsehood, and to hold the pow-  
7 erful and government officials to account.

8 (2) As reflected in the First Amendment to the  
9 United States Constitution, a free press is essential  
10 to safeguard democracy.

11 (3) The suppression of the press is historically  
12 associated with authoritarian rule.

13 (4) As provided in Article 19 of the United Na-  
14 tions Universal Declaration of Human Rights and  
15 the International Covenant on Civil and Political  
16 Rights, all people enjoy the right to freedom of opin-  
17 ion and expression, which includes the right to seek,  
18 receive, and impart information.

19 (5) An informed public is fundamental to a free  
20 society.

21 (6) In accordance with a long United States  
22 history of championing freedom of the press around  
23 the globe, the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press  
24 Act of 2009 was enacted into law (Public Law 111–  
25 166).

1           (7) Since the passage of the Daniel Pearl Free-  
2           dom of the Press Act of 2009, the global environ-  
3           ment for a free and independent press has become  
4           more repressive.

5           (8) According to 2020 data from the Committee  
6           to Protect Journalists, for the fifth consecutive year,  
7           at least 250 journalists were imprisoned globally in  
8           2020, and there was complete impunity in an esti-  
9           mated 86 percent of cases of murdered journalists in  
10          the last decade.

11          (9) According to 2019 data from Freedom  
12          House, in seven of the last 10 years, more countries  
13          have seen declines in press freedom scores than im-  
14          provements. In the last five years, nearly 50 percent  
15          more countries have seen a net decline in press free-  
16          dom.

17          (10) According to 2019 data from Reporters  
18          Without Borders, 63 percent of the journalists killed  
19          last year were deliberately targeted and 59 percent  
20          were killed outside warzones.

21          (11) In 2018, the brutal murder of Jamal  
22          Khashoggi at the hands of Saudi intelligence officers  
23          acting on explicit orders of the Saudi Government  
24          underscored the extent to which those in power will  
25          go to stifle the freedom of expression, silence their

1 critics, and eliminate the threat they believe inde-  
2 pendent journalists pose to their rule.

3 **SEC. 3. EXPANDING SCOPE OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS**  
4 **WITH RESPECT TO VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN**  
5 **RIGHTS OF JOURNALISTS.**

6 The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151  
7 et seq.) is amended as follows:

8 (1) In paragraph (12) of section 116(d)—

9 (A) in subparagraph (B)—

10 (i) by inserting “or online harass-  
11 ment” after “direct physical attacks”; and

12 (ii) by inserting “or surveillance”  
13 after “sources of pressure”;

14 (B) in subparagraph (C)(ii), by striking  
15 “ensure the prosecution” and all that follows to  
16 the end of the clause and inserting “ensure the  
17 investigation, prosecution, and conviction of  
18 government officials or private individuals who  
19 engage in or facilitate digital or physical at-  
20 tacks, including hacking, censorship, surveil-  
21 lance, harassment, unlawful imprisonment, or  
22 bodily harm, against journalists and others who  
23 perform, or provide administrative support to,  
24 the dissemination of print, broadcast, internet-

1 based, or social media intended to communicate  
2 facts or opinion.”;

3 (C) by redesignating subparagraphs (B)  
4 and (C) (as amended by subparagraph (A) of  
5 this section) as subparagraphs (C) and (D), re-  
6 spectively; and

7 (D) by inserting after subparagraph (A)  
8 the following new subparagraph:

9 “(B) an identification of countries in which  
10 there were gross violations of internationally  
11 recognized human rights (as such term is de-  
12 fined for purposes of section 502B) committed  
13 against journalists;”.

14 (2) By redesignating the second subsection (i)  
15 of section 502B as subsection (j).

16 (3) In the first subsection (i) of section 502B—  
17 (A) in paragraph (2)—

18 (i) by inserting “or online harass-  
19 ment” after “direct physical attacks”; and

20 (ii) by inserting “or surveillance”  
21 after “sources of pressure”;

22 (B) by redesignating paragraph (2) (as  
23 amended by subparagraph (A) of this section)  
24 and paragraph (3) as paragraphs (3) and (4),  
25 respectively; and

1 (C) by inserting after paragraph (1) the  
 2 following new paragraph:

3 “(2) an identification of countries in which  
 4 there were gross violations of internationally recog-  
 5 nized human rights committed against journalists;”.

6 **SEC. 4. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS ON PERSONS RESPON-**  
 7 **SIBLE FOR THE COMMISSION OF GROSS VIO-**  
 8 **LATIONS OF INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED**  
 9 **HUMAN RIGHTS AGAINST JOURNALISTS.**

10 (a) LISTING OF PERSONS WHO HAVE COMMITTED  
 11 GROSS VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED  
 12 HUMAN RIGHTS.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—On or after the date on  
 14 which a person is listed pursuant to paragraph (2),  
 15 the President shall impose the sanctions described in  
 16 subsection (b) on each foreign person the President  
 17 determines, based on credible information, has per-  
 18 petrated, ordered, or otherwise directed the  
 19 extrajudicial killing of or other gross violation of  
 20 internationally recognized human rights committed  
 21 against a journalist or other person who performs,  
 22 or provides administrative support to, the dissemina-  
 23 tion of print, broadcast, internet-based, or social  
 24 media intended to report newsworthy activities or in-

1       formation, or communicate facts or fact-based opin-  
2       ions.

3           (2) PUBLICATION OF LIST.—The Secretary of  
4       State shall publish on a publicly available website of  
5       the Department of State a list of the names of each  
6       foreign person determined pursuant to paragraph  
7       (1) to have perpetrated, ordered, or directed an act  
8       described in such paragraph. Such list shall be up-  
9       dated at least annually.

10          (3) EXCEPTION.—The President may waive the  
11       imposition of sanctions under paragraph (1) (and  
12       omit a foreign person from the list published in ac-  
13       cordance with paragraph (2)) or terminate such  
14       sanctions and remove a foreign person from such  
15       list, if the President certifies to the Committee on  
16       Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and  
17       the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate—

18           (A) that public identification of the indi-  
19       vidual is not in the national interest of the  
20       United States, including an unclassified de-  
21       scription of the factual basis supporting such  
22       certification, which may contain a classified  
23       annex; or

24           (B) that appropriate foreign government  
25       authorities have credibly—

1 (i) investigated the foreign person  
2 and, as appropriate, held such person ac-  
3 countable for perpetrating, ordering, or di-  
4 recting the acts described in paragraph  
5 (1);

6 (ii) publicly condemned violations of  
7 the freedom of the press and the acts de-  
8 scribed in paragraph (1);

9 (iii) complied with any requests for in-  
10 formation from international or regional  
11 human rights organizations with respect to  
12 the acts described in paragraph (1); and

13 (iv) complied with any United States  
14 Government requests for information with  
15 respect to the acts described in paragraph  
16 (1).

17 (b) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—The sanctions de-  
18 scribed in this subsection are the following:

19 (1) ASSET BLOCKING.—The President shall ex-  
20 ercise all of the powers granted to the President  
21 under the International Emergency Economic Pow-  
22 ers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent nec-  
23 essary to block and prohibit all transactions in prop-  
24 erty and interests in property of a foreign person  
25 identified in the report required under subsection



1 (a)(1) if such property and interests in property are  
2 in the United States, come within the United States,  
3 or come within the possession or control of a United  
4 States person.

5 (2) INELIGIBILITY FOR VISAS, ADMISSION, OR  
6 PAROLE.—

7 (A) VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.—An  
8 alien described in subsection (a)(1) is—

9 (i) inadmissible to the United States;

10 (ii) ineligible to receive a visa or other  
11 documentation to enter the United States;  
12 and

13 (iii) otherwise ineligible to be admitted  
14 or paroled into the United States or to re-  
15 ceive any other benefit under the Immigra-  
16 tion and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et  
17 seq.).

18 (B) CURRENT VISAS REVOKED.—

19 (i) IN GENERAL.—An alien described  
20 in subsection (a)(1) is subject to revocation  
21 of any visa or other entry documentation  
22 regardless of when the visa or other entry  
23 documentation is or was issued.

24 (ii) IMMEDIATE EFFECT.—A revoca-  
25 tion under clause (i) shall take effect im-

1           mediately, and automatically cancel any  
2           other valid visa or entry documentation  
3           that is in the alien's possession.

4       (3) EXCEPTIONS.—

5           (A) EXCEPTION FOR INTELLIGENCE AC-  
6           TIVITIES.—The sanctions described in this sub-  
7           section shall not apply to any activity subject to  
8           the reporting requirements under title V of the  
9           National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3091  
10          et seq.) or any authorized intelligence activities  
11          of the United States.

12          (B) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH INTER-  
13          NATIONAL OBLIGATIONS.—The sanctions de-  
14          scribed in this subsection shall not apply with  
15          respect to an alien if admitting or paroling the  
16          alien into the United States is necessary to per-  
17          mit the United States to comply with the  
18          Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the  
19          United Nations, signed at Lake Success June  
20          26, 1947, and entered into force November 21,  
21          1947, between the United Nations and the  
22          United States, or other applicable international  
23          obligations.

24       (c) IMPLEMENTATION; PENALTIES.—

1           (1) IMPLEMENTATION.—The President may ex-  
2       ercise all authorities provided under sections 203  
3       and 205 of the International Emergency Economic  
4       Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1702 and 1704) to carry out  
5       this section.

6           (2) PENALTIES.—The penalties provided for in  
7       subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the Inter-  
8       national Emergency Economic Powers Act (50  
9       U.S.C. 1705) shall apply to a foreign person that  
10      violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or  
11      causes a violation of this section to the same extent  
12      that such penalties apply to a person that commits  
13      an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of such  
14      section 206.

15      (d) EXCEPTION RELATING TO THE IMPORTATION OF  
16      GOODS.—

17           (1) IN GENERAL.—The authorities and require-  
18      ments to impose sanctions under this Act shall not  
19      include any authority or requirement to impose sanc-  
20      tions on the importation of goods.

21           (2) GOOD DEFINED.—For purposes of this sub-  
22      section, the term “good” means any article, natural  
23      or man-made substance, material, supply, or manu-  
24      factured product, including inspection and test  
25      equipment and excluding technical data.

1 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

2 (1) ADMITTED; ALIEN.—The terms “admitted”  
3 and “alien” have the meanings given those terms in  
4 section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act  
5 (8 U.S.C. 1001).

6 (2) FOREIGN PERSON.—The term “foreign per-  
7 son” means an individual who is not—

8 (A) a United States citizen or national; or

9 (B) an alien lawfully admitted for perma-  
10 nent residence to the United States.

11 (3) UNITED STATES PERSON.—The term  
12 “United States person” means—

13 (A) a United States citizen, an alien law-  
14 fully admitted for permanent residence to the  
15 United States, or any other individual subject  
16 to the jurisdiction of the United States;

17 (B) an entity organized under the laws of  
18 the United States or of any jurisdiction within  
19 the United States, including a foreign branch of  
20 such entity; or

21 (C) any person in the United States.

22 **SEC. 5. PROHIBITION ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.**

23 (a) PROHIBITION.—Assistance authorized under the  
24 Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.)  
25 or the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.)

1 may not be made available to any governmental entity of  
2 a country if the Secretary of State or the Director of Na-  
3 tional Intelligence has credible information that one or  
4 more officials associated with, leading, or otherwise acting  
5 under the authority of such entity has committed a gross  
6 violation of internationally recognized human rights  
7 against a journalist or other person who performs, or pro-  
8 vides administrative support to, the dissemination of print,  
9 broadcast, internet-based, or social media intended to re-  
10 port newsworthy activities or information, or communicate  
11 facts or fact-based opinions. To the maximum extent prac-  
12 ticable, a list of such governmental entities shall be pub-  
13 lished on publicly available websites of the Department of  
14 State and of the Office of the Director of National Intel-  
15 ligence and shall be updated on a regular basis.

16 (b) PROMPT INFORMATION.—The Secretary of State  
17 shall promptly inform appropriate officials of the govern-  
18 ment of a country from which assistance is withheld in  
19 accordance with the prohibition under subsection (a).

20 (c) EXCEPTION.—The prohibition under subsection  
21 (a) shall not apply with respect to the following:

22 (1) Humanitarian assistance or disaster relief  
23 assistance authorized under the Foreign Assistance  
24 Act of 1961.

1           (2) Assistance the Secretary determines to be  
2           essential to assist the government of a country to  
3           bring the responsible members of the relevant gov-  
4           ernmental entity to justice for the acts described in  
5           subsection (a).

6           (d) WAIVER.—

7           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, may  
8           waive the prohibition under subsection (a) with re-  
9           spect to a governmental entity of a country if—

10           (A) the President, acting through the Sec-  
11           retary of State and the Director of National In-  
12           telligence, determines that such a waiver is in  
13           the national security interest of the United  
14           States; or

15           (B) the Secretary of State has received  
16           credible information that the government of  
17           that country has—

18           (i) performed a thorough investigation  
19           of the acts described in subsection (a) and  
20           is taking effective steps to bring respon-  
21           sible members of the relevant governmental  
22           entity to justice;

23           (ii) condemned violations of the free-  
24           dom of the press and the acts described in  
25           subsection (a);

1 (iii) complied with any requests for in-  
2 formation from international or regional  
3 human rights organizations with respect to  
4 the acts described in subsection (a), in ac-  
5 cordance with international legal obliga-  
6 tions to protect the freedom of expression;  
7 and

8 (iv) complied with United States Gov-  
9 ernment requests for information with re-  
10 spect to the acts described in paragraph  
11 (a).

12 (2) CERTIFICATION.—A waiver described in  
13 paragraph (1) may only take effect if—

14 (A) the Secretary of State certifies, not  
15 later than 30 days before the effective date of  
16 the waiver, to the Committee on Foreign Af-  
17 fairs and the Committee on Appropriations of  
18 the House of Representatives and the Com-  
19 mittee on Foreign Relations and the Committee  
20 on Appropriations of the Senate that such waiv-  
21 er is warranted and includes an unclassified de-  
22 scription of the factual basis supporting the cer-  
23 tification, which may contain a classified annex;  
24 and

1 (B) the Director of National Intelligence,  
2 not later than 30 days before the effective date  
3 of the waiver, submits to the Permanent Select  
4 Committee on Intelligence of the House of Rep-  
5 resentatives and the Select Committee on Intel-  
6 ligence of the Senate a report detailing any un-  
7 derlying information that the intelligence com-  
8 munity (as such term is defined in section 3 of  
9 the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C.  
10 3003)) has regarding the perpetrators of the  
11 acts described in subsection (a), which shall be  
12 submitted in unclassified form but may contain  
13 a classified annex.

○