

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

### TOPLINE TAKEAWAY

- *The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia must change.*

### WHILE TRUMP RUNS PR FOR SAUDI ARABIA, CALLS FOR JUSTICE AND CHANGE GROW

The news surrounding Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance grows more disturbing by the day. Here's [what we know so far](#), according to Turkish authorities: When Jamal Khashoggi entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, a team of fifteen men were waiting for him. He was tortured, killed, and dismembered. The team of men, carrying diplomatic passports, flew out of Turkey that same evening. One of those suspects, coincidentally, was reportedly [killed](#) in a traffic accident in Saudi this week.

The suspicion of a cover-up in the making is consistent with a [CNN report](#) that Saudi Arabia is preparing to chalk up Khashoggi's death to an interrogation gone wrong and scapegoat a member of the Saudi intelligence services. However, the links to Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, or MbS, only grow more solid, as one of the prince's highest level aides was [captured on camera](#) entering the consulate on the same day Khashoggi disappeared. The denials of MbS and the Saudi King, already dubious to begin with, now just insult the collective intelligence of the global community.

Unsurprisingly, the president of the United States has only [parroted](#) those denials. But while President Trump and his administration wait for MbS to get his story straight, others across the government and private sector have taken action.

### THE PATH TO DEFEND ATROCITIES

Given his record of cozying up with authoritarian regimes and alienating democratic allies, it comes as no surprise that Trump has been reluctant to criticize MbS. As the world read with horror the increasingly gruesome headlines alleging Khashoggi's fate, Trump pitched in with conspiracy theories of "[rogue killers](#)," equivocated U.S. responsibility to take action based on Khashoggi's residential status, and repeated the Saudi regime's dubious denials.

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



Meanwhile, Trump [sent](#) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Riyadh to speak directly to the King and the Crown Prince regarding Khashoggi's fate. There, Pompeo was [photographed](#) grinning amicably during a meeting with MbS, a stomach-churning display of impunity when considering the dismemberment of a U.S. resident was on the agenda.

Perhaps as a result of Pompeo's unproductive meeting with the Saudi government, Trump finally [shifted his tone yesterday](#) and accepted that it "certainly looks" like Khashoggi is dead. When asked about consequences for the Saudi regime, he said, "Well it'll have to be severe, I mean it's bad, bad stuff. We'll see what happens. OK?"

As of now, it seems unlikely that the repercussions will be as "severe" as Trump claims. The president has said repeatedly that he would be reluctant to take any action that could jeopardize his purported \$110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia and allegedly drive Saudi Arabia into the embrace of Chinese or Russian weapons dealers. But besides from the moral bankruptcy of such a defense, the argument itself is also [unconvincing](#). Due to the need of interoperability, the Saudis cannot simply add Chinese and Russian weapons to an American weapons system. The process would take years and come at a significant cost, costs that even Saudi may not be able to sustain given the current state of its economy. Furthermore, the net benefit to jobs created in the United States by those arms sales is [not nearly as significant](#) as Trump claims.

Given the baselessness of the argument, it is unsurprising to discover deeper motives underlying Trump's support of the Saudi regime's criminal enterprise. Namely, they make him rich. Despite Trump's denial of any personal financial interest in Saudi Arabia, according to [Politifact](#), that claim is "half true at best." The numbers speak for themselves:

- [\\$300,000](#) from a Saudi lobbying firm spent at Trump's DC hotel.
- [\\$4.5 million](#) from the Saudi government's purchase of a floor of Trump World Tower in 2001.
- MbS's visit to the [Trump International Hotel in Manhattan](#) this year drove up the hotel's revenue.
- Trump has boasted of earning "[hundreds of millions](#)" from sales to Saudi Arabia.

And that's just what we know from public reporting. Needless to say, we can't count on Trump to take action. Thankfully, we don't have to.

## THE PATH TO JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Trump and his cabinet of hawks stand increasingly alone in the global tide turning against the Saudi regime. While Trump sent his Secretary of State to Riyadh to make nice with MbS,

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



France, Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands have all [suspended political visits](#) to Saudi Arabia until the truth of Khashoggi's fate comes out.

Business and government leaders have embarked on a [mass exodus](#) from Saudi's "Future Investment Initiative" conference, or "Davos in the Desert" as it's sometimes called. Even [Fox Business](#) and [Trump's Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin](#), reluctant at first to break with the president on the issue, have exited the conference, clearly recognizing the building momentum.

But some important business leaders are [still attending](#). So along with the Project for Middle Democracy, we [organized](#) a letter calling for other attendees to join the exodus. More than thirty organizations, representing millions of Americans, have signed the letter, urging business leaders to back out of the conference to send a message to the Saudis about the importance of real accountability for Khashoggi's murder and the countless others who languish in Saudi prisons on trumped up charges related to their activism, speech, or religious beliefs.

This week has also witnessed a flurry of [Congressional action and outrage](#). While each action is limited in its specific scope, taken in concert, all are essential to channeling global outrage into productive change by addressing different components of the Saudi relationship, including ending U.S. support for the war Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates wage in Yemen.

1. A bipartisan group of senators invoked the [Global Magnitsky Act](#) which requires the president to conduct an investigation on whether members of the Saudi government violated human rights in Khashoggi's disappearance, and if found guilty, authorizes the imposition of targeted sanctions on the guilty parties. This could include sanctions on MbS, or at least, the fifteen (now fourteen) suspects of the "murder squad."
2. A War Powers Resolution has been [introduced](#) in the House and Sen. Bernie Sanders plans to [revive](#) a companion measure in the Senate, which would end our direct support of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, including stopping intelligence sharing and in-flight refueling on Saudi and UAE aircraft.
3. If Trump moves forward with arms sales to Saudi, bypassing Senator Bob Menendez's current hold on sales, several senators on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have [indicated](#) there are likely more than enough votes to pass a resolution of disapproval and block the sale.

The global demand for accountability is heartening. However, people want to use this momentum in different ways. Some want to use it to simply sideline MbS and return to the status quo. We have to resist that easy solution which won't create the systemic change necessary in the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia or end Saudi Arabia's human rights violations against its

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



own people. Instead, we should use this moment to put tangible support behind [Jamal Khashoggi's last call for freedom of expression](#) in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world, to stop offering U.S. support and legitimacy to the world's largest humanitarian crisis in Yemen, and ultimately, to re-examine the terms of the U.S.-Saudi alliance. As Senator Chris Murphy said in an [op-ed for the Washington Post](#), "[We] owe it to Khashoggi to learn the whole story and reset our relationship with the country that likely carried out his murder."

## **BURIED LEDES**

The UN [warned this week](#) that **Yemen could be facing the worst famine in 100 years** if the Saudi-led coalition does not stop its airstrikes.

The [threat](#) of nuclear war **is not just some relic of the Cold War**.

Why are [high ranking](#) active duty U.S. military officials **speaking at a conference put on by a hate group?**

Chinese officials [claim](#) **their internment camps for Muslims are just job-training facilities**.

Speaking of internment camps, we're all [paying far too little attention](#) to **the massive and growing internment camps being run by the Trump Administration** in the Texas desert.

Myanmar military [personnel](#) **used Facebook to incite genocide**.

Former American soldiers [are](#) **doing the UAE's dirty work, running murder squads in Yemen**.

[Hardly anyone talks](#) about the fact that the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS **obliterated Raqqa and killed hundreds of civilians**.

A new [poll](#) found that a **large majority of American Jews disapprove of Trump's handling of foreign policy**, particularly his withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, relations with the Palestinians, and his decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem.

Donald Trump [should](#) **sign an end of war declaration with North Korea**.

Trump's Justice Department is [asking](#) the Supreme Court to throw out a lawsuit by a group of young people aged 10 to 21 who claim that **the government violated their right to "a climate system capable of sustaining human life."**

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



Yes there's peace in Columbia [but](#) **victims of sexual violence during the years-long conflict have yet to see justice.**

[Progressive foreign policy](#) is **pretty popular, even in deep red Texas.**

And finally, yes, good things still happen: Ethiopia's new prime minister [announced](#) this week that **half of his cabinet will be women.**