

Khushoggi's Murder and Saudi War Crimes in Yemen Were Facilitated by US

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The alleged torture, dismemberment and killing of [Saudi citizen and US permanent resident Jamal Khashoggi](#) in the Saudi embassy in Istanbul has triggered justifiable outrage throughout the United States and around the world. But amid the outcry over Khashoggi's death, many media and public figures still fail to acknowledge the war crimes Saudi Arabia is committing in Yemen with US assistance.

Khashoggi, a columnist for The Washington Post, had written critically about the Saudi government and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The Post reported that Mohammed had recently [attempted to lure Khashoggi](#) back to Saudi Arabia in an operation resembling an extrajudicial "rendition," where a person is forcibly removed from one country and taken to another for interrogation. [Bloomberg reported](#) that the United States knew the Saudis planned to seize Khashoggi because US intelligence services had intercepted communications between Saudi officials discussing the plan. [According to Turkish sources](#), participants in Khashoggi's killing and dismemberment were Saudi operatives.

Six days after Khashoggi's disappearance, New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman [made the astounding claim](#),

"If Jamal has been abducted and murdered by agents of the Saudi government ... [i]t would be an unfathomable violation of norms of human decency, worse not in numbers but in principle than even the Yemen war."

Uncompromised, uncompromising news

Friedman's attempt to minimize the enormity of the carnage, including [over 6,000 civilian casualties](#) and [the world's worst humanitarian crisis](#), resulting from three years of war in Yemen is not uncommon. **Vicki Divoll**, former CIA attorney and instructor at the US Naval Academy, [told The New Yorker's Jane Mayer in 2009](#),

"People are a lot more comfortable with a Predator [drone] strike that kills many people than with a throat-slitting that kills one."

In fact, Saudi Arabia is committing war crimes in Yemen and the US government is aiding and abetting them.

Saudi-US War Crimes Committed in Yemen

The Saudi-led coalition is bombing Yemen in order to defeat the Houthi rebels who have been resisting government repression. This war is the culmination of a long-standing grievance the Houthis have had with the state, which was weakened during the Arab spring. Yemen is strategically located on a narrow waterway that links the Gulf of Aden with the Red Sea.

In August, the coalition dropped a 500-pound, laser-guided MK 82 bomb on a bus at a market in Dahyan, [killing 51 people](#), including 40 children. The bomb was manufactured by Lockheed Martin, a leading US defense contractor. Provision of that bomb was part of a US-Saudi arms deal last year.

The August bombing conducted with US-manufactured weapons was not an isolated incident. In 2016, the coalition [used a similar bomb](#) to kill 155 people at a funeral in Sana'a.

As recently as October 13, a Saudi-led airstrike killed at least 19 people and injured 30 when it [hit a convoy of buses carrying civilians](#) escaping an attack on Hodeidah. The coalition has mounted [more than 50 airstrikes on civilian vehicles](#) in 2018 alone.

Targeting civilians is a war crime under the [Fourth Geneva Convention](#).

By furnishing a bomb with knowledge it would likely be used to commit a war crime, US leaders could be tried for aiding and abetting a war crime under customary international law. They supplied the bomb used in the August 2018 bus attack, knowing a similar one was used in the 2016 funeral bombing.

Trump Administration Lies to Congress About Attempts to Minimize Civilian Casualties

On September 12, US **Secretary of State Mike Pompeo** [certified to Congress](#)

“that the governments of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates are undertaking demonstrable actions to reduce the risk of harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure resulting from military operations of these governments [in Yemen].”

However, as New York University **Professor Mohamad Bazzi** [noted in The Nation](#),

“the administration’s assurances contradicted virtually every other independent review of the war, including the recent report by a group of UN experts and several Human Rights Watch investigations that found the Saudi coalition culpable of war crimes.”

On August 28, the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, [documented the likely commission of war crimes](#) by parties to the war in Yemen. The group of experts concluded that coalition airstrikes have caused most of the direct civilian casualties, hitting residential areas, weddings, funerals, markets, detention facilities, medical facilities and civilian boats.

The Trump administration is lying to Congress about the coalition’s efforts to minimize civilian casualties. The Wall Street Journal quoted [a classified memo](#) revealing that Pompeo

certified Saudi-Emeriti compliance with the minimization requirement, notwithstanding opposition by several military and regional experts at the US State Department, “due to a lack of progress on mitigating civilian casualties.”

[A new law](#) requires that the administration certify to Congress every six months that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are doing enough to minimize civilian casualties or the US will cease refueling operations in Yemen. Pompeo’s certification was motivated by a desire [to protect a forthcoming \\$2 billion weapons sale](#) to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, according to the classified memo.

US leaders are mindful of their potential liability for aiding and abetting Saudi-UAE war crimes in Yemen, [according to documents](#) acquired by Reuters pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act request.

Pushback From Congress on US Assistance to Saudi Arabia

In March, a bipartisan resolution that would have ended US support, including refueling and targeting assistance, for Saudi military actions in Yemen, was [defeated in the Senate](#) by a vote of 55-44. A similar resolution was voted down in the House of Representatives. The resolutions invoked the War Powers Resolution, which allows the president to introduce US Armed Forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities only after Congress has declared war, or in “a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces,” or when there is “specific statutory authorization,” such as an Authorization for the Use of Military Force.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont), co-sponsor of the Senate bill, stated, “Some will argue on the floor today that we’re really not engaged in hostilities, we’re not exchanging fire. Please tell that to the people of Yemen, whose homes and lives are being destroyed by weapons marked ‘Made in the U.S.A.,’ dropped by planes being refueled by the U.S. military on targets chosen with US assistance.”

Meanwhile, [Donald Trump is doing a two-step](#) to avoid blaming Saudi Arabia for Khashoggi’s death.

But Congress is pushing back.

On October 10, [a bipartisan group of 22 senators](#) sent a letter to Trump, triggering the [Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act](#), which requires the president “to determine whether a foreign person is responsible for an extrajudicial killing, torture, or other gross violation of internationally recognized human rights against an individual exercising freedom of expression, and report to the Committee within 120 days with a determination and a decision on the imposition of sanctions on that foreign person or persons.”

The letter states that Khashoggi “could be a victim of a gross violation of internationally recognized human rights, which includes ‘torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges and trial, causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction and clandestine detention of those persons, and other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of person.’”

It calls on Trump to impose sanctions on “any foreign person responsible for such a violation related to Mr. Khashoggi,” including “the highest ranking officials of the Government of

Saudi Arabia.”

The timing of this scandal is tricky for congressional Republicans. [Several GOP Congress members](#) are demanding an aggressive US response if Saudi Arabia is responsible for Khashoggi’s killing. But with the November 6 midterm elections less than three weeks away, [many could face a backlash with voters](#) if they distance themselves from Trump.

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