

'Credible evidence' links MBS to Khashoggi's murder: UN report

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Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman should be investigated over killing of journalist Khashoggi, UN expert concludes.

Saudi Arabia has denied Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman knew about the plot to kill Khashoggi [Amr Nabil/AP]

Saudi Crown Prince [Mohammed bin Salman](#) should be investigated over the killing of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a UN rights expert has concluded, citing "credible evidence".

In her long-anticipated [report](#), which was released on Wednesday, UN extrajudicial executions investigator Agnes Callamard said Khashoggi's death "constituted an extrajudicial killing for which the State of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is responsible".

Speaking to Al Jazeera just after the report was published, Callamard said based on the information made available to her, "there is little doubt in my mind that the killing was premeditated. It was planned."

Khashoggi's killing by a team of Saudi operatives in the the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul on October 2 provoked widespread revulsion and marred the image of the crown prince.

The 100-page report cites audio from inside the consulate, recorded just minutes before Khashoggi entered.

In the audio, Maher Abdulaziz Mutreb, a close aide to bin Salman, asked whether it will "be possible to put the trunk in a bag?"

Joints will be separated. It is not a problem. The body is heavy. First time I cut on the ground. If we take plastic bags and cut it into pieces, it will be finished. We will wrap each of them.

Salah Mohammed Abdah Tubaigy, forensics doctor

In response, Salah Mohammed Abdah Tubaigy, a well-known Saudi forensics doctor, replied "No. Too heavy," after which he expressed hope that Khashoggi's killing would "be easy".

"Joints will be separated. It is not a problem. The body is heavy. First time I cut on the ground. If we take plastic bags and cut it into pieces, it will be finished. We will wrap each of them," Tubaigy said in the recording, adding: "Leather bags".

There was a reference to cutting skin, according to the report.

Tubaigy also expressed concerns that his direct manager was not aware of what he was doing. "There is nobody to protect me." At the end of the conversation, Mutreb asked whether "the sacrificial animal" has arrived.

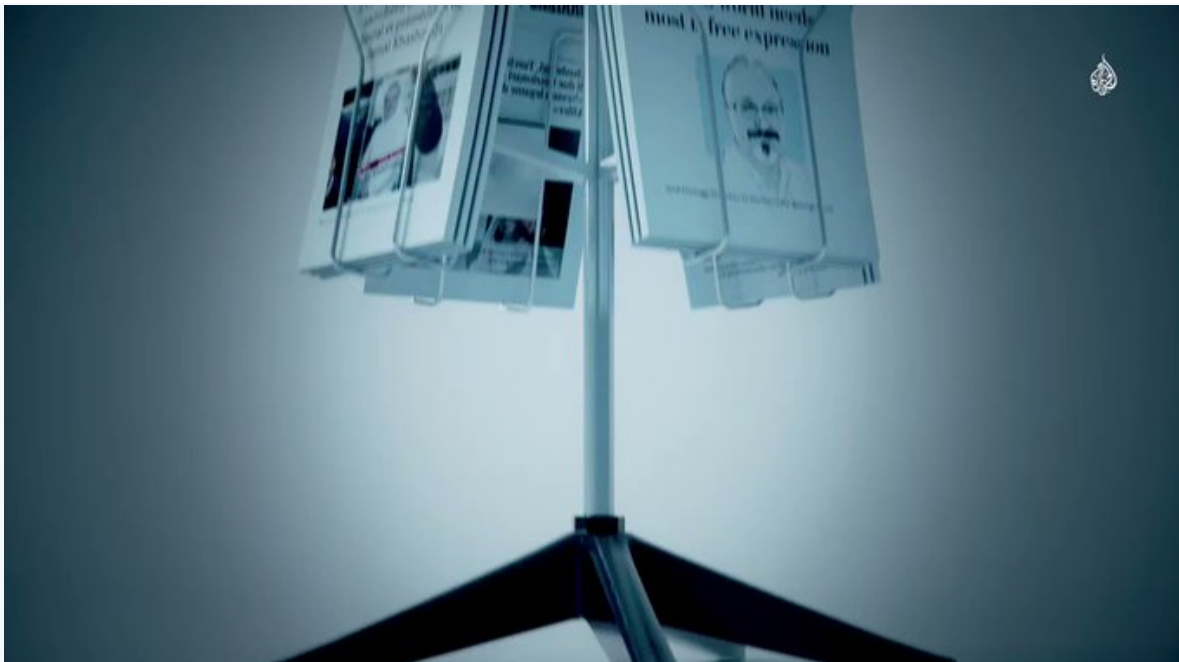
At 13:13 local Istanbul time, a voice said "he has arrived", the report said. In the recordings heard by the special rapporteur, Khashoggi's name was not mentioned.

Callamard said she "determined that there is credible evidence, warranting further investigation of high-level Saudi officials' individual liability, including the crown prince's".

Saudi Arabia dismissed Callamard's findings as "not new".

"The [UN] report reiterates what has already been published and circulated in the media," Adel al-Jubeir, Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs, said on Twitter on Wednesday.

"The report of the rapporteur in the human rights council contains clear contradictions and baseless allegations which challenge its credibility."





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Six months after the Saudi journalist was killed, we reconstruct what 3 Turkish journalists believe happened at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Their book, *Diplomatic Atrocity: The Dark Secrets of the Jamal Khashoggi Murder*, is said to be based on Turkish intelligence.

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Al Jazeera's diplomatic editor James Bays, reporting from the UN headquarters in New York, described the findings as "damning".

"It's a report that is pretty certain of who is to blame - she [Callamard] says Saudi Arabia is responsible for premeditated murder," Bays said.

"It completely blows away the official Saudi cover story that this was a botched plan to seize Khashoggi and take him back to Saudi Arabia," he added.

Al Jazeera's Hashem Ahelbarra, reporting from outside of the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, said the report's findings were likely to provide Turkey with "momentum" to put pressure on US President Donald Trump to "come out and take action against bin Salman".

The report also said that Saudi Arabia must apologise to Turkey for "abuse of diplomatic privileges".

Body still missing

Callamard told Al Jazeera, "It is very difficult to imagine that you will include a forensic doctor in a team for the purpose of only carrying out an abduction."

Asked if anyone knew where the remains of Khashoggi were, Callamard said, "Oh yes, absolutely, the people that were in the room, the people that disposed of the body. There were 15 individuals involved."

"His remains have not been found and I must highlight the fact that the recordings need to be interpreted, they do not tell a very straightforward story. What was done to his body I cannot deduct from the sounds that I have heard," she said.

Callamard in her report confirmed earlier findings after a visit to Turkey this year that the evidence pointed to a brutal crime "[planned and perpetrated](#)" by Saudi officials.

Matthew Bryza, a former US ambassador and a non-resident senior fellow at the US-based Atlantic Council think tank, said the findings made clear Khashoggi's killing was "a premeditated murder, planned carefully".

"The Saudi government must come up with an explanation for who ordered this, who's responsible and where is the body," Bryza told Al Jazeera from Istanbul.

"This report builds and restores momentum for justice to be done."

It suggests among other things that member states impose targeted sanctions against those allegedly involved in the killing, including the Saudi crown prince, "focusing on his personal assets abroad, until and unless evidence has been produced that he bears no responsibility for the execution of Mr Khashoggi".

Calls for criminal probe

In a statement on Wednesday, Amnesty International said the report's findings highlighted the need for an independent criminal investigation to uncover the truth.

"We call on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to immediately take up the Special Rapporteur's recommendation to launch an international follow-up criminal investigation. The UN report confirms that the steps taken to date by Saudi Arabia to ensure accountability are not only inadequate, but violate themselves human rights standards, both procedurally and substantively," Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty's Middle East director of research, said.

Turkey's foreign minister said on Wednesday his country strongly endorsed the UN recommendations.

The CIA and some Western countries reportedly believe [bin Salman](#), also known as MBS, ordered the operation to kill Khashoggi, a critic of the crown prince's policies and Washington Post columnist.

Saudi officials have denied these suspicions.

Callamard had earlier denounced the [lack of transparency](#) at the kingdom's secretive hearings for 11 suspects accused in the murder.

She called on Saudi authorities to reveal the defendants' names, the charges against them and the fate of 10 others initially arrested.

US President Donald Trump's administration said it was pressing its close Middle East ally [Saudi Arabia](#) to show "tangible progress" towards holding to account those behind the Khashoggi killing.

Washington wants the Saudis to do so before the one-year anniversary of his murder, a senior administration official said last week.

Callamard is due to present her report on June 26 to the UN Human Rights Council, whose 47 member states include Saudi Arabia.

The French national is also director of the Global Freedom of Expression initiative at Columbia University in New York.