



[Social Justice Advocates Express Concern with Turkey's Decision to Transfer the Jamal Khashoggi Murder Trial to Saudi Arabia](#)

A Turkish court recently decided that it would transfer the trial of 26 suspects linked to the brutal 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi to Saudi Arabia. The move has been broadly criticized by rights and social justice advocates who have highlighted that those responsible will not be brought to justice if this happens due to Saudi authorities' link to the murder. Reputable intelligence agency findings in the past have determined that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved the assassination of Khashoggi, who was a contributing columnist for the Washington Post and often wrote critically of the Saudi government and its de facto leader. Analysts and experts have pointed out some of the potential underlying motivations behind the decision to transfer the trial, such as the belief that it may be part of Turkey's efforts to improve its relations with Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, it is feared that the move is a step towards diminishing the chance for justice in the disturbing case. There is also worry that it would create a dangerous precedent regarding lack of accountability for the killing of dissidents and journalists, and further jeopardizes freedom of press globally.

The decision to transfer the Khashoggi trial comes at a time when the Turkish and Saudi governments are attempting to improve strained diplomatic relations. The move is also a significant reversal, as Turkey in the years since the killing has gone out of its way to publicize the Saudi government's involvement in the crime. Turkey released surveillance footage and other material revealing that a team of Saudi operatives had traveled to Istanbul. They ambushed Khashoggi while he was in the Saudi consulate attempting to get legal documents that would allow him to marry his fiancé, Hatice Cengiz. There, he was killed and dismembered. The Saudi government has been implicated in the murder and faced global criticism because of it. The findings of Turkey have also been independently verified by other intelligence organizations. A possible reason for the change in stance is because of Turkey's economic woes. Turkey's activism in the Khashoggi case has caused the Saudis and their allies to implement an unofficial boycott on the country, greatly affecting its imports and exports. Over the last two years, Turkey has been working to re-establish and strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia to boost its economy.

Human rights organizations are very concerned by the move and say that it is unlikely that there will be justice for Khashoggi if the trial is held in Saudi Arabia. The repressive country has a notoriously corrupt judicial system that often is more focused on doing its leader's bidding than obtaining justice. It appears that Turkey is currently sacrificing the moral high ground for short-term political gains. This move endangers journalists and government critics around the world, especially those in authoritarian countries. The leaders there may see a lack of accountability as a new norm and use it to silence dissidents without fear of ramifications.

As she accurately summarized, "The Turkish government has decided that good relations — and in particular investment and trade with Saudi Arabia — is more important than pursuing justice for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi on Turkish soil," says Sarah Leah Whitson, the executive director of Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN). His widowed fiancé and DAWN, a group founded by Khashoggi, are currently involved in civil cases against the Saudi crown prince and his co-conspirators.