



[Jamal Khashoggi Murder Trial Begins in Turkey](#)

Turkey has begun the trial of 20 Saudi nationals who are accused of involvement in the plot to kill journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate in 2018. Khashoggi, an American resident and journalist for the Washington Post, was murdered in the Saudi consulate by a kill team allegedly sent by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Turkey is trying the defendants in absentia, after Saudi Arabia refused an extradition request last year. The Saudi government tried and convicted eight individuals last year, who they say were part of the plot. Mohammed bin Salman has said that the murder was a mistake, but justice had been carried out by the Saudi authorities. However, the international community has widely denounced the Saudi trial as a sham. The commencement of the trial in Turkey marks the first time a public trial will occur in relation to Khashoggi's murder.

Among the defendants being tried in absentia are former senior advisor to Mohammed bin Salman, Saud al-Qahtani, and former deputy intelligence chief Ahmad Asiri. During Saudi Arabia's trial over the murder last year, it was concluded that the head of a "negotiations team" ordered a team of agents to the Istanbul consulate to repatriate Khashoggi "by means of persuasion or force." Saudi Arabia's public prosecutor said that the murder was an accident, and had occurred as the result of an overdose when Khashoggi was injected with a drug to sedate him. This conclusion has been roundly rejected by the international community, with the United Nations' special rapporteur Agnes Callamard calling it the "antithesis of justice." It is thought that Khashoggi was targeted by the Saudi government over his criticism of Mohammed bin Salman.

In the immediate aftermath of Jamal Khashoggi's murder, various intelligence agencies including the CIA concluded that Mohammed bin Salman had ordered the operation. Intelligence pointed to communication between a member of bin Salman's inner circle and a member of the team in Istanbul discussing the operation. Additionally, an investigation by Agnes Callamard found that the murder had been carefully planned by high-level members of the Saudi royal family. Mohammed bin Salman has always maintained that Khashoggi's murder was a mistake, and that the order was to return him to Saudi Arabia, not kill him. In an interview with "60 Minutes" last fall, bin Salman said he accepted responsibility for the killing as the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, but stopped short of taking personal responsibility.

Despite having little hope of Saudi Arabia ever extraditing the suspects to face justice in Turkey, prosecutors are hoping that the Turkish justice system will have a more satisfactory conclusion than the Saudi trial last year. The indictment alleges that Khashoggi was targeted by the Saudi government on the basis of criticism he had levelled against Mohammed bin Salman, and the crown prince had subsequently ordered his forced repatriation, or killing. Turkey is also in possession of evidence secured from within the consulate, including recordings secretly collected by Turkish intelligence leading to the moment of the murder.