

Trump welcomes Saudi prince: Billionaire murderers meet at the White House

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US President Donald Trump welcomed Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the White House Tuesday, defended the prince's bloodstained rule when questioned by reporters about the grisly murder of Saudi dissident and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi, and then hosted a formal dinner in the prince's honor, attended by billionaires, corporate executives and Republican politicians.

For four years, bin Salman was unable to visit Europe or North America due to outstanding legal issues stemming from the Khashoggi murder. A team of Saudi assassins, headed by Salman's security chief, seized Khashoggi when he visited the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey to obtain documents for his marriage to his Turkish fiancée. The journalist was tortured, killed and his body dismembered and disposed of secretly.

During the course of the visit, Trump had an extraordinary exchange with a reporter that exposed the gangsterism and criminality of both governments. When ABC News reporter Mary Bruce raised two pointed questions—asking Trump about possible “incriminating evidence” in the Epstein files, and bin Salman about the Khashoggi murder and the Saudi government's ties to the 9/11 terrorist attacks—Trump erupted in defense of both himself and the prince.

Referring to Khashoggi, he said, “You're mentioning somebody that was extremely controversial. A lot of people didn't like that gentleman that you're talking about. Whether you liked him or didn't like him, things happen.” He continued, defending the prince, “He knew nothing about it, and we can leave it at that. You don't have to embarrass our guest by asking a question like that.”

“Things happen.” This statement, about the murder and dismemberment of a political critic, could serve as the motto of Trump's fascist presidency. ICE agents smash car windows and assault citizens. National Guard troops occupy major cities and are prepared for nationwide deployment. Millions are cut off from food stamps, Medicaid, and other vital services. US drones fire missiles at fishing boats, killing nearly 100 people in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific. In Trump's America, all these crimes are dismissed

with a shrug: “Things happen.”

And if he had his fondest wish, the treatment dealt out to Jamal Khashoggi by a Saudi death squad would be applied to Trump's own critics in the United States. After telling a reporter Sunday “Quiet, piggy,” when she raised a question about Epstein, Trump denounced Mary Bruce for what he called a “horrible, insubordinate and just a terrible question,” and added, “I think the license should be taken away from ABC, because your news is so fake and it's so wrong.”

As Trump said in his initial welcome to bin Salman, “I'm very proud of the job he's done. What he's done is incredible in terms of human rights and everything else.” This of an absolute ruler whose regime carried out 345 executions last year, a new record high.

The Trump–bin Salman meeting brought together two billionaire rulers perched atop political powder kegs, preparing violent repression as the only means of preserving the outmoded social order they represent. Trump personifies the criminality of the American financial oligarchy, while bin Salman heads a corrupt royal family that monopolizes Saudi Arabia's vast oil wealth.

Trump is relying on Saudi investment to bolster his false claims that foreign investment will revive the American economy and create good-paying jobs. At his public meeting with bin Salman, Trump boasted of \$600 billion in Saudi investment, which the crown prince promptly inflated to “nearly \$1 trillion.” Like all of Trump's investment claims, these pledges are largely fictional, with no real benefits for the broad mass of the population. In reality, his trade war policies have destroyed jobs and driven up prices, tightening the financial stranglehold on working class families.

This deepening social crisis underlies the repudiation of the Trump administration in the massive “No Kings” protests, held exactly one month ago, in which 7 million people took to the streets in more than 2,500 cities and towns. This was followed by the Democratic Party victories in the November 4 election, including of self-described “democratic socialist” Zohran Mamdani as mayor of New

York City, despite Trump's fascistic denunciations and threats.

The administration is also facing an escalating political crisis. The White House meeting took place as Congress voted near-unanimously to require the Justice Department to release its files on billionaire sex-trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, once a close associate of Trump. Trump had vehemently opposed the measure, and House Speaker Mike Johnson blocked it for weeks. But just two days after Trump reversed his stance, the bill is now headed to his desk.

Bin Salman has come to the US to buy fighter jets and other weapons to suppress his own population and those of neighboring countries, particularly Yemen, where a Saudi-led war has killed hundreds of thousands and starved millions. He likely calculates that his complicity in the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza has earned him favor in Washington. The arms buildup also targets Iran, seen by Israel, the US and the Saudi monarchy as the principal obstacle to imperialist domination of the Middle East.

Trump is not merely speaking as an individual but as the personification of the American state and the interests of the ruling class it serves. His glorification of the Saudi regime's brutality reflects the violence and criminality of American imperialism itself.

A central aim of the US-backed genocide in Gaza is to entrench US domination over the Middle East and to solidify the alliance between Washington, Tel Aviv, and Riyadh. This is a bipartisan policy. In 2022, the Democratic administration of Joe Biden—who during his 2020 campaign vowed to make bin Salman a “pariah”—granted the crown prince sovereign immunity from civil or criminal prosecution in US courts. This came just months after Biden traveled to Riyadh and greeted the murderer with a now-notorious fist bump.

The American oligarchy, represented by both parties, looks with longing upon the absolutism of the Saudi sheikhdom—an unrestrained autocracy in which wealth is monopolized by a dynastic elite and political dissent is punishable by death.

The state dinner held on Tuesday night was attended by a who's who of the financial aristocracy, with Elon Musk, the world's richest man, among the guests. It was Musk's first visit to the White House since his much-publicized falling out with Trump during the summer over Trump's failure (in Musk's eyes) to cut enough from federal social spending on Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

Joining Musk were Stephen Schwarzman of Blackstone; Larry Fink of BlackRock; David Ellison of Paramount/CBS (and son of Oracle billionaire Larry Ellison); Henry Kravis, co-founder of Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR); Apollo Global Management co-founder Joshua Harris, Citigroup

CEO Jane Fraser, GM CEO Mary Barra, Ford chairman William Clay Ford Jr., Apple CEO Tim Cook, and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang. Top executives from Chevron, Qualcomm, Boeing, Cisco, General Dynamics, Pfizer, IBM, Honeywell, Lockheed Martin and many others attended. Only Jeffrey Epstein's demise in 2019—in a Manhattan prison cell after his second arrest for sex trafficking—kept him off the guest list.

While Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the beneficiary of \$2 billion in investment from a fund run by the crown prince, did not attend, his son Don Jr. was present, shortly after signing agreements to build Trump-branded towers in Jeddah and Riyadh, the largest business venture by the Trump Organization in the Saudi kingdom. Trump bristled at a question about the propriety of such business connections during his presidency, claiming he had no involvement in the company, despite remaining its owner.

More will undoubtedly come to light about the sordid deals discussed behind closed doors—deals whose goals, beyond strengthening the global position of American imperialism against Iran, Russia and China, are to boost the profits of the US arms industry and the Saudi oil monarchy, at the cost of thousands, if not millions, of lives.

The Trump-bin Salman meeting exposes the utterly reactionary character of both regimes: the semi-feudal Saudi monarchy and the corrupt, billionaire-dominated oligarchy in the United States—each a historically doomed relic of a social order that must be swept away.



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