

# Congress, CEOs follow Trump in welcome to Saudi butcher

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Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met with top congressional leaders of both parties Wednesday morning, before an hours-long session with corporate CEOs and billionaires at the Kennedy Center in the afternoon.

The events confirm that President Trump spoke for the entire US ruling class, Democrats and Republicans alike, when he welcomed the bloodstained monarch to the White House and denounced any mention of bin Salman's role in the gruesome murder of Saudi dissident and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

Particularly noteworthy was the attendance of the House and Senate leaders of the Democratic Party, Hakeem Jeffries and Chuck Schumer, at a reception for bin Salman at the Capitol, followed by a tour of the building. They were joined by Representative Gregory Meeks (D-NY), the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the House and Senate Republican leadership.

The reception was intentionally low-key, with no notice to the press, no opportunity to take photographs and—likely the main consideration—no opportunity for those opposed to the Saudi regime and its collaboration with Zionism and American imperialism to stage protests against the appearance of the murderous ruler at the Capitol.

At a press briefing later Wednesday, Jeffries did not even mention the meeting with bin Salman until he was asked directly about it by a reporter. Jeffries answered:

I was part of the bipartisan meeting hosted by the Speaker this morning. I asked the crown prince about his views relative to a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinian people, and his views as it relates to the importance of a two-state solution. The Crown Prince reiterated his view that a one-state solution in Israel is impractical, and that the best path forward, of course involving the reconstruction of Gaza, is to eventually find a robust path toward a safe and secure Israel, living side by side in peace and prosperity with a Palestinian state. I support that

position.

Jeffries went on to declare his support for “the special relationship between our two countries. It's incredibly important.” And he praised the Saudi ruler for his “commitment” to self-determination for the Palestinian people (a right which is entirely denied to the population of Saudi Arabia, living under the despotic monarchy).

The reporter had to press Jeffries to elicit any response about bin Salman's brutal history of violent repression. “Was Jamal Khashoggi mentioned at all, or his murder?”

Jeffries replied, “It wasn't mentioned in the conversations that I was a part of.”

Representative Meeks, the other House Democrat known to have attended the get-together with bin Salman, told reporters later that the Trump administration should brief Congress on any agreements reached during the Saudi leader's visit, and voiced concerns about conflicts of interest involving the Trump Organization, the family business run by Trump's two oldest sons, Don Jr. and Eric.

Meeks is a key advocate within Congress for the military-intelligence apparatus of US imperialism. He was part of the congressional delegation that visited Taiwan in August 2022, headed by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, in a show of support for the regime on the island that deliberately undermined the longstanding “one China” policy which acknowledges that Taiwan is part of China.

Several Senate Democrats who did not attend the reception for bin Salman criticized Trump's embrace of the Saudi despot because he was rejecting the assessment made by the CIA that the crown prince had ordered Khashoggi's murder. These included Jeanne Shaheen, ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Tim Kaine, who was Hillary Clinton's running mate in the 2016 presidential election.

Kaine criticized Trump's disregard for the CIA assessment of the Khashoggi murder, suggesting that it undermined the interests of US imperialism in the Middle

East. He said in a statement, “Instead of rolling out the red carpet for MBS and leveraging the presidency for private hotel deals, Trump should be demanding accountability on behalf of Khashoggi’s Virginia-based family and pressing Saudi Arabia to advance U.S. security interests.”

There is nothing surprising about the welcoming of the Saudi despot and mass murderer to the US Capitol. The House and Senate have given standing ovations to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on at least two occasions during the Israeli genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed a joint session of Congress twice—even as he pursued policies of entrenching his authoritarian Hindu-supremacist regime and threatening nuclear war against neighboring Pakistan. British Prime Minister Tony Blair addressed Congress at the height of the US-British war of conquest in Iraq, in July 2003.

More importantly, American presidents themselves address Congress on a regular basis, and the war crimes committed by these presidents in this century alone (wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, drone missile assassinations from the Middle East to the Caribbean), dwarf those committed by any visiting monarchs, dictators or prime ministers.

After his brief session schmoozing with the congressional leadership, bin Salman travelled across town to the Kennedy Center to resume the real business of his trip: wooing and being wooed by corporate CEOs and billionaires, with Trump presiding over the scene like the head pimp at a house of ill repute.

The crowd attending the Kennedy Center spectacle was at least four times as large as the number who dined at the East Room of White House Tuesday night. Trump complained during that dinner that he could have invited a much larger number if his reconstruction of the east wing of the building were completed, including a huge ballroom with a seating capacity in the thousands.

There were no protests in this milieu over bin Salman’s bloody record. On the contrary, his corporate well-wishers no doubt envy his ability, not just to fire critics, as is the practice in giant corporations, but to put them, literally, to the sword.

While a few individual reporters have raised the Khashoggi assassination—only to attract bullying from Trump—their bosses in the corporate media have downplayed the issue, even in the two newspapers most identified with the Democratic Party, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Both newspapers published editorials Wednesday criticizing Trump’s embrace of bin Salman, but hedged about with professions of support for Trump’s foreign

policy in the Middle East, and particularly his all-out support of Israel.

The *Times* editorial began with a depiction of the United States as a democracy forced to ally with murderers like bin Salman by “the realities of geopolitics.” But the central “reality” of geopolitics is that American imperialism is itself the most murderous force on the planet. It attracts the support of jackals like bin Salman who seek a share in the spoils provided by the biggest and most violent predator among imperialist powers.

Like Kaine, the *Times* criticized Trump for discarding “the hard work of American intelligence” in investigating the Khashoggi murder, while complaining mildly that “the president showed open disdain for the principles of press freedom enshrined in the Constitution.” The editorial went on to describe bin Salman as “a complicated dictator,” (i.e., a dictator with a good side!) without bothering to connect that assessment to Trump’s ongoing effort to set himself up as a president-dictator.

As for the *Post*, owned by billionaire Jeff Bezos, it could barely summon up the energy to condemn Trump’s gangster remark about the murder of Khashoggi, that “Things happen.” Khashoggi regularly criticized bin Salman on the *Post*’s op-ed page. Suppressing that criticism was the motive for his murder inside a Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey.

The *Post* editorial began by declaring, “The United States government often advances its national interests by working with nasty people, and Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is one of the nastiest.” It went on to criticize Trump, not for making deals with bin Salman, but for being too effusive in his public embrace. But it concluded, “Trump has an unconventional foreign policy that can achieve unexpected results. See Gaza. But it’s possible to protect U.S. interests without insulting Khashoggi’s memory.”

The *Post* editors—and their centi-billionaire owner—object to Trump’s spitting on the grave of Khashoggi. But they support far greater and more terrible crimes, the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza which has killed tens, even hundreds of thousands, mainly women and children.



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