

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 21, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to express our concern that Saudi Arabia's government is an unfit and inappropriate host for the 2020 G20 summit. As an absolute monarchy without any form of meaningful democratic representation, the Saudi government has a long record of silencing the very voices that are necessary for a meaningful global conversation regarding the massive challenges we collectively face. Saudi Arabia's brutal record has only intensified since Mohammed bin Salman became crown prince in 2017.

We urge the Department of State to publicly demand that the Saudi government take clear and immediate steps towards ending its record of human rights violations, reckless foreign policy, and environmental destruction. These steps should include releasing prisoners of conscience, true accountability for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and ending its war in Yemen. If the Saudi government fails to take these steps, we urge the U.S. government not to participate in Saudi Arabia's G20 proceedings this year.

Today, human rights and civil society norms are under threat across the world. Our government has an obligation to ensure that G20 convenings are not used by host governments to obscure or hide their own repressive and environmentally destructive practices.

Before Saudi Arabia's government can be considered an appropriate host for the G20 summit, the Saudi government should take the following immediate steps towards reform:

Tell the Truth About the Murder of Jamal Khashoggi: Saudi Arabia has failed to provide any meaningful accountability for the murder of exiled Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey by Saudi government agents in October 2018. A recent trial in Saudi Arabia regarding Khashoggi's murder was described by Amnesty International as a "whitewash." Saudi Arabia must accept an independent international criminal investigation into his murder.

Release Human Rights Advocates from Prison: Saudi Arabia must stop imprisoning, torturing, and killing advocates for human rights and political reform. The government must release Islamic scholar Salman Alodah, aid worker Abdulrahman al-Sadhan, human right advocate Waleed Abu al-Khair, the imprisoned members of the Saudi Association for Civil and Political Rights (ACPRA), and all prisoners of conscience.

Free Women's Rights Activists and Stop Violating Women's Rights: Saudi Arabia must release imprisoned women's rights activists Loujain al-Hathloul, Samar Badawi, Naseema al-Sada, Nouf Abdulaziz, and Maya al-Zahrani, as well as imprisoned men who have advocated for women's rights. Charges must also be dropped against all women's rights advocates. Saudi Arabia should abolish the male guardianship system, as well as the laws that discriminate against women or give husbands absolute control over their lives. Saudi Arabia should reform its domestic violence law, including to make clear that marital rape is a crime.

Allow Independent Media and Journalists to Report Freely: Saudi Arabia permits no independent media and is one of the world's worst jailers of journalists. The government regularly jails those who express critical thoughts on social media. The number of journalists and citizen-journalists in detention has tripled since the start of 2017, and 26 journalists were imprisoned by Saudi Arabia as of 2019.

Abolish the Sponsorship System of Modern-Day Slavery: Under Saudi Arabia's sponsorship ("kafala") system, foreign workers face significant risks of abuse and even conditions amounting to forced labor and modern-day slavery. This system also applies to foreign spouses, who have been trapped in Saudi Arabia against their will.

Embrace Religious Freedom: Foreigners comprise 30 percent of Saudi Arabia's population, but Saudi Arabia does not allow public worship by non-Muslims. The Saudi government represses and discriminates against its Shia Muslim minority, and the government beheaded 37 individuals, the majority of whom were Shia, in a 2019 mass execution.

Stop Driving the Climate Crisis: State-owned Saudi Aramco is the world's largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions among corporate fossil fuel producers. Saudi Arabia also has an extensive record of undermining global climate negotiations. Saudi Arabia must end its climate obstruction and commit to a dramatic reduction in its fossil fuel exports.

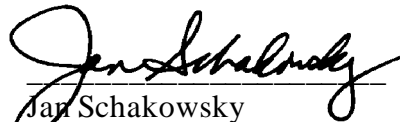
Stop Intervening Against Democracy: Saudi Arabia has blocked democracy movements and advanced dictatorships across the Middle East and North Africa, including in Libya, Bahrain, Sudan, and Egypt.

End the Saudi-led War in Yemen: Saudi Arabia has bombed, blockaded, starved, and slaughtered thousands of Yemeni civilians in its war in Yemen. Yemen's healthcare system is now decimated, giving rise to a lethal spread of the coronavirus pandemic across the Yemeni population. Saudi Arabia must end its war in Yemen.

As the world's leading democracy and purveyor of human rights, our government should demand dramatic changes to Saudi Arabia's dismal record of human rights violations, repression, war, and environmental destruction. Should the Saudi government fail to take immediate steps to

address this record, we should withdraw from the Saudi-led G20 summit and commit to making human rights reforms a condition of all future dealings with Saudi Arabia's government.

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

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