

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, and the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances

20 November 2018

Excellency,

It has now been six weeks since Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was disappeared and murdered in the Consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul. The killing has had a profound impact on journalists and human rights defenders in the Middle East and beyond. Details and allegations continue to leak out through media reporting, adding substance to the claims of Saudi responsibility and drawing attention to the lack of any mechanism of independent investigation and accountability. The failure of the international community to act is drawing increasing attention to the disconnect between calls for journalists' safety and willingness to address the global crisis of attacks on the media.

We write to propose that you, exercising your authority consistent with past UN practice, seek the establishment of an independent UN-led investigation into this crime. Soon after Khashoggi's disappearance, we proposed the creation of an independent, international investigation to determine his whereabouts. We believe that such an investigation is critical to uncovering the truth of what happened to Mr. Khashoggi and determining consequences for his killing. The Saudi Government has acknowledged his killing and the involvement of Saudi officials. The murder bears the hall marks of a state-sanctioned, extra-judicial execution. To this day, the Saudi government has not provided information regarding the location of the body of Mr. Khashoggi.

Several alternative mechanisms may be pursued to establish an investigative body, whether through the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, or your own office. We would be happy to provide our suggestions regarding procedural steps as well as possible experts and methodology, if this would be deemed helpful. In any scenario, your leadership would be essential to moving such a process forward. The consent of the Government of Turkey to on-the-ground investigation and sharing of information may be necessary; President Erdogan himself has made statements suggesting the possibility of such consent.

H.E. Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations Office

Thank you for considering this matter. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further and we would like to inform you that this letter will be made available to the public and posted on the website page of our respective mandates.

David Kaye
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of
opinion and expression

Agnes Callamard
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Bernard Duhaime
Chair of the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances.