

Independent inquiry needed into suspected 'enforced disappearance' of Saudi journalist: UN rights office

The “apparent enforced disappearance” of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi who was last seen reportedly visiting his country’s consulate in Istanbul last week, requires a full investigation involving both Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the UN human rights office, [OHCHR](#), said on Tuesday.

“This apparent enforced disappearance of Mr Khashoggi from the consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul is of serious concern,” spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani told journalists in Geneva.

“If reports of his death and the extraordinary circumstances leading up to it are confirmed, this is truly shocking.”

Noting that the development followed “several cases” in Saudi Arabia recently where human rights defenders and journalists have been detained, the OHCHR spokesperson underlined the need for an independent inquiry.

“We call for cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia to conduct a prompt, impartial and independent investigation into the circumstances into Mr Khashoggi’s disappearance and to make the findings public,” Ms Shamdasani said.

The OHCHR spokesperson’s comments were echoed later on Tuesday by senior UN rights experts, who spoke of their concern at Mr Khashoggi’s disappearance on 2 October “and at allegations of state-sponsored murder” of the journalist and government critic.

“We are concerned that the disappearance of Mr Khashoggi is directly linked to his criticism of Saudi policies in recent years,” said Bernard Duhaime, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on [Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on [freedom of expression](#), David Kaye, and the UN Special Rapporteur on [summary executions](#), Agnes Callamard.

“We reiterate our repeated calls on the Saudi authorities to open the space for the exercise of fundamental rights,” they added, “including the right to life and of expression and dissent”.

Given the lack of clarity surrounding Mr Khashoggi’s disappearance, OHCHR’s Ms Shamdasani said that her office would wait before issuing further statements.

“At the moment there are still a lot of questions about precisely what happened when Mr Khashoggi entered the consulate,” she said. “So we will wait until matters are clearer before we can comment further.”

According to news reports, Mr. Khashoggi went to the consulate a week ago to obtain a divorce document that would allow him to remarry his Turkish fiancée. She went with him, but had to wait outside, and he failed to return.

She told journalists that he had been required to surrender his mobile phone to consulate staff, and Mr. Khashoggi had advised her to call an adviser to the Turkish President, if he failed to emerge.