

State of Vermont

Senate Chamber



Montpelier, Vermont

Joint Senate Resolution

By Senators Balint, Ashe, Baruth, Benning, Bray, Brock, Campion, Clarkson, Collamore, Cummings, Hardy, Hooker, Ingram, Kitchel, Lyons, MacDonald, Mazza, McCormack, McNeil, Nitka, Parent, Pearson, Perchlik, Pollina, Rodgers, Sears, Sirotkin, Starr, Westman, and White,

J.R.S. 14. Joint resolution condemning the murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi and affirming the central importance of freedom of the press.

Whereas, Jamal Khashoggi was a prominent Saudi journalist who once served as an advisor to his nation's government, and

Whereas, despite his status in Saudi society, Jamal Khashoggi fell out of favor with senior Saudi officials and opted for self-imposed exile in the United States, and in 2017 he became a columnist for the *Washington Post*, writing critically about Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and

Whereas, on October 2, 2018, Jamal Khashoggi entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, on a family matter and was killed, and U.S. intelligence officials have concluded with "high confidence" that the crown prince of Saudi Arabia ordered the killing, and

Whereas, following a classified CIA briefing on December 4, 2018, a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators concluded that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the killing, and

Whereas, Jamal Khashoggi's remains have yet to be found, and

Whereas, the killing of an American-resident journalist was an appalling act that Saudi Arabia acknowledges was deliberate, and

Whereas, despite the CIA's strong evidence to the contrary, Saudi Arabia claims that the killing was not authorized, but was the act of a group of rogue Saudi-government employees, and

Whereas, the Khashoggi death occurred at a time when press freedom is under increased threat both domestically and internationally, and

Whereas, Freedom House, in its recently issued report, "State of Global Press Freedom 2017–2018," commented that "five years ago, global pressure on the media did not appear to affect the United States or the established democracies of Europe in any significant way" but that now "populist leaders constitute a major threat to free expression in these open societies," and

Whereas, Reporters Without Borders has observed that "more and more democratically-elected leaders no longer see the media as part of democracy's essential underpinning," and

Whereas, a recent Quinnipiac University poll found that 26 percent of American voters view the press as the enemy, and

Whereas, the critical importance of the guarantees of a free press enshrined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is truly apparent, and

Whereas, internationally, a prominent example of an attack on one of the world's most venerable media organizations is the recent jailing for seven-year terms of two Myanmar-based Reuters reporters, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly condemns the murder of *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi and affirms the central importance of freedom of the press, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders.