

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 3, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We congratulate you on your recent confirmation to serve as America's 71st Secretary of State. We were proud to support you and look forward to working with you to revitalize America's alliances, restore our diplomatic leadership, and return to promoting basic human rights and dignity.

We write today about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's troubling history of helping Saudi nationals accused of heinous crimes flee the United States to avoid trial. We urge you to do what the Trump administration would not: impose consequences on the Saudis for their indefensible behavior. We also urge you to seek a waiver of any relevant immunity for Saudi officials who engage in this type of activity so that they may be prosecuted to the fullest extent of U.S. law.

President Biden has stated his intent to take a harder line with Saudi Arabia and taking action against the Kingdom for their subversion of the rule of law would be a good way to demonstrate that. More than two years ago, journalists in Oregon and across the country began exploring allegations that Saudi officials were helping U.S.-based Saudi nationals flee this country after being accused of serious crimes like manslaughter and sexual assault. In response to a law authored by Senator Wyden, the FBI declassified its conclusions last January. We have included a copy of that FBI report, which is damning. It says that "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) officials almost certainly assist U.S.-based Saudi citizens in fleeing the United States to avoid legal issues." The FBI further concludes that "KSA officials are unlikely to alter this practice in the near term unless the U.S. Government (USG) directly addresses this issue with the KSA and ties U.S. cooperation on KSA priorities to ceasing this activity."

The FBI report says these Saudi government actions are "undermining the U.S. justice system." Indeed, Saudi actions constitute flagrant violations of U.S. domestic law and American sovereignty. Nor are these victimless crimes. A Saudi student ran over a young woman near where we live in Portland, killing her. To avoid justice, he cut his ankle bracelet and fled the country. Other Saudi nationals have been charged with rape and assault only to disappear and resurface later in Saudi Arabia.

We made these points to the Trump administration, repeatedly, and were shocked when agency after agency refused to do anything to hold the Saudi government accountable or prevent future abuses. We urge you to publicly condemn the Saudi government's lawless behavior, to impose

consequences on the Saudis, and to seek accountability through the justice system for all Saudi officials involved. We stand ready to partner with you on concrete steps to address this egregious behavior, including advancing appropriate administrative action as well as legislation we plan to introduce in the 117th Congress.

We thank you again for your willingness to serve and we look forward to working with you on restoring America's image and leadership in the international community.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator