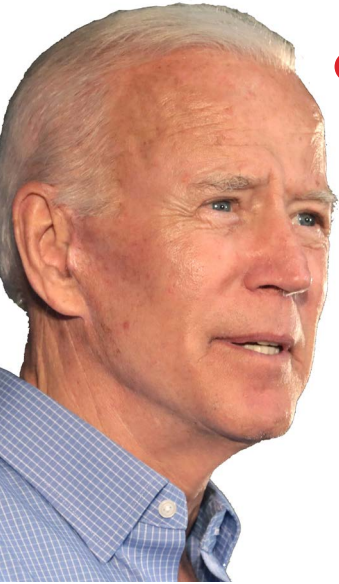


# SETTING A NEW TONE: THE BIDEN TEAM ON SAUDI ARABIA



December 2020

During the 2020 campaign, President-elect Joe Biden and his senior foreign policy advisors pledged to no longer ignore the kingdom's human rights abuses and to make countering Saudi Arabia's repression a higher priority. Below is a selection of relevant statements by Biden; by Antony Blinken, his nominee for secretary of state; and by Jake Sullivan, the incoming national security advisor.



**PRESIDENT-ELECT  
JOE BIDEN**

"I would end U.S. support for the **disastrous Saudi-led war in Yemen**.... We will make clear that America will never again check its principles at the door just to buy oil or sell weapons...America needs to **insist on responsible Saudi actions and impose consequences for reckless ones**."

— **WRITTEN REMARKS** TO THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, AUGUST 2019

"We were going to in fact make them pay the price, and make them in fact the **pariah** that they are. There's very little social redeeming value in the present government in Saudi Arabia. I would end...the **sale of materiel** to the Saudis where they're going in and **murdering children and murdering innocent people**. And so they have to be held accountable."

— DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY **DEBATE**, NOVEMBER 2019

"Under a Biden-Harris administration, we will **reassess our relationship** with the Kingdom... I will **defend the rights of activists, political dissidents, and journalists**...to speak their minds freely without fear of persecution and violence."

— BIDEN-HARRIS CAMPAIGN **STATEMENT**, OCTOBER 2020

"**Human rights** should be at the core of our engagement with the world—not the periphery. As president, Joe Biden will **hold accountable** Saudi Arabia...and every nation that violates the human rights of their citizens."

— **TWEET**, NOVEMBER 2019

"This is not about ending the alliance or the partnership with Saudi Arabia. It is **making sure that the alliance actually reflects our interests and our values**, not just Saudi Arabia's."

— REMARKS ON "INTELLIGENCE MATTERS" **PODCAST**, JANUARY 2019

"We would **review the US relationship** with the government of Saudi Arabia, to which President Trump has basically given a blank check to pursue a disastrous set of policies, including the **war in Yemen**, but also the **murder of Jamal Khashoggi** [and] the **crackdown on dissent at home**."

— **QUOTED** IN ALARABY, JULY 2020



**SECRETARY OF  
STATE NOMINEE  
ANTONY  
BLINKEN**

"We should absolutely be removing all forms of support for the continuing **hostilities in Yemen**."

— REMARKS AT CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE **EVENT**, JUNE 2020

"In our strategic dialogue with Saudi Arabia, having at the highest levels a consistent message that says that the strength of our relationship will depend on progress, on questions related to **human rights and political and economic reform**.... The appropriate action in response [to the **Khashoggi murder**] would have been a) more aggressive public condemnation of what happened there than we saw from the Trump administration, b) a greater demand for **transparency and accountability** for exactly what happened and accounting for those who are responsible for it, and c) securing a set of pledges from the Saudi government about what they were going to do going forward to make sure that this kind of thing and things like it don't happen again."

— REMARKS AT CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES **EVENT**, JUNE 2020

"On the specific question of **sanctions against MBS**, [Biden] would want to go through an intelligence-based assessment of who exactly is responsible up to what level [for the **Khashoggi murder**].... He's not going to prejudge or pre-commit on the specific issue of sanctions vis-à-vis MBS, but he will not take off the table sanctions against whomever he deems appropriate to pursue sanctions against."

— REMARKS ON "SKULLDUGGERY" **PODCAST**, SEPTEMBER 2020



**NATIONAL  
SECURITY  
ADVISOR  
DESIGNATE  
JAKE SULLIVAN**