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Khashoggi's widow challenges architects to raise his brutal murder with Saudis

17 FEBRUARY 2025 • BY GINO SPOCCHIA



Jamal (right) and Hanan Khashoggi (left)
Source: Hanan Khashoggi

Hanan Khashoggi, the widow of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, has called on British architects working in Saudi Arabia – including Norman Foster – to raise her husband's killing with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

Talking to the AJ from her apartment in Washington DC – where she has been granted asylum since December 2023 after leaving Dubai – Hanan said her husband's murder remains unsolved and pleaded with UK architects to raise the case with the country's ruler.

Speaking directly to the profession, she said: 'I tell the architects from the UK: I'm proud that you are helping Saudi Arabia to develop, and this is what Jamal wanted, but please speak to them [Saudi Arabia's ruling royal family] and remind them there is unfinished business here, which is Jamal.'

Khashoggi, a *Washington Post* journalist and legal resident of the United States, who was highly critical of Prince Mohammed, was killed inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018. While US intelligence concluded that he was murdered on the orders of Prince Mohammed, Saudi officials claimed the journalist was killed in a 'rogue operation' by a team of agents sent to persuade him to return to the kingdom.

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As questions mounted in the immediate aftermath of Khashoggi's death in 2018, Norman Foster temporarily stepped back from his role on the board overseeing the planning of the \$500 billion NEOM project. Foster + Partners told the AJ that Foster had permanently stepped back the same year.

However, just over six years later, Foster + Partners' involvement in Saudi Arabia has deepened, with the practice now designing several major schemes, including a 2km-tall tower, as the AJ revealed last year, a six-runway airport, and Red Sea resorts.





Foster + Partners design for a six-runway international airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

The practice's **burgeoning international workload**, especially in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East, is understood to be behind its recent **London expansion** to office space at 50 Electric Boulevard next to Battersea Power Station.

Hanan said she 'appreciated' Foster's stance on NEOM in 2018, which showed 'he had the ability to tell the Crown Prince and the Saudi royal family that there is unfinished business here, and they need to finish it.'

Addressing the Foster + Partners founder directly, she said: 'Mr Foster, this case has not been closed. There is one victim still alive, which is me. She didn't receive any compensation or any official apology, they destroyed her family life. This is me.'

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'Mr Foster, this case has not been closed. There is one victim still alive, which is me'

The former Emirates Airline employee also expressed concerns over human rights in general in Saudi and warned architects not to abandon democratic freedoms and concern for human life when working in the country. According to an ITV News investigation published last year, an estimated 21,000 foreign workers have died in the Kingdom since the reform programme Saudi 2030 Vision was launched in 2016.

Hanan explained: 'I hope UK architects carry and keep their democratic values and that they don't stop working in Saudi Arabia, because this is what Jamal wanted; he wanted better for his country, for his people.'



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

'But I want architects to remind the Crown Prince and the Saudi royal family that there is unfinished business here regarding Jamal because a horrible crime happened to an honest journalist.'

In December, Hanan raised her case with Keir Starmer ahead of his first visit to the kingdom as Prime Minister. This was reported in **The Guardian**, but she did not get a direct response from the government, Hanan told the A.J.

The approach of Starmer, whose visit to the kingdom was in support of his 'number one mission' to grow the UK economy, comes on the back of attempts by the former Conservative deputy prime minister **Oliver Dowden** (*pictured below*) to strengthen UK-Saudi business ties.

'I want architects to remind the Crown Prince and the Saudi royal family that there is unfinished business here regarding Jamal'

However, in May last year, Dowden was also said to have raised the issue of Saudi forces being 'told to kill' to make way for the Line – the flagship linear city NEOM project, set to be designed by Gensler's London office. The claim, reported as part of an investigation by the BBC, has been denied by NEOM.

Dozens of UK architects are understood to be currently working on '2030 Vision' development projects overseen by Prince Mohammed or have previously taken part in design work. UK firms also have permanent bases in the country, or are in the process of establishing them.



These include Allies and Morrison, which announced last week that it had opened offices in Jeddah to support its workload in the kingdom, including masterplanning the AlUla Saudi 2030 Vision development.

Simon Gathercole, partner at Allies and Morrison, said the practice had been working in Saudi for 16 years and that the Jeddah offices 'will provide a base for our work in the region'.

He added: 'What makes it more interesting for us is that we will be right in the heart of this fascinating, culturally engaged community.'

Human rights group Amnesty International [previously told the AJ](#) that it was 'vital that architecture firms considering operating in Saudi Arabia are doing proper due diligence to ensure they're not contributing to labour exploitation and other human rights abuses'.

The organisation's head of labour rights and sport, Steve Cockburn, cautioned that the enormity of the [Saudi 2030 Vision](#) projects meant architects would 'inevitably rely on a huge workforce of migrant workers who face significant risks of exploitation and even death'.

The RIBA last year described ITV News' report of 21,000 worker deaths as 'serious and concerning' and referred to the institution's Code of Professional Conduct and Code of Practice regarding architects' impact on the environment and society.

Chapter 14 of the [RIBA code](#) states that 'members shall have proper concern and due regard for the effect that their professional activities and completed projects may have on users, the local community and society'.

Foster + Partners has confirmed to the AJ that Foster is not on NEOM's advisory board. The practice did not respond to the above comments when approached by the AJ.

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One comment



R L

17 February 2025 at 10:30 am Edit

Sadly, this would require said architects to have integrity & a backbone and not only care about money. The RIBA is equally as pathetic on this matter.

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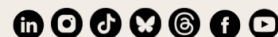
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