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# THE JERUSALEM POST



A woman passes by an election poster of Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul, Turkey. (Photo by: ALKIS KONSTANTINIDIS / REUTERS)

## The strange, disturbing cases of Pastor Andrew and Jamal Khashoggi

By JOEL C.  
ROSENBERG  
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Keep in mind that for more than two years Erdogan's government has made the most brutal, heinous and slanderous allegations against this innocent American Evangelical pastor, Andrew Brunson.

Two very different yet strangely linked stories are drawing global media attention. Both involve Turkey and the regime of Turkish President Recep Erdogan and both deserve our attention.

Let me explain.

**Story #1:** Andrew Brunson, the American Evangelical Christian pastor who was arrested by the Turkish government and kept in prison for more than two years, was finally set free on Friday. Evangelicals have been praying for years for Brunson's protection and release. I thank the Lord that those prayers have been answered, and am grateful for all the White House, State Department and other senior US officials have done to secure the pastor's release.

**Story #2:** Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist who was at times close to the royal family in Riyadh and more recently was quite critical, has disappeared in Turkey. It seems clear from closed circuit TV evidence that Khashoggi entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last week. It is not clear, however, that he ever left. The Saudis say he did. The Turks say he didn't. The Saudis have not yet offered video proof that he left. The Turks have not yet offered any evidence that something sinister actually occurred. I am praying for Khashoggi's safety, protection and freedom, and ask you to join me in those prayers.

That said, let's be clear: The Turkish media is filled with macabre tales that the Saudis have either arrested Khashoggi and secreted him out of the consulate back to the Kingdom, or even murdered and dismembered him with a bone saw. Global media – including US media — have run with the wildest leaks and unnamed, unsourced quotes from Turkish officials. Such officials anonymously say they have all kinds of hard, factual intelligence proving the most sinister of

actions by the Saudis, yet so far, they have released nothing concrete or compelling.

Indeed, as I write this, all we actually know for certain is that the Saudi journalist is missing. Nearly everything else is conjecture.

If the Turkish allegations are true, this would be a very serious and disturbing turn of events. And the consequences could lead into uncharted waters for the Saudis.

President Trump, Vice President Pence and Secretary of State Pompeo – along with many House and Senate members – have rightly called for a full and transparent investigation by both countries. If Khashoggi is alive, where is he? If not, what happened?

We need answers. We need facts. Then we can assess such information and draw conclusions and implications. Someone is lying. But who?

What we don't need are wild, unsourced allegations by one US ally in the Middle East against another, both of whom deeply distrust even despise each other. We should certainly be cautious about accepting unproven allegations from Erdogan's government, which is steadily turning against the United States, Israel and the Sunni Arab world and allying itself with Russia, Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

Keep in mind that for more than two years Erdogan's government has made the most brutal, heinous and slanderous allegations against this innocent American Evangelical pastor, Andrew Brunson. Yet the allegations were all false. Several so-called "witnesses" have now recanted. The charges were ultimately thrown out. Thank God, Brunson is now a free man. But in the process we have learned just how horrible the Turkish government can be.

Is Turkey telling the truth this time about Khashoggi? Maybe yes, maybe no. Until we see hard facts we should be slow to make any judgments. Let's take a breath. Let's let the investigation play out. And let's not stop praying for Mr. Khashoggi and his family.

The writer is a New York Times best-selling author with some five million copies in print. His next novel, *The Persian Gamble*, will be published in March. He and his family live in Jerusalem.



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