Jamal Khashoggi death: 'Weapon exports cannot take place at this time', Chancellor Angela Merkel

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel/File Image

Berlin: Chancellor Angela Merkel has announced the suspension of German arms sales to Saudi Arabia, saying they cannot be undertaken in the current circumstances, a reference to the death of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi who disappeared on October 2 and whom Riyadh has admitted died inside its consulate in Istanbul.

"Regarding weapons exports, these cannot take place at this time," said Merkel in Berlin after meeting with top officials from her party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

Merkel earlier had condemned Khashoggi's death in a joint communique with her Social Democratic Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas.

The German leader emphasized that the evolving explanations given to date by Riyadh for the journalist's death were insufficient, adding that Berlin will undertake to coordinate with its partners to adopt a common position vis-a-vis the Saudi government.

In the joint statement with Maas, Merkel had "categorically" condemned Khashoggi's death, which the Saudi government claims - implausibly, in the opinion of many analysts - occurred in its Istanbul consulate on October 2 during a "fight" that got out of hand.

"We expect transparency on the part of Saudi Arabia with regard to the circumstances of the death. Those responsible must be called to account," the two officials said in their communique.

Maas, meanwhile, said in remarks to Germany's Channel 1 that after Khashoggi's death there was no basis for approving future arms exports to the Middle Eastern kingdom.

Although Maas had criticized Berlin's arms sales to Saudi Arabia in recent months, weapons exports are within the purview of Germany's Economy Ministry, not the Foreign Ministry.

After Khashoggi's disappearance and once his death was finally confirmed, Maas - along with many top international officials and a number of German and international businessmen - cancelled his participation in an economic conference in Riyadh.

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