

# Nikki Haley: Mohammed bin Salman 'has to lose' his 'thuggish nature'

In a gaggle with a small group of journalists on Tuesday, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley told me that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been “careless at times” and “has to lose the thuggish nature in which he has been acting.”

Haley’s robust comments go further than other Trump administration officials, most notably President Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. But perhaps recognizing that the young prince will likely still be around if she pursues higher office in the future, Haley was also calibrated in her assessment.

When I asked her for her view of the prince, she noted, “That’s an interesting question,” and paused for a few seconds before answering. But then Haley cut to the crux of the issue most in the news at present, the crown prince’s culpability in the murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi. “First and foremost,” Haley said “[the crown prince] owes us some accountability for what happened to Khashoggi. Without question.”

Haley suggested that how the prince addresses the aftermath of Khashoggi’s murder will be “a defining moment” for his leadership. But Haley also noted that Crown Prince Mohammed has “a lot of good ideas,” and “wants to change with the times.” While Haley’s stance on Saudi Arabia is thus somewhat harsher than other officials and certainly implies that Haley believes Crown Prince Mohammed was involved in Khashoggi’s killing, it sits on the same baseline of President Trump’s realism.

Considering American interests, I believe this is the right approach.

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