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AUGUST 16, 2018

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17.08.2018

Will Trudeau Stand Up to Mohammad bin Salman?

As every good poker player knows, sometimes the right move is to go all in.

Given his cards and the obvious over-the-top attempt by his opponent to scare him off a winning hand, Justin Trudeau's next move should be to see Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman's (aka MBS) diplomatic break and raise him a wide-ranging ethical challenge.

In response to Saudi Arabia suspending diplomatic ties, withdrawing medicalstudents and selling offassets in Canada over an innocuous tweet, the Trudeau government should:

+ Demand an immediate end to Saudi airstrikes in Yemen. More than 15,000Yemenis have been killed, including dozens of childrenon Thursday, since Riyadh began bombing its southern neighbour in 2015. Ottawa should suspend air force traininguntil they stop bombing Yemen. In 2011 Saudi pilots began training in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan and Cold Lake, Alberta with NATO's Flying Training in Canada (NFTC).

+ As Trudeau promised before the 2015 election, the Liberals should re-establish diplomatic relations with Riyadh's regional competitor Iran.

+ Labour minister Patricia Hajdu should hold a press conference in Ottawa or at the International Labour Organization in Geneva to call on that country to adhere to international labour standards. Exiled Saudi labouractivists could be invited to discuss how unions have been outlawed in the kingdom since 1947.

+ Culture minister Pablo Rodriguez should launch an investigation into Saudi funding of mosques, Islamic schools, universitiesand Arabic languagemedia in Canada. The objective would be to ascertain the extent to which this money promotes an extremist Wahhabi version of Islam and the reactionary politics of the Saudi monarchy.

+ Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland should forcefully criticize the fourteen-month old Saudi blockade of Qatarand visit that country in a demonstration of solidarity.

+ Trudeau should condemn any effort by MBS to impose the Donald Trump/Jared Kushner "deal of the century" on Palestinians.

+ Global Affairs Canada should closely monitor repression in the largely Shia eastern region of the country and be prepared to strongly condemn it.

+ Call for an end to Saudi interference in Bahrain, a small island nation sandwiched between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Saudi forces (with Canadian made Light Armored Vehicles) intervened to squelch pro-democracy protests there in 2011 and continue to support the 220-year-old monarchy.

+ Withdraw any Canadian military personnel training Saudi forces.A Canadian colonel, Mark Campbell, leads the General Dynamics Land Systems Saudi Arabian LAV support program.

+ Cease public support, including via the Canadian Commercial Corporation, for weapons sales to Saudi Arabia until the monarchy re-establishes full diplomatic ties, ends the blockade of Qatar and stops bombing Yemen.

One of the most misogynistic and repressive countries in the world, the Saudi royal family uses its immense wealth to promote reactionary social forces in the Middle East and elsewhere. The Saudi monarchy may be the worst regime in the world. (The US, of course, is responsible for far more violence but it is relatively free domestically.)

In an odd twist the Liberals have been given a unique opportunity to turn the highest-profile "stain" on their "supposedly principled, feminist, rights-promoting foreign policy" into a human rights image boosting campaign. Standing up to a wealthy international bully could be exactly what the party needs to be re-elected.

Of course Trudeau may fear MBS' relationship with Trump/Kushner, Saudi's growing alliance with Israel and ties to some Canadian corporate titans. But to win the big pots a poker player must be willing to gamble.