

Beat: Politics

Canadian PM says will keep pressing Saudi Arabia on human rights

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USPA NEWS - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday he would keep pressing Saudi Arabia on its human rights record, even as a dispute with Riyadh over criticism from Ottawa continued to escalate.

Trudeau - who referred to the matter as "a diplomatic difference of opinion" - also told reporters that Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland had held a long conversation with her Saudi counterpart on Tuesday, but gave no details.

Saudi Arabia has frozen ties and banned new trade deals with Canada after Canada urged the release of jailed civil rights activists.

"Diplomatic talks continue. But as the Minister (Freeland) has said, and as we will repeat, Canada will always speak strongly and clearly, in private and in public, on questions of human rights," Trudeau said at an event in Montreal.

"We don't want to have poor relations with Saudi Arabia ... but we will continue underscoring challenges where and when they exist, in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere," he added.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir had earlier ruled out talk of mediation, telling a news conference in Riyadh that "a mistake has been made and a mistake should be corrected".

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