

Saudi Arabia in Focus

The monthly update from the Saudi mission to the European Union



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From the ambassador

At the COP 22 conference in Marrakech, world leaders have pulled together to find common ground on climate action following the Paris climate agreement of last year. Saudi Arabia has reaffirmed its commitment to implement the agreement.

In our region the ongoing aggressive encroachments of Iran in Yemen and in Syria continue to wreak havoc. Saudi Arabia calls on the international community to condemn the conduct of the regime in Tehran and urge it to cease its interference in the internal affairs of other states in order to help bring peace to the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom, through KSRelief, continues to develop its humanitarian aid programs in Syria, Yemen and beyond, as well as taking in and welcoming our Syrian brothers who continue to flee their wartorn country.



Abdulrahman S. Alahmed Ambassador and Head of the Mission to the European Union

Humanitarian Relief

Laying the foundation for EU-KSA cooperation on aid



Dr Abdullah Al Rabeeah, Supervisor General of The King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Centre (KSRelief), last month presented the details of Saudi Arabia's Humanitarian Aid & Relief Program in Brussels in the context of bilateral meetings with senior European Commission officials and EU policymakers. The Kingdom is one of the world's leading humanitarian donors, and continues to increase its contributions year on year.

Saudi Arabia's humanitarian aid activities date back as far as 1950, and in the last months alone the Kingdom pledged 67 million euros to support refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria, as well as 90 million euros to support the rebuilding of the Afghan state. Over the past 40 years, Saudi Arabia's humanitarian contributions totalling over 125 billion euros have helped to improve the lives of people in over 80 countries with political impartiality.

Speaking after meetings with Christos Stylianides, the European Commissioner responsible for humanitarian aid and crisis, Dr Al Rabeeah said, "I have been very glad to raise awareness of the invaluable work of KSRelief in Brussels and to lay the foundation for a closer collaboration with the European Commission's Directorate General ECHO towards the exchange of information and visiting teams on humanitarian work and improve coordination on the ground."

KSRelief, the organisation founded in 2015 to manage and coordinate international relief activities, is currently prioritising its work in the conflict-stricken countries of Yemen and Syria. KSRelief has launched projects to support healthcare provision, food security and shelter for the Yemeni people both in the country and in the region.



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Unilateral US legislation should not undermine sovereign immunity



The Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, commonly referred to as JASTA, is a recently adopted piece of legislation in the US, which seeks to bring to justice perpetrators of horrific terrorist acts. However, by allowing private litigators to pursue sovereign states in court, the act jeopardises the fragile balance of today's international order. In the rush to pass the bill, US legislators have overlooked the grave unintended repercussions of the bill for all sovereign states and the delicate balance of international relations.

Some in the US welcomed the decision of the United States Congress in September this year to overturn a presidential veto against JASTA. Indeed, at first glance, the bill sits well with a universal sense of justice: those who commit or support terrorist atrocities must be punished for their actions in accordance with the given legal framework. Yet this legislation completely fails to consider how eroding the sovereign immunity of states will have wide-ranging, unintended consequences for the global legal order.

Sovereign immunity is the internationally accepted precept that no sovereign or state can commit a legal wrong. JASTA effectively strips other countries of their sovereign immunity, exposing them to private lawsuits in foreign courts. Already, the US is beginning to see that its decision to pursue this course of action is having consequences, including a lawsuit on the grounds that the US government supported and protected a terrorist organisation that mounted the coup in Turkey.

It doesn't take much further extrapolation to see how such action could in future impinge upon vital military or intelligence activities.

As well as contravening the fundamental principles of international law and exposing governments to legal challenges, the bill will undoubtedly put a burden on bilateral relations between states as well as on the international order. Rather than relying on national security, foreign-policy, and intelligence professionals to determine whether a state sponsors terrorism, JASTA effectively hands over this important responsibility to private litigants and courts who could mount cases with threadbare evidence or accusations. We must ask ourselves whether we are willing to open up this Pandora's box at the risk of destabilising international cooperation in the fight against terrorism at such a fragile moment in history.

This is not, as might be believed, an isolated view unique to Saudi Arabia or the Arab world. On the contrary, a multitude of voices in the international community have warned against implementing JASTA. At all levels of the EU and its Member States, the erosion of sovereign immunity has been decried as potentially undermining mutual trust between states and adversely affecting all areas of international cooperation.

It is the hope of the Kingdom and many leading voices around the globe that wisdom will prevail and that Congress will take the necessary steps to correct this legislation to mitigate its scope and avoid the serious unintended consequences that may ensue.

Saudi Arabia Remains Committed to Paris Climate Deal

Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its commitment to the Paris climate change accord this month. The government said that it will press ahead with its pledges regardless of recent political changes in the United States.

The Saudi delegation to the U.N. climate talks in Marrakesh, Morocco, headed up by H.E Khalid Al-Falih Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources, said that while the US is very important for the climate process, “we need to recognize that the climate is a global issue. At the end of the day, this process is resilient enough to move forward and China’s comments are an example of that.”

A member of the Saudi delegation added that having so many countries rush to ratify the Paris deal and for it to come into effect in record time was a pleasant surprise, and even further evidence of global consensus. He said that Saudi Arabia has “no intention of watering down its commitments to the deal.”

The Paris accord has been hailed as an end to the “fossil fuel era” because it requires all signatories to develop



climate-action plans to jointly curb greenhouse gas emissions enough to prevent runaway global warming.

To achieve its part of this goal, Saudi Arabia has pledged to install more solar panels and renewable energy systems as long as its economy continues to grow.

Regional Affairs

Riyadh condemns Iran’s interference and aggression

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expresses its growing concern about Iran, its increasingly aggressive approach in the region and interference in the internal affairs of Arab states. These regrettable actions have, in turn, led to a climate of tension and instability in the Middle East

The chaos and instability at hand in Yemen is the direct result of Iran’s blatant intrusion in internal Yemeni affairs. It seems that Tehran is aiming to undermine Yemen’s security and stability, stoke sectarian divisions and thwart international efforts seeking to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Yemeni crisis in accordance with the UN Security Council’s Decision 2216 (2015).

It is regrettable that the regime in Iran continues to support the Houthi rebels by providing them with arms, missiles and military expertise (IRGC-Hezbollah), all of which contribute to the worrying regional instability and protract the misery of the Yemeni people.

The rebel attacks on Saudi Arabia’s borders and the firing of missiles on its cities could not have been carried out without the express support and encouragement of the Iranian regime whose actions have only emboldened the rebels who now threaten regional and international security.

On 27 October, the command of the coalition forces supporting the legitimate government in Yemen announced that a ballistic missile fired on Makkah had been launched by Iranian-backed Houthi militia. Fortunately, Saudi air defence was able to intercept the missile about 65 km from the holy city.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia therefore reaffirms its right to safeguard its sovereignty and security, and calls on the international community to assume its responsibility to condemn the conduct of the Iranian regime, and in particular its interference in its internal affairs.

Syrians in Saudi Arabia

Free Healthcare and Education to Syrians in the Kingdom



The turmoil of the Syrian conflict has seen 5 million Syrians leaving the country they once called home. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians now call Saudi Arabia home.

40 year old Firaz, originally from Damascus, has now settled full time in Riyadh with his parents. “The Saudi people are so happy we are here. They want to help us. There are no issues here for us. Some of the poorer people are being given donations from Saudis so we are sure they will be ok. We meet each other for coffee or in private homes, we meet us groups to try and help people find work.”

Firaz is one of the luckier Syrians who have managed to flee the country where loss of life is a daily occurrence. While thousands of Syrians have fled to Saudi Arabia, many people from Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo still want to get out. “I’m still trying to help three or four people to leave Syria,” he said.

The Kingdom has certainly embraced having Syrian refugees in Saudi Arabia and tried to make it as easy as possible for them to start a new life. Firaz explained, “If a Syrian person goes to hospital, the medical treatment is free for us in all the government hospitals.

For Syrian children too, all education is free. It’s easy for to come on a visiting visa and stay with no problem.”

Critical to starting life in a new country is employment. Firaz, who studied civil engineering at the University of Damascus, is one of the many Syrians who relocated to Saudi Arabia and can also work without any restrictions. “Hundreds of Syrians who have been living here for a while don’t have a working visa, but the government lets us stay and get employed. My colleagues have become like brothers. They are so glad I’m from Syria and I am working with them.” While that is good news, being a refugee is one of the hardest situations for any family to endure as Firaz explained, “My parents are happy to be in Saudi Arabia but they had to leave everything behind.”

As Saudi Arabia continues to welcome Syrian refugees to the Kingdom, Firaz says support groups have opened in Riyadh and Jeddah to help provide guidance, contacts and networking to their fellow peers. At the forefront of all their minds is the same message, “I want to thank the people of Saudi, they are helping us to make our families have a good situation again. God willing, the people still in Syria will eventually arrive at a better situation than we have now.”

They said...

>> “Our climate action ambitions aims to diversify our economy away from depending primarily on hydrocarbons, while keeping in line with our commitments to developing both conventional and renewable energy sources.”

Khalid Al-Falih
Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources

In Brief

>> The United Nations World Food Programme has welcomed a US \$12 million (€11.2m) contribution from the King Salman for Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) of Saudi Arabia to support WFP’s humanitarian operations in Syria, Palestine and Ethiopia. The agreement was signed at a ceremony in Riyadh by the Adviser to the Royal Court and Supervisor General of KSrelief, Abdullah Al Rabeeah, and the Director of the WFP office in the UAE and GCC, Abdallah Alwardat.

“We appreciate this timely contribution from The King Salman for Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre that will help us provide vital food assistance to hundreds of thousands of families in Syria, Palestine and Ethiopia,” said Alwardat. “For years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been a strong supporter and a generous donor to WFP’s projects worldwide. Our partnership has helped save millions of lives across the globe.”

In Syria, Palestine and Ethiopia, the funds will be used to help provide a more dignified life for those in the most desperate need. In Syria, WFP delivers food assistance to more than four million people every month across the country. WFP will use US\$10 million of this contribution to buy and distribute mixed food items that will cover the needs of more than 1.2 million people for three months in Syria’s hard-to-reach areas.

