

Saudi Arabia in Focus

The monthly update from the Saudi mission to the European Union



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From the ambassador

The struggle against terror and injustice has continued this month, with the Kingdom coming under attack at its borders from Houthi rebels, abetted by Iran, who continue to take Saudi lives.

Elsewhere, the Kingdom has been targeted by distortion and unfounded accusations about the Islamic teachings it espouses. Let it be clear: Saudi Arabia is dedicated to the eradication of so-called Islamist terrorism and the foolish ideology used to support it. The Islam we endorse is modest, law-abiding and peace-loving. As the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud has frequently stated: we deplore terrorist acts and extremist ideology. Indeed, under His Majesty's leadership, the Kingdom has taken extraordinary steps to ensure that financial support for such criminal activities cannot be derived from Saudi Arabia. On the ground our security services have had success this month, and will continue to dismantle terrorist cells domestically, whichever flag they might fly or nationality they claim.



Ambassador and Head of the Mission to the European Union

Counterterrorism

Saudi Arabia Dismantles Four Daesh Cells



Major General Mansour Al-Turki, Saudi Arabian Ministry of Interior Spokesman

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior announced this month that it had successfully carried out a counterinsurgency operation that led to the dismantling of four Daesh (ISIS) cells and the subsequent arrest of 18 suspected terrorists.

According to Ministry Spokesperson Major General Mansour Al-Turki, 15 of those arrested were Saudi nationals, two were from Yemen and one was from Sudan. Gen. Al-Turki said that all arrested were involved with different aspects of Daesh operations, including providing financial and logistical support, offering shelter, and assisting with recruitment, training and the development of explosive devices for Daesh operatives known to have launched attacks in Saudi Arabia.

The operation was carried out over a five-day period. Arrests were made in Qassim, Mecca, Madina and Riyadh provinces. Security forces seized

automatic weapons and two million Saudi riyals in cash (approximately €500,000) during the raid.

General Al-Turki said the security operation underscored the Kingdom's forceful and decisive counterterrorism efforts and his ministry's commitment to bring to justice anyone involved in extremist activity.

Saudi Arabia is at the helm of the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT). Founded by the Deputy Crown Prince, HRH Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud in March 2016, the 39-nation-strong alliance is based at a joint command centre in Riyadh. IMAFT's primary objective is to protect its members from all terrorist groups and organizations irrespective of their sect and name. It operates in line with the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation provisions on terrorism.



OIC Secretary General in Brussels to forge closer partnership with the EU and Belgium



Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Dr. Yousef A Al Othaimeen with Federica Mogherini, Brussels, 15 February 2017

The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Dr Yusuf bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen met with Federica Mogherini, the EU's foreign policy chief, in Brussels on 15 February. High-Representative/Vice-President Mogherini emphasized the importance of a regular and constructive dialogue in view of a closer partnership to address together many issues of common interest.

The occasion represented first bilateral meeting since the Secretary General took office late last year. The meeting allowed for discussions on relations with the Muslim world and with Muslim communities in Europe. The High-Representative/Vice-President and the Secretary General exchanged views on possible areas of cooperation, building also on the fruitful exchanges, the previous day, at the first EU-OIC Senior Officials Meeting. There was a common resolve to reach out to Muslim communities

notably in Europe, as a way to increase Muslim youth participation and civic involvement in the political and social life in Europe and to counter radicalisation and terrorism.

During the two-day long visit Secretary General Othaimeen and his delegation had several other important engagements both at bilateral and multilateral level, including a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Belgium Didier Reynders His discussion with Minister Reynders also touched upon the potential role of the OIC in promoting tolerance, peaceful coexistence, respect for minorities and diversity and on how to engage Muslim Communities in Europe in dealing with the threat of radicalism and extremism. In addition, Secretary General Othaimeen and Minister Reynders agreed to work on developing more structured cooperation framework between the OIC and Belgium.



Iran is the Biggest State Sponsor of Terrorism



Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir addresses the Munich Security Conference, 19 February 2017

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir has said that Iran is the “biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world.” He made the remarks in an address before the Munich Security Conference. Minister Al-Jubeir cited several covert, political and military actions carried out by Iran to buttress his argument.

He also outlined the Kingdom’s view of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the crises in Syria and Yemen and said Saudi Arabia was optimistic about working with the U.S. administration to resolve many of the crises in the region today.

“One of the biggest factors I think that will help to resolve many of these challenges is the new American administration,” said Minister Al-Jubeir. “We expect to see America engaged in the world. And we expect to see a realistic American foreign policy, and we look forward to working with this administration very, very closely.”

Minister Al-Jubeir said that Iran is a destabilizing force in the region and “remains the biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world.” He said, “The Iranians do not believe in the principle of good neighborliness or non-interference in the affairs of others. This is manifested in their interference in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan.”

The foreign minister noted that Iran was the only country in the region that has not been attacked by either Al-Qaeda or Daesh.

“We look at the region and we see terrorism and we see a state sponsor of terrorism that is determined to upend the order in the Middle East,” he said. “The Iranians are the only country in the region that has not been attacked by either Daesh or Al-Qaeda. And this begs the question why? If Daesh and Al-Qaeda are extremist Sunni organizations, you would think they would be attacking Iran, a Shiite state. But they have not. Could it be that there’s a deal between them that prevents them or causes them not to attack the Iranians? This is a question that we keep asking ourselves.”

Minister Al-Jubeir said Saudi Arabia is hopeful that Iran will change, but that Iran ultimately will be judged by its actions, not its words.

“When the Iranians send weapons in violation of UN Security Council resolutions to the Houthis in Yemen, that’s an action,” he said. “When the Iranians send Shiite militias to fight in support of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, that’s action. When the Iranians plant terror cells in Bahrain and in Saudi Arabia and in other places, that’s action. The action is more important than the words”.



Al-Jubeir Clear on the Need for a Two-State Solution



Foreign Minister Al-Jubeir held talks with his Italian counterpart Angelino Alfano during an official visit to Italy, 21 February, 2017

Saudi Arabia has reasserted support for a Palestinian state in the wake of mixed messages from the new US administration about its policy on the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Speaking on Monday after talks with his Italian counterpart, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir said: “You have a peace deal which essentially calls for a settlement based on two states living side by side in peace and security. [A] Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the just settlement of refugees and sharing water resources. This is the settlement that we believe is a fair and just settlement.”

After talks with Mr Alfano, Minister Al-Jubeir highlighted the long history of Saudi-Italian bilateral relations, explaining that they discussed the situations in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Libya, in addition to the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 and the role that Italy may play, in this regard.

For his part, the Italian foreign minister pointed out that the meeting reviewed bilateral relations and developments in the Middle East, as well as reactivation of cooperation in economy and investment.

US Senator John McCain warmly welcomed in Riyadh



The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud received US Senator John McCain in Riyadh this month. During the meeting, they reviewed the relations of friendship between the Kingdom and the United States of America.

Whilst in Riyadh, Senator McCain also met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Naif, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir. The talks addressed a number of issues of common concern including enhancing cooperation between the Kingdom and the US in various fields.



How has Saudi Arabia been helping in Yemen?



Dedicated workers from the King Salman Centre for Relief and Humanitarian Aid distribute food in Hodeidah, Yemen. *Photo Credit: KSRelief*

The Saudi government, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has agreed on three decisive measures to expand the provision of relief to Yemen with almost a quarter of a billion euros. The initiatives grant facilities to Yemeni residents in the Kingdom, correcting their statuses and renewal of six months visit visa, in addition to allowing their children to study in the Kingdom's schools free of fees.

These decisions were put in place to respond to the deteriorating conditions in Yemen after the violent coup carried out by militias of Houthis and Saleh against the legitimate, elected Yemeni government. The aim of the measures was to stress the clear position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and support the long, close and loyal relationship between our two peoples who more than neighbourliness, share history, culture and a common vision of a stable Gulf region in the future.

The first decision was the allocation of \$274 million (€259 million) for humanitarian relief in Yemen through the United Nations, before the King Salman Centre for Relief and Humanitarian Aid assumed the relief tasks. Its support has so far helped to run 118 projects worth \$576 million (€545 million).

The second decision saw the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques instruct the competent authorities to improve the living conditions of Yemenis living within the Kingdom before the 9 April 2015, by giving them visas for a period of six months, which are extendable after getting travel documents from the legitimate government of their country. This measure allows Yemeni brothers to work according to the competent authorities' regulations.

The third decision was the call by the Ministry of Education on school principals in three educational phases to admit Yemeni students coming to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and treat them at all their educational levels and phases as if they are Saudis.



Tech leaders see bright Saudi future



Prince Dr Turki bin Saud bin Mohammed, President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) receives Google head of policies and legal affairs Kent Walker Photo Credit: SPA

The King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), Saudi Arabia's national science agency, continues to garner interest from tech leaders. Talks this month between KACST President Prince Dr. Turki bin Saud bin Mohammed Al-Saud and Kent Walker, Google senior VP for public policy affairs and social investment, proved fruitful.

Welcoming the Google delegation, Prince Turki outlined KACST activities in science, research, innovation, IT and communication, in line with Saudi Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program 2020. He said the KACST will help the government and NGOs diversify their projects and investments, and help Saudi youth in innovation, science,

Saudi Women Earn Two of the Kingdom's Top Jobs

Saudi Arabia's stock exchange has appointed a woman to the position of chairperson for the first time in the kingdom's history.

Sarah Al Suhaimi, who became the first female chief executive of a Saudi investment bank when she took the role at NBC Capital in 2014, accepted the offer to chair Saudi Arabia's Tadawul, the largest bourse in the Middle East, replacing Khalid Al Rabiah.

The announcement was followed by the appointment of Rania Mahmoud

technology and research. Walker, for his part, expressed his desire to cooperate with KACST in future projects that service their mutual objectives.

The positive discussions were accompanied this month by comments from Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, who said the next generation in the region, he said, "is going to be responsible for incredible innovation," adding that "despite the challenges of instability and other regional problems, I do think the Middle East — both economically and in terms of contributing to innovation in the world — will surprise people with positive results."

Nashar to the position of chief executive of Samba Financial Group, one of Saudi Arabia's largest national banks. Ms Nashar has nearly two decades of experience in the financial sector and previously held several jobs at within Samba.

The appointment of women to top financial positions shows Saudi Arabia's will to boost the presence of women among all levels of its workforce as part of the Vision 2030 roadmap for economic success.

They said...

>> "Vision 2030 is a powerful set of goals, but it will be the young people whose innovative work is needed to achieve them, that means lots of studying and getting the new skills that will equip you for the evolving job market, building on the deeply engrained values of giving back, caring for others and working toward a common goal."

Bill Gates, Microsoft Co-founder

In Brief

International art exhibition comes to Jeddah

King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC) hosted the inauguration of the 4th edition of the Art of Jeddah 21,39 exhibition "Safar" meaning "Travel."

The exhibition is organized by the Saudi Art Council over three months and features more than 50 cultural and artistic works. The exhibition was opened 3 February at the Prince Mohammed bin Salman College of Business and Entrepreneurship (MBSC).

Fahd Al-Rasheed, KAEC Group CEO and managing director said "the annual Saudi Art Council event has become an important focal point for the artistic community, bringing together local talents and promoting community interaction with the arts and cultural scene in the Kingdom."

The Safar exhibition represents the Kingdom's future, and showcases audio-visual works by international artists. The works portray the concept of travel from a different, unique perspective ranging from personal journeys to chronological boundaries.

More information on the exhibition is available at <http://www.21-39.com/>

