

Saudi Arabia in Focus

The monthly update from the Saudi mission to the European Union



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From the ambassador

As we mark a year since the horrendous terrorist attacks that struck Brussels one year ago, we are again reminded that the scourge of violent extremism is still very much present. In London this month, more innocent lives have been taken through needless and cowardly acts committed falsely in the name of Islam.

It is for this very reason that the international community must continue to cooperate to eliminate the menace presented by Da'esh and other transnational terrorist organisations. The simple fact is that we are more effective when we work together to counter the multiple threats we face.

Indeed, this month, Foreign Ministers from the 68 countries of the Global Coalition against Da'esh committed to intensifying and accelerating their efforts to eliminate these terrorists. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is at the heart of this coalition, which reflects the international community's will to put an end to the senseless destruction and extremism the group stands for.



Abdulrahman S. Alahmed

Ambassador and Head of the Mission to the European Union

Culture

Saudi Arabia contributes to UNESCO's Global Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas

Saudi Arabia has donated \$20 million (€18.5m) dollars to the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, providing 20% of the funding target up until 2019.

On 20 March, the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, participated in the launch of the Alliance at Paris' Louvre Museum. The Governor of Mecca, HRH Prince Khalid al-Faisal Al Saud announced the Kingdom's contribution to the new Aliph fund in the presence of French President François Hollande and the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, HE Sheikh Saif Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

UNESCO's Director-General reviewed the wide range of measures taken by UNESCO in recent years to protect historic sites from the ravages of Da'esh and other groups, including the adoption of a comprehensive strategy and the creation of an emergency fund for the protection of heritage. "UNESCO will continue to play its full part in coordinating

international initiatives in the field." "The protection of heritage is inseparable from the protection of human life," declared President François Hollande, announcing the project of a framework resolution at the United Nations Security Council on the protection of cultural heritage.

"Those who destroy heritage are well aware of its power to unite communities, and they intentionally target culture, schools and libraries to enslave and accelerate the disintegration of societies. I have called this a strategy of cultural cleansing. This is a war crime and it has become a tactic of war," added the Director-General.

The creation of a new international fund, announced at the Abu Dhabi Conference in December 2016, reinforces existing tools - including UNESCO's emergency fund established in 2015 - and gives a new impetus to international cooperation for the protection of heritage.



The International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas was launched on 20 March at a Conference on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Danger in Paris, France



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Forging a roadmap to peace in Yemen



The UN's Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed meets with Foreign Minister HE Adel Al Jubeir in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir has this month welcomed Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, Yemen's president and Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, UN special envoy for Yemen, in Riyadh to discuss key elements of an agreement for a peace roadmap to ensure an orderly political transition to peace in the war-torn country. Mr Ahmed shared with the foreign minister the efforts underway to advance the political process in accordance with the GCC-sponsored initiative and the UN Security Council Resolution 2216.

Speaking in an interview, Mohamed A. Qubaty, Yemen's Minister for Tourism, confirmed that "all issues under the peace roadmap should be dealt with in accordance with these references — GCC peace initiative with its executive mechanism, the National Dialogue outputs and the UN Security Council's resolutions, including Resolution 2216 and Chapter VII of the UN Charter." He added that "With the fulfilment of the requirements of these three strategic references, we are ready to accept the roadmap."

In 2015, the UN Security Council demanded that all parties in the embattled country, particularly the Houthis, unconditionally end the violence and refrain from further unilateral actions that threaten the political transition. The Security Council also demanded that the Houthis withdraw from all areas seized during the conflict, relinquish arms seized from military and security institutions and cease all actions falling within the authority of the legitimate government.

Furthermore, under Chapter VII of the charter, the UN

body called upon the Houthis to refrain from any provocations or threats to neighbouring states, release all political prisoners and individuals under house arrest or arbitrarily detained, and end the recruitment of children as soldiers.

With no end to the humanitarian threat posed by the Houthi rebel militia, the Yemeni Ministry of Human Rights this month published a Preliminary Report on the Human Rights Situation in Yemen. The comprehensive report, composed by the Ministry's Leadership Council, details the extent of human suffering in Yemen in two years between January 2015 and January 2017, covering the Houthis' countless breaches of international humanitarian law, be it the targeting of civilians, the recruitment, maiming and killing of children, the denial of education and healthcare or the oppression of basic freedoms.

Another example of Houthi disregard for international law is their occupation of the Yemeni port of Al-Hodeida. The Red Sea port is a vital arrival point for supplies, but is being exploited by Houthis and other supporters of former President Saleh. In order to be able to deliver vital supplies to the Yemeni population, the UN was asked to appoint international observers to ensure the port can receive humanitarian assistance to those affected by the war. "Proper UN supervision would ensure that the port is not exploited by the Houthi militias. Ships carrying humanitarian aid have been accumulating in the port, which was transformed into a base for attacks against coalition forces," explained Coalition spokesman Maj. Gen. Ahmed Al-Assiri



Yemen's legitimate President Marshal Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, in his foreword to the report, condemns the Houthi and Saleh-supporting militia that have "taken Yemen into a meaningless war, and destroyed its social fabric, economic and financial resources and infrastructure." President Hadi recounts the turmoil of the militia's systematic killing of civilians, children and the elderly; kidnappings; disappearances; sieges and suppression of civic freedoms, equating these deplorable terrorising acts with those of Al Qaeda or Da'esh.

Welcoming the intervention of the Arab Coalition in Yemen, the report reiterates President Hadi's complete support for the military procedures that the Coalition has taken to defend the legitimacy, unity and territorial integrity of the Yemeni state. However, where there have been mistakes in targeting, the report recommends that the facts are investigated and those responsible are held to account.

Mohammed Askar, Yemen's Vice Minister of Human Rights also renews his government's appeal to all international organisations and human rights mechanisms to look carefully at the Yemeni crisis in order to achieve sustainable peace in all parts of Yemen by ending the coup d'état in line with UN Resolution 2216.

The appeals reflect those made by H.E. Mohamed Taha Mustafa, the Yemeni ambassador to Belgium and the European Union, who was welcomed to the European Parliament's Delegations for relations with the Arab Peninsula earlier this month. In his speech, he underlined the disruptive role of the Houthis rebels supported by Iran and their continuous boycott of all attempts to secure the peaceful transition promoted by the legitimate elected government and the Saudi-led coalition. The Ambassador appealed to the European Parliament and EU governments to put pressure on Iran to cease interfering with internal Yemeni affairs and stop supporting the Houthi rebels.



H.E: Mohamed Taha Mustafa, the Yemeni ambassador to Belgium in a meeting of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula, Brussels, 6 March

Houthis continue to recruit child soldiers in Yemen



The UN recorded the recruitment of 1,476 boys in Yemen between March 2015 and January 2017, but the real number is thought to be much higher as most families are not willing to talk about the recruitment of their children, for fear of reprisals.

The spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Ravina Shamdasani, this month spoke out about the recruitment of children in Yemen, by the Popular Committees affiliated with the Houthi rebels. "Between 26 March 2015 and 31 January 2017, the UN has verified the recruitment of 1,476 children, all boys. However the numbers are likely to be much higher as many cases go unreported.

"Children under the age of 18 often join the fighting after either being misled or attracted by promises of financial rewards or social status. Many are then quickly sent to the front lines of the conflict or tasked with manning checkpoints."

The UN underlined that the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict is strictly forbidden by international human rights and humanitarian law, and, when concerning cases of recruitment of children under fifteen, may amount to a war crime.



The EU calls for more engagement with Saudi Arabia on counter-terrorism



The EU's Counter-terrorism Coordinator Gilles De Kerhove called for greater collaboration between the EU and Saudi Arabia

The European Union's top anti-terror chief this month called for more cooperation and engagement with Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states on counterterrorism and counter radicalisation.

"We have to engage more with the Gulf. We have several level of cooperation with the Gulf countries. One is countering terrorism financing. We have seen progress. We have interesting discussions every year," said Gilles de Kerchove EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator.

He was speaking at an event to launch a book titled "One year after the Brussels attacks: The challenges of jihadist radicalisation in Europe and beyond," organised by the think tank European Policy Centre in Brussels. Speaking on the EU's engagement with the Gulf countries, De Kerchove said "I have been myself to several Gulf countries, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia." "The last meeting in Saudi Arabia was very interesting. Saudi Arabia has started the process of restructuring the economy the vision of 2030 to be less dependent on oil. It is an interesting process. This process will have an impact on civil society as well" he said. "They asked for our support. EU High

Representative for Foreign Policy Federica Mogherini is ready to help the Saudi government in this delicate process. "Saudi Arabia is part of the international counter IS alliance and they share a lot of intelligence with us," De Kerchove added. On the use of terms like "Islamic terrorism" by some Western leaders and the western media, he said "when we use the term Islamic terrorism our Arab friends get mad. They say you cannot equate Islam with terrorism. It's an offensive way to capture their attention. So we have to be cautious," he said.

The same day, the ministers of the Global Coalition against Daesh to reaffirm their commitment to eradicating the group. In a declaration signed by all 68 international partners, they stated, "We remain firmly united in our outrage at Daesh's atrocities and in our determination to eliminate this global threat and overcome its false, destructive narrative. We reiterate our commitment to an integrated, multidimensional, and comprehensive approach to defeat Daesh and its global networks, fully recognizing this will require sustained, focused efforts."



Deputy Crown Prince welcomed by President Trump at the White House



HRH Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was welcomed to the White House by President Donald Trump

In a strengthening of the relations between the US and Saudi Arabia, President Donald J. Trump and Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have reaffirmed their support for a strong, broad, and enduring strategic partnership based on a shared interest and commitment to the stability and prosperity of the Middle East.

The leaders have directed their teams to explore additional steps across a broad range of political, military, security, economic, cultural, and social dimensions for the benefit of both countries.

The President and the Deputy Crown Prince noted the importance of confronting Iran's destabilizing regional activities while continuing to evaluate and strictly enforce the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The President expressed his strong desire to achieve a comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to continue the two countries' consultations to help reach solutions for regional issues. More broadly, the President and Deputy Crown Prince noted the

ongoing security and military cooperation between the two countries and other international partners in confronting Daesh/ISIS and other transnational terrorist groups that pose a threat to all nations.

President Trump expressed his support for developing a new United States-Saudi program, undertaken by joint U.S.-Saudi working groups, and its unique initiatives in energy, industry, infrastructure, and technology worth potentially more than \$200 billion in direct and indirect investments within the next four years. The President also provided his support for United States investments in Saudi Arabia and the facilitation of bilateral trade, which will result in sizable opportunities for both countries.

The Deputy Crown Prince also presented Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 programme for the President and agreed to put in place specific bilateral programmes to help both countries benefit from new opportunities created by the Kingdom's implementation of those new economic plans.

They said...

>> Saudi Arabia is "brimming with a bright and advanced human potential due to the Kingdom's young population." Japan is "extremely keen to tap into that great resource and assist with the development programs laid out by the government."

Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

In Brief

KSRelief opens two new projects in Yemen

The King Salman Center for Relief and Humanitarian Aid has launched two new projects in Yemen. The first will help tackle malnutrition among children, and pregnant and nursing mothers, while a second focuses on water supply.

The malnutrition project will cover eight provinces, and targets 348,468 children, nursing and pregnant women.

Water supply projects will be implemented in 15 governorates and help deliver water to houses, distributing tanks and other water containers. The water project will benefit 1.35 million children, 796,011 men and 762,917 women.

Yemen Minister of Public Health and Population Dr. Nasser Ba'oom said in a press statement that the Kingdom is giving vital support to Yemen not least that supplied by KSRelief.

The head of King Salman Center for Relief and Humanitarian Aid in Aden said that the center provides uninterrupted support to the Yemeni people as a part of the Kingdom's humanitarian position toward the Yemeni people, adding that the centre implemented more than 121 projects across the Yemeni governorates.

