



The Kingdom of SAUDI ARABIA

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National Day Issue

National Day celebrating unity and growth

National Day celebrates the final reunification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by King Abdulaziz in 1932



Today we celebrate the legacy left by the founder of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud which has been honoured and upheld by successive kings who have successfully led the nation through a variety of challenges and changes.

On our 85th National Day (Hijri calendar), we recall the development of the Kingdom since reunification. The Kingdom has gone from a disparate array of acrimonious and divided tribes to a united country in which approximately 30 million people find security, stability and the benefits of a thriving economy.

Under the leadership of King Abdulaziz and his sons, King Saud, King Faisal, King Khalid, King Fahd, King Abdullah and our current leader Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Kingdom has transformed from an undeveloped area of desert and created a modern developed society in less than a century.

Today, the Kingdom offers a highly developed infrastructure to support economic growth and investment, free public education, and health care systems for all citizens, as well as an extensive social services programme.

The Government under the prudent and wise leadership of King Salman, is dedicated to building a society based on the true teachings of Islam, whilst also confronting the forces of radical hatred and division.

With its consistent political stability, abundant energy reserves, and important position in the world, and guided by a foreign policy that focuses on Arab unity, Islamic solidarity and peaceful coexistence, Saudi Arabia is a strong advocate of peace, security and constructive cooperation throughout the world.



Message from the Prime Minister David Cameron on Saudi Arabia's National Day

“ I send my warmest wishes to His Majesty King Salman, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and to the people of Saudi Arabia as they mark the Kingdom's National Day.

This is an important year, marking the centenary this December of the first formal treaty signed between the United Kingdom and King Abdulaziz, founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Your country has recently endured much sadness. No one could fail to be moved by the tragic pictures of the Mecca crane accident where over 100 people lost their lives and so many more were injured. I offer my sincere condolences and prayers at this terrible time.

Your country has also marked the deaths of King Abdullah and Prince Saud Al Faisal, this year. King Abdullah served your country with distinction, maintaining warm relations with the West, to the benefit of both our nations. Prince Saud Al Faisal was the world's longest-serving foreign minister and a good friend to the UK government.

We have much to work together on. Both our nations are dealing with the threat of violent extremists who worship a perverted ideology that is not Islam. We must fight it, and we must continue to value the importance of each other as allies, as we seek to support a stable, prosperous and peaceful Middle East. ”



David Cameron

From the Ambassador

HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf Al Saud



“ This has been a momentous year for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In January, following the death of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, may God rest his soul, Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, became King of Saudi Arabia and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

King Salman has set the agenda for the future of our Kingdom, steadfastly following the footsteps of his predecessor and building on his legacy, and remaining true to the principles established by the founder of the modern Kingdom, King Abdulaziz. Our aim now, as in the past, will be to maintain stability and growth for all the people of the Kingdom and to work for peace both regionally and internationally.

This was also the longstanding aim of our Foreign Minister HRH Prince Saud Al Faisal who died this summer, may his soul rest in peace. He will be missed by all who knew him but has been ably succeeded by Adel Jubair, the former Ambassador to the USA.

This National Day follows Hajj – when Muslims from all over the world pray in unity for peace and come together in Makkah al Mukkaramah. It is a unity we strive for in our region. Our prayers this year are particularly with the families affected by the terrible crane accident in Makkah two weeks ago. King Salman immediately visited the victims, ordered compensation to be paid to their families and initiated an investigation into the cause of the accident.

We also pray for our neighbours in Syria and Yemen. We are committed to doing all we can to bring peace and security to these countries and to offer people fleeing from the centre of war a safe haven in the Kingdom.

In London we are looking forward to the launch of the exhibition *Hajj – Journey Through the Ages* at the Royal Geographical Society. We hope that the paintings and photographs on display will remind Muslims and non-Muslims of the essence of this incredible lifetime journey, how it has physically changed but how its spiritual message remains the same.

In the coming year, we look forward to ongoing co-operation and good relations with the government here in the United Kingdom which shares our desire for a peaceful and stable world. ”

The Kingdom marches forward

King Salman unveils his policies

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has unveiled his domestic and foreign policy agenda, vowing to work towards “complete and balanced development” and to defend Arab and Islamic causes.

“Our country is marching firmly towards growth,” said King Salman. The Kingdom will continue to work on the principles of Shariah and in the service of Islam on which it was founded, and towards “complete and balanced development” for all.

The King outlined his policies to senior princes, ministers, governors, Al Shura members, top military commanders, the Grand Mufti, Islamic scholars, top editors and other dignitaries.

He said: “I have the pleasure to address you with a heart full of love and sincerity looking forward to a bright future for the country.

“My aim is to work to achieve justice for all citizens with no difference between one citizen and another, one region and another.”

Regional governors

King Salman said regional governors had been directed to listen to the concerns of their citizens and to confront any divisions with the aim of “eradicating any differences” in society.

He said the media had a major role to play in supporting government initiatives to strengthen national unity. It should not be used to incite division and discord among different sections of society.

“Media should be a means for harmony and constructive thinking. It should be instrumental in strengthening unity and national cohesion.”

Security

King Salman said that the security of the Kingdom was the reason for its prosperity and stability. “Security is everybody’s responsibility, and we will never allow anyone to tamper with our security.”

The Kingdom’s security forces are to be boosted to ensure they are capable of defending Saudi Arabia and the Arab and Muslim cause. The government



will continue to work towards soothing tensions in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Economy

Speaking about the Saudi economy King Salman said that “high petrol prices during the past few years have had a positive effect on the national economy and on development projects”.

He said that the drop in oil prices had emphasized the need for economic alternatives.

“My aim is to work to achieve justice for all citizens with no difference between one citizen and another, one region and another”

He said that exploration of oil, gas and natural resources would continue, but there is a need to “build a strong economy with diversified revenues.” The government is working towards limiting the effect of lower oil prices on the development process.

Industry

The King hoped the coming years would see landmark achievements in the industrial and service sectors. Private businessmen would partner the government in its aim for further development. There is a plan to give the private sector more opportunities to enable it to contribute more towards the Kingdom’s economic growth.

Partners in progress

Addressing businessmen specifically he said: “You are our partners in progress. We are expecting a lot from you, and you have to contribute with initiatives in employment and service as well as in the social and economic sectors.”

Health and Education

The King pledged to “develop specialized health care services for all citizens wherever they are”. He also highlighted the need to find housing solutions for all Saudis.

He said the government should “provide education that will offer results suitable to the development process and market needs”.

King Salman said that young Saudi students represented the future of the Kingdom. He said the government would continue to provide higher education to its students at reputable universities both inside and outside Saudi Arabia.

Foreign Affairs

King Salman said that he will continue to work for global peace. The Kingdom’s foreign policy is based on holding fast to the teachings of Islam, which fosters love and peace.

He said that Saudi Arabia is committed to abiding by international covenants, agreements and conventions and respected the principle of sovereignty. He said that he would reject interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

Scourge of Extremism

“We are also working to achieve global security and stability, as well as to consolidate the principles of justice and peace and reject the use of violence.

“The Kingdom is determined to combat the global scourge of extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as to root out this menace, in cooperation with friendly nations and international organizations.”

King Salman asked for God’s help to fulfil his responsibilities in the best manner possible.

Key talks with Obama discuss regional crises

- a new period of co-operation -

The global fight against terrorism, Iran's aggressive policies and the crises in Yemen and Syria were at the top of the agenda when the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman made his first official visit to the USA earlier this month.

King Salman said the visit was important: "Our relationship is beneficial not only to our two countries, but to the entire world and to our region. We must always affirm and deepen such relations." He hoped the Saudi-US relationship was entering a new period of greater cooperation and strategic partnership across all sectors of society.

During his visit he held a meeting with President Barack Obama. The two leaders discussed joint efforts to defeat Al-Qaeda and the coalition campaign to contain and destroy all terrorists.

Syria

They also discussed the crisis in Syria. Both leaders stressed the importance of reaching a lasting political solution to the current conflict on the principles of a Geneva declaration including the departure of Bashar Al-Assad who has lost legitimacy to lead Syria.

Yemen

Concerns about Yemen were a central part of discussions. The two leaders stressed the urgent need to reach a political solution within the GCC Initiative and the outcomes of the National Dialogue and UN Security Council Resolution 2216. Both leaders had humanitarian concerns. King Salman said Saudi Arabia was committed to providing assistance to the Yemeni people.

Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor for the United States said that the leaders discussions on Syria and Yemen were very significant. The US shared many of the same objectives as Saudi Arabia, wanting to pursue both military and political strategies whilst offering all necessary humanitarian assistance.

Palestine

The two leaders also discussed the longstanding push for peace between Palestine and Israel. Both leaders stressed the importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement with a two-state solution.



Iran

On the subject of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran and P5+1 countries, King Salman expressed support for the shared goal of preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. The two leaders agreed on the need to improve regional security and their concern about Iran's aggressive activities.

An earlier US government statement said there was a need to build more effective capabilities and cooperation to counter Iranian destabilizing activities in the region.

Iraq

Both King Salman and President Obama expressed support for Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi and the Iraqi government's efforts to defeat terrorism. They encouraged the full implementation of recently-agreed reforms by the Iraqi Parliament.

Following their meeting both leaders tasked government officials to identify ways to further develop bilateral relations including a new strategic partnership for the 21st century.

King Salman's visit is part of a broader diplomatic initiative calling for world leaders "to safeguard the interests of the Saudi people and the Islamic world".

King Salman was accompanied on his visit to the US by Deputy Crown Prince, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, HRH Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

Business co-operation and growth

King Salman's presence in Washington coincided with the biggest US-Saudi trade and investment event ever mounted. The Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) working with the Council of Saudi Chambers (CSC) and the US-Saudi Business Council hosted the US-Saudi Investment Forum.

King Salman delivered the keynote address to the US-Saudi Investment Forum dinner. He said the foundation of the Saudi-US relationship was set by the late King Abdulaziz and President Franklin D. Roosevelt and that the Kingdom and the US "have worked together, side by side over the past 70 years to counter all the challenges that threaten the security and stability in the region, and to promote the march of bilateral cooperation for the benefit of the two friendly countries and the upholding of global economic growth."

King Salman said that he had issued directive to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and SAGIA to review trade and investment regulations to provide incentives "including direct work in the Saudi markets for those companies which wish to invest in the Kingdom".

Recent figures on US commercial relations with the Kingdom show that in the last ten years, Saudi-US trade rose from \$26 billion to \$74 billion.

Prince Mohammad bin Naif appointed Crown Prince

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has issued a royal decree naming HRH Prince Mohammad bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Second Deputy Prime Minister, in addition to his current position as Minister of Interior.

This is the first time that a grandson rather than son of King Abdulaziz has been appointed to this key position, placing him in line for the monarchy following King Salman.

Prince Mohammed is the second eldest son and one of ten children of Prince Naif who died in 2012. Prince Mohammad studied in the United States, attending the FBI's security courses from 1985 to 1988, and then training with Scotland Yard's anti-terrorism units between 1992 and 1994.

He was appointed Assistant Interior Minister for Security Affairs in 1999 and has been widely credited for the success of the Ministry's counter-terrorism program. He is also regarded as the architect of the government's counterinsurgency program. During his term as Assistant Minister he also served as the Director of Civil Defence. In 2004, he was appointed to the rank of minister, becoming number two at the Ministry of Interior.

In November 2009, King Abdullah appointed Prince Mohammad as a member of the influential Supreme Economic Council of Saudi Arabia. He was appointed as Minister of the



Interior in 2012 succeeding his father in the post.

Prince Mohammad has shown himself to be forward thinking and in late January 2013 announced that Saudi women would be allowed to work at the Interior Ministry's directorate. In February 2014, Prince Mohammad was made responsible for Syria, replacing Bandar bin Sultan, then Intelligence Chief of Saudi Arabia.

As well as being Deputy Crown Prince, King Salman has appointed Prince Mohammad as Chairman of the Council for Political and Security Affairs which was established on 29 January 2015.

Mohammad bin Naif has helped lead Saudi Arabia's fight against terrorism and believes that terrorism must be treated as a form of crime and fought with ruthless policing methods. He has been commended by Western intelligence agencies for Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism programs.

Prince Mohammad was described by The Economist as "energetic and low-key". However his hard line against terrorism and extremism has resulted in four assassination attempts, from all of which he has escaped unhurt. Following one attempt in 2009 by a suicide bomber linked to Al Qaeda, Prince Mohammad told the media that attempts on his life had only "increased my determination to fight terrorism in the Kingdom".

Crown Prince visits the United Kingdom

HRH Prince Mohammad bin Naif bin Abdulaziz visited the UK earlier this year, just prior to his appointment as Crown Prince, to hold high level talks with Prime Minister David Cameron and other key government officials.

The Ambassador, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf stressed the importance of the official visit of Crown Prince Mohammed who is also Minister of the Interior. He said the visit was a strong indication of the common desire by both Kingdoms for closer bilateral relations in various fields.



The Crown Prince held a meeting with HRH The Prince of Wales who held a dinner in his honour. He also held talks with British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon and Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond. He was greeted at the airport

on arrival by the Ambassador and by British Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Theresa May.

The Ambassador said that talks had been aimed at looking at ways to enhance cooperation in the security field, particularly in combating extremist ideals and terrorist organizations. There were also discussions on finding ways to achieve a return to stability in Yemen.

Following the visit, the recently appointed British Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Simon Collis held talks in Riyadh with the President of the Al Shoura Council, Dr Abdullah Al-Sheikh who

congratulated the Ambassador on his appointment and said that he hoped to see a strengthening of the parliamentary relationship between the council and the UK House of Commons and House of Lords.

Mohammad bin Salman appointed Deputy Crown Prince

HRH Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has been appointed Deputy Crown Prince, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.

Prince Mohammed has acted as a personal advisor to his father since 2009. As well as Deputy Crown Prince he is Chief of the Royal Court and Chairman of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs.

He is the son of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his third wife Fahda bint Falah bin Sultan Al Hithalayn. He holds a BA in law from the King Saud University, graduating second in his class.

Prince Mohammad entered politics as a special advisor to his father when the latter was the governor of Riyadh Province. He also became Secretary-General of the



Riyadh Competitive Council and Special Advisor to the Chairman of the Board for the King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives. In 2014 he was appointed as a Minister of State and member of the cabinet.

In March 2013, by royal decree, Prince Mohammad was appointed Head of the Crown Prince's Court with the rank of Minister and special advisor to the Crown Prince. On April 25, 2014, he was appointed as a State Minister and Member of Cabinet.

Following the appointment of his father as King in January this year, Prince Mohammad was appointed Minister of Defence. He was also named as the Secretary General of the Royal Court on the same date, also retaining his position as Minister of State.

The Council of Ministers

Since taking office in January this year, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman, has made a number of changes to his cabinet and Council of Ministers.

The Council of Ministers was established by the founder of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz. The Council is responsible for drafting and overseeing the implementation of the internal, external, financial, economic, educational, defence and general affairs policies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Council meets weekly and is presided over by the King or one of his deputies.

Members of the current Council serving under King Salman, who is also Prime Minister, are:

Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior:

HRH Prince Mohammad bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (Crown Prince since 29.4.2015)

Deputy Crown Prince, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence:

HRH Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (Deputy Crown Prince since 29.4.2015)

Minister of the National Guard:

HRH Prince Miteb bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (27.5.2013)

Minister of Education:

Dr Azzam bin Mohammed Al-Dakhil (29.1.2015)

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs:

Abdullatif bin Abdulmalik bin Omar Al-Shaikh (29.1.2015)

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir (29.4.2015)

Minister of Agriculture

Abdulrahman bin Abdulmohsen Al-Fadhli (29.4.2015)

Minister of Water and Electricity:

Abdullah bin Abdulrahman Al-Husein (13.4.2004)

Minister of Civil Service:

Khalid bin Abdullah Al-Araj (29.1.2015)

Minister of Finance:

Dr Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Al-Assaf (May 2003)

Minister of Health:

Khaled bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih (29.4.2015)

Minister of Commerce and Industry:

Dr Tawfiq Al-Rabiah (30.4.2003)

Minister of Culture and Information:

Dr Adel bin Zaid Al-Turaifi (29.1.2015)

Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance:

Sheikh Saleh Bin Abdulaziz Al-AsShaikh (29.1.2015)

Minister of Justice:

Dr Walid bin Mohammad bin Saleh Al-Samaani (29.1.2015)

Minister of Labour:

Dr Mufrej bin Saad Al-Haqbani (29.4.2015)

Minister of Social Affairs:

Dr Majed bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi (29.1.2015)

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources:

Ali bin Ibrahim Al-Naimi (1995)

Minister of Hajj:

Dr Bandar bin Mohammed Al-Hajjar (13.12.2011)

Minister of National Economy and Planning:

Adel bin Mohammed Fakeih (29.4.2015)

Minister of Communications and Information Technology:

Dr Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al-Suwaiyel (29.1.2015)

Minister of Transport:

Abdullah bin Abdulrahman Al-Muqbel (8.12.2014)

Minister of Housing:

Majed bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Hogail (13.7.2015)

Seeking stability for Yemen



Saudi Arabia seeks security and stability for the people of Yemen.

Setting out the Kingdom's position on the situation in Yemen, Foreign Minister HE Adel bin Ahmed Al- Jubeir said: "Our hope was that various parties in Yemen would be able to reach a solution that ensures security and stability, but this did not happen. The Houthis occupied and moved their militias from Saada into Amran, Sana'a, Ibb, Taiz, and Aden, and posed a direct threat to the legitimate Yemeni government, which had to request support under item 51 of the Charter of the United Nations".

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Coalition countries have provided this support, but we have always said the solution in Yemen is political, and we hope that the Houthis and Ali Saleh will have the wisdom to find that solution.

"We're seeing a shift in the balance of power in Yemen, and we hope that will convince the rebels to abandon their military option and return to the negotiating table."

Meeting with Hammond

Mr Jubeir held talks with British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond during a one day visit to London.

In a statement following the meeting Mr Jubeir said that they discussed Yemen. Both countries hope that UN resolution 2216 will be implemented so that Yemen can move towards a secure and stable future.

They also discussed the necessity for Assad to leave Syria.

On Iran, Mr Hammond gave an assurance to Mr Jubeir that Britain reopening its embassy in Iran did not mean it would relax pressure on Tehran to stop interfering in other countries' affairs.

Iran must not intervene in Gulf Affairs

Saudi Arabia is keen on developing relations with Iran on condition that Iran stops interfering in the internal affairs of other countries in the region including Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq and Bahrain said Saudi Foreign Minister, HE Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir.

He said Saudi Arabia has sought positive relations with Iran but continues to be concerned about Iran's foreign policy and interference in the region. He expressed concern that Iran continues to refuse International Atomic Energy Agency's inspectors to enter some military installations only suggests that Tehran's intention is to make nuclear weapons. Saudi Arabia is closely monitoring the Iranian policy developments concerning uranium enrichment.

The Minister has also condemned Iranian statements on Bahrain: "This is something we do not accept. We believe it does not represent the desire of a state seeking good neighbourliness, but rather represents a country with ambitions in the region. It is aggressive behaviour."

Mr Jubeir said that there had been an escalation in aggressive statements from Iran. He pointed out that despite the new Group 5+1 agreement with Iran sanctions were still in place and would remain in place until the implementation of the agreement which has yet to be adopted by the Security Council.

He said that he believed many Iranian people, particularly young people wanted their country to open up to the rest of the world, they wanted a different future and it was up to the Iranian government to secure that for them through education and other programmes.

Aid commitment to Yemen

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has committed more than \$540 million in humanitarian aid to Yemen this year.



A statement issued to the press earlier this year on the instructions of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah said: "We are setting aside one billion riyals (\$266 million) for aid and humanitarian operations in addition to the more than one billion riyals (\$274 million) we had already pledged."

In April the Kingdom announced it would fund the entire \$274 million

sought by the United Nations in its appeal for emergency assistance to help victims of the war in Yemen. The UN said the money would "meet the life-saving and protection needs of 7.5 million people affected" by a deepening humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

In a press statement, Raafat Al-Sabbagh, official spokesman for the King Salman Centre, said that it would be up to UN agencies to decide where the aid would be delivered. So far it has been allocated to the following U.N. affiliated organizations:

- \$142.8 million to the World Food Program
- \$31.1 million to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees
- \$29.6 million to the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- \$22.6 million to the World Health Organization
- \$8 million to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- \$5.8 million to the Food and Agriculture Organization
- \$2.5 million to the U.N. Population Fund
- \$1.7 million to the U.N. Development Program
- \$525,000 to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

All humanitarian aid will be provided in consultation with the legitimate government of Yemen. The Kingdom has already set up refugee camps within Yemen and has disbursed eleven plane loads of aid to local people.

Zero tolerance for terror in the Kingdom

Saudi Arabia will leave no stone unturned in its fight against terrorism and misguided radical extremists said the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman. There is zero tolerance for terror in the Kingdom.

The King denounced terrorists and terrorism and emphasized the need for a strategic plan to combat terrorism in a keynote speech to the opening of an international conference on counter terrorism organised by the Muslim World League.



“At the national level, our security forces have confronted terrorists without showing any leniency and have even sacrificed their lives in that mission, while our air forces have joined the international coalition to combat terror,” said the King in a speech read out by Makkah Governor HRH Prince Khaled Al Faisal. He said that terrorists were tainting and vilifying the image of Islam among non-Muslims across the world. Muslim countries are threatened by the infiltration of terrorists who kill in the name of Islam “fuelling international opinion against Muslims.” As a consequence ties between Muslim and non-Muslim states had been damaged. Muslims were increasingly seen as “a source of fear and concern.” Terrorism had resulted in a “catastrophic loss of people

and infrastructure”, but the greatest danger it posed was in opening up Islam and its 1.5 billion followers to attack said the King.

Calling out for moderation and forgiveness, King Salman said that Saudi Arabia had been actively working for better understanding between all people, establishing centres and organizing conferences to further dialogue, not only between Muslim groups, but also between Muslims and people of other faiths.

Muslims needed to increase their understanding of the dangers and risks stemming from terrorism. Both “individuals and organizations should double their efforts” to fight it.

Crackdown on terrorist suspects

An intensified crackdown on suspected terrorist cells has resulted in the arrest of 431 suspects by the Ministry of Interior.

Ministry spokesman, Major General Mansour Al Turki said that the Ministry had also thwarted a number of terrorist operations during the month of Ramadan, including suicide attacks aimed at a number of mosques in the Eastern Province and one in Riyadh. As a result 37 people had died including security personnel and civilians.

Saudi Arabia provides a safe haven to 2.5 million displaced Syrians

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a statement highlighting the Kingdom’s efforts to support the people of Syria since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011. In a statement the ministry said that the Kingdom has been one of the largest providers of aid to Syria’s people and has taken in millions of citizens from the war-torn country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that the following actions have been taken by Saudi Arabia:

1. The Kingdom has received around 2.5 million Syrians since the beginning of the conflict. In order to ensure their dignity and safety, the Kingdom adopted the policy not to treat them as refugees or place them in refugee camps. They have been given the freedom to move about the country, and those who wish to remain in Saudi Arabia (some hundreds of thousands) have been given legal residency status like other residents. Their residency comes with the right to receive free medical care, to join the labour market and to attend schools and universities. This was contained in a royal decree in 2012 that instructed public schools to accept Syrian students. According to government statistics, the public school system has accepted more than 100,000 Syrian students.

2. The Kingdom’s efforts were not limited to accepting Syrian citizens into the Kingdom; it also extended its efforts to support and care for millions of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and others. Efforts included providing humanitarian assistance in

coordination with host governments and with international human aid organizations. Aid was provided in the form of money and goods.

3. The aid provided by Saudi Arabia to the Syrian people totals around \$700 million, according to the statistics of the Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria which took place in Kuwait on 31st March, 2015. Government aid and aid provided by the National Campaign are included in that figure.

4. Humanitarian aid provided to Syrians by the Kingdom consisted of food, medical, academic, and residential supplies, and included the establishment of Saudi specialized clinics in refugee camps, most importantly the Zaatari Camp in Jordan. The Kingdom has also provided medical care in the form of immunizations, preventive treatments and medical procedures. Saudi Arabia has also sponsored a large number of Syrian families living in Lebanon and Syria (specifically paying for their rent and living costs).

Third expansion of the Grand Mosque, an historic leap forward



A third expansion of the Grand Mosque, Makkah has been launched by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

This expansion is a further development of expansions initiated by the founder of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

King Abdulaziz and completed by his sons King Saud and King Faisal. This was followed by the expansion of the eastern parks implemented during the era of late King Khalid, the expansion of the mosque from the western side during the reign of late King Fahd, followed by the Massaa (circumambulation passage) expansion which took place during the era of late King Abdullah who also ordered the grand expansion which will be completed during the current era of King Salman.

King Salman has dedicated five major projects in Makkah as follows: the Holy Mosque's main expansion building, the external parks, pedestrian-use tunnels, central services building and first ring road. Other projects being completed include the Mataf (circumambulation), the stairs where up to 150,000 people will be able to pray, the security building and the hospital. All these developments will bring the capacity of the Grand Mosque to 1,850,000 worshippers.



The Massaa area has been extended by 57,000 square meters to accommodate 70,000 worshippers, enabling the number of people able to use the circumambulation path to more than double from 44,000 to 118,000 people per hour.

The Mataf area has been extended by 60,000 square meters and will be able to accommodate nearly twice as many worshippers after expansion is complete.

A report on the expansion pointed out that the third expansion would be the largest expansion in history and would use the latest construction and systems techniques.

The project is estimated to cost over SR 1 billion.

Millions of Muslims undertake Hajj and Umra pilgrimages annually. This year more than two million Muslims attended Hajj, the largest single gathering of Muslims in the world.

King orders payments to crane crash victims

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud issued an order for compensation payments to be made to the victims of the disastrous crane accident which happened in September.



Families of those who died and of those who suffered permanent disability in the accident will receive SR1 million. Those who suffered injury will receive SR500,000. He said that these payments would not deprive families of the victims from filing private claims before the competent judicial authorities.

The King further issued a directive that family members of those who died would be invited as his guests to perform Hajj next year.

Within 24 hours of the tragic crash, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman visited the site of the accident and went on to visit the injured in hospital.

The dramatic accident in which 107 people died and hundreds of others were injured happened when one of the crane's carrying out building work around the Grand Mosque collapsed during a storm involving torrential rains and a sand storm.

A report by the Accident Investigations Committee concluded that the main reason for the accident was strong winds while the crane was in the wrong position. King Salman has issued a directive to refer the Committee's results to the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution who are examining procedures undertaken by the building contractors, the Saudi Bin Laden Group (SBLG). A travel ban has been imposed on all members of the SBLG Board of Directors, senior executives and other persons connected with the project until the completion of the investigation.

King Salman reviewed the report of the Committee which concluded that there was no suspicion of criminal intent. He issued a directive to refer the results of the investigation to the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution to complete inquiry procedures with the SBLG.

All operations of the SBLG have been halted until a review of their work has been completed.

Hajj – Journey through the Ages

An exhibition of paintings by Saudi artist Reem Nazir is to go on display in the Pavilion at the Royal Geographical Society's headquarters in London next month.

The paintings are inspired by historical photographs and first-hand accounts of the Hajj.

"The seeds of the project go back to when I asked Reem to paint two of my favourite images from amongst my historic photograph collection," explained her husband Tarik Alireza, who, has a collection of thousands of historical photographs of Arabia and the Islamic world.

When the two paintings were finished they were displayed at a Ramadan charity bazaar organized by HRH Princess Adela bint Abdullah. Both Reem and Tarik were delighted by the overwhelming interest the paintings attracted from visitors.

"I sent an image of Reem's painting 'Prayer in Haram of Makkah' to accompany my Ramadan email greetings to close friends. One recipient, Tajammul Hussain, a British Pakistani artist, called me to say how moved and inspired he was by the image. He felt we must convince Reem to do a series on the Hajj Journey of olden times."

The project begins

"It took three very intensive years of work. As always some paintings move quickly and others just take their time," said Reem. "My studio in Jeddah is large enough, so I was able to work at up to three paintings at the same time.

"As I was painting in many layers of thick paint, I often had to let the paint dry. This work would have to be set aside and something else started. All told, each painting took upwards of four weeks."

Each painting was inspired by photographs from Tarik's collection. "Working only from black and white photographs, often with less than clear detail, presented its own set of problems," said Tarik. "Soon she was asking about the colour of various objects shown in the images.

"As almost all that one sees in the images of a century ago no longer exists, only observations or descriptions of early travellers would possibly offer a clue."

Finding the quotes

"In searching for answers, I also ran into many evocative quotes that really added another dimension. These also helped inspire Reem as the atmosphere of the place in an otherwise static photographic image was suddenly brought to life. It was then that we decided that the exhibition would benefit from the three complementing elements: the photographs, first hand quotes and the paintings," said Tarik.

Reem chose to paint on the type of canvas from which pilgrim tents used to be made. "I liked the rough texture as it suited my work and gave the right effect I wanted while working with a palette knife."



The challenges

The project was all consuming. "In truth it is difficult to undertake such a large project knowing it will be a few years before one gets feedback from the viewing public. Doubt could sometimes creep in but one must trust one's own instincts," said Reem. She was encouraged by Tarik and Tajammul and other close friends.

She finally finished the 43 paintings in the collection just before they were first exhibited in Jeddah in 2013. The inaugural exhibition was launched by HRH Prince Khalid Al Faisal, Governor of Makkah. "He is an artist and was kept apprised of the progress of the work. His favourable response to the project and works was very encouraging."

Reem has now embarked on a new project. "I have started working on a series depicting the "Mihrab", or prayer niche, from mosques in all corners of the Islamic world. The theme will be unity through diversity.

"I have also been commissioned by HRH Prince Faisal ibn Salman ibn Abdulaziz, Governor of Madinah, to paint classically traditional portraits of the last few living "aghawat", the eunuchs entrusted with the care of the Two Holy Mosques in Makkah and Medinah."

The London patron

The London exhibition is being held under the patronage of the Ambassador, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf Al Saud. He said: "I am delighted to have been able to bring this exhibition to the multicultural city of London, and hope it will contribute to the understanding of this remarkable annual Muslim gathering. I hope that it helps to represent the important message of dialogue in Islam, which ultimately aims to bring all nations and ethnic groups of the world together in justice and equality."

Hajj – Journey Through the Ages

The Pavillion, Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AR.

8-28 October 2015 Monday to Saturday 10.00-17.00

Prince Charles holds talks with King Salman

HRH The Prince of Wales, made an official visit to Saudi Arabia earlier this year to hold talks with the newly appointed Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman.

“They exchanged very cordial talks while reviewing the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries during their meeting,” said a British spokesman.

“The Prince of Wales’ return to the region demonstrates the importance Her Majesty’s government places on its association with key partners in the area.

“These connections are underpinned by the long-standing and respectful relationships which exist between the Royal Family and the ruling families in the Gulf.”

During the visit Prince Charles also held meeting with other top government officials and ministers including HRH Prince Mohammad bin Naif Al Saud, Crown Prince and Deputy Premier.

King Salman hosted a luncheon in honour of Prince Charles and his delegation which was attended by senior figures and ministers as well as HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, Saudi Ambassador to the United Kingdom.



Archaeological visit



During his visit Prince Charles, took a historical trip with HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman, President of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, to visit Al-Ula and Hejaz Railway. Al-Ula, located approximately 350 km north of Madinah, is well known for its archaeological remnants, while the historical Hejaz Railway once linked Damascus with the holy city of Madinah through a narrow-gauge railway line, and was used by pilgrims travelling from Istanbul to the Prophet’s Mosque via the Syrian capital. Prince Charles has a life-long interest in archaeology and anthropology having studied both at university.

During the visit to Al Ula an agreement was signed by the Saudi National Handicraft Program *Bari*, with Prince Charles Turquoise Mountain Foundation.

Rock paintings are newest world heritage site

The rock painting sites at Jabel in the Hail region has become the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s newest heritage site to be listed by the Organization of World Heritage of United Nations for Educational, Scientific and Cultural (UNESCO).

This is the Kingdom’s 4th heritage site to be listed on UNESCO’s list of World Heritage Sites.

Jabel is located in the north-west of Hail, 100 kilometers inside the Nafud desert and is considered to be one of the largest and most important rock inscription and painting sites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The rock inscriptions show ancient peoples of the desert. The site dates back to the stone age and has become a heritage and tourist destination in the region.



Women to vote and stand in December elections



Women will be allowed to vote in the third municipal elections which are scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia this December.

The Kingdom held its first municipal elections in 2005 and second elections in 2011. This year several changes have been made to encourage greater public participation including:

- An increase in elected municipal council members from half to two thirds.
- A reduction in the voting age from 21-years to 18-years.
- Inclusion of women as both voters and candidates.

The executive committee supervising the election has identified a total of 1,263 voting centres, distributed in 284 municipalities.

Voter registration started on August. Candidate registration was in August and September. The final list of candidates will be announced on 29 November.

Many Saudi women have been preparing to take part in the elections by undergoing training programmes encouraging their interest in politics and explaining how to get nominated for election, how to run an election campaign and how to encourage political participation by other women.

Deputy Minister for Girls' Education Dr Haya Al-Awad, said that Saudi women had the confidence and ability to compete with men and women all over the world.

Registering to vote earlier this month Hala Al Zir said: "This is a proud moment for Saudi women. I am delighted to be taking part in this historic vote."

Saudi women 'rising to the top with confidence'



There are hundreds of powerful and successful women in Saudi Arabia, contrary to the perception of people in the West.

Afnan Al-Shuaiby, Secretary General and Chief Executive of the Arab British Chamber of Commerce, based in London, highlighted the success of women in the Kingdom at a recent global series meeting organized by George Washington University.

She told a packed audience hall of ambassadors, business leaders and alumni that she was sometimes frustrated by the continued stereotyping of Saudis and Arabs, particularly in Western countries. She said many people still believe that Saudis travel on camels.

There was also the perception that people from Saudi Arabia can only be successful if they grow up in the West. She said she was proud of her Saudi identity and that there were hundreds of fellow women in the Kingdom who are educated and successful.

She said that many of the 15,000 Saudis studying at universities in the United Kingdom are women.

Al-Shuaiby said a good business leader has to listen, observe and understand people from different walks of life and different cultures. In addition to education, strong family support was vital to help women and men develop the confidence to take up leadership positions.

Al-Shuaiby recalled how nervous she was in 2009 facing a panel of six examiners who quizzed her on her PhD dissertation. She remembered waiting outside and worrying about what she would say to her family if she failed. When the examiners called her back and addressed her as Dr. Al-Shuaiby, she first thought her father, also a doctor, had come into the room. She said that it was only when she picked up her diploma later that realization of her success sank in.

Stock market opens to foreign investors

Saudi Arabia's stock market was opened to foreign investors in June, marking a step forward in the Kingdom's economic reform programme that could attract a rush of overseas investment in coming years.



The Kingdom is the Middle East's biggest economy and the opening of the market has given direct market access to large overseas investors with more than \$5bn in assets under management.

The Tadawul market, with a capitalisation of more than \$560 billion is expected to be upgraded from frontier to emerging markets status by 2017, encouraging more asset managers to allocate funds to Saudi Arabia.

Tariq al-Sudairy, Chief Executive of Riyadh-based Jadwa Investment, forecast that \$30-\$50 billion of overseas money would enter the market over the next three to five years.

"Inward flows typically materialise gradually over a period of a few years, rather than an immediate flooding of the market," he said.

The decision to open the stock market to foreign investors is part of the government's broader effort to boost the private sector and reduce dependency on oil revenue.

Prince Saud Al Faisal, Foreign Minister, remembered

HRH Prince Saud Al Faisal, who died in July aged 75, was the world's longest-serving foreign minister. He represented the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for 40 years, from 1975 until April this year. In the same period the UK got through 15 foreign secretaries and America 13 secretaries of state.

Universally well-regarded at home and abroad, Prince Saud possessed a formidable intellect and extraordinary in depth knowledge of international affairs. He worked closely with four kings: King Khalid, King Fahd, King Abdullah and the current Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman.

King Salman was accompanied by other regional and international leaders when he performed funeral prayers for the soul of Prince Saud in the Grand Mosque in Makkah. Prayers were also performed by the Emir of Kuwait HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; Deputy Prime Minister HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa of Bahrain and others. Prince Saud's brothers and sons as well as other members of the Saudi Royal Family and government ministers joined in the prayers.



Messages of condolence from leaders from around the world were received by the King and members of Prince Saud's family.

British Prime Minister David Cameron said: "Many, including myself, have benefited from his great wisdom in international affairs over his long years of service to the Kingdom."

President Barack Obama said: "Prince Saud was a skilled diplomat who pursued Middle East stability and was committed to Saudi-US relations."

HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf Al Saud, the Ambassador to the UK said: "He was my friend and my mentor. He will be greatly missed."

A statement from the Royal Court said: "The Saudi people, the Arab and Islamic nations as well as the world at large are well aware of the great work the deceased has offered over five decades to serve his religion, homeland and nation with utmost devotion and sincerity at the expense of his personal health." The statement went on to appeal to Allah almighty to reward Prince Saud "a comfortable place in Paradise for the good deeds he has done for his religion and nation".

Dignitaries offer condolences in the UK for King Abdullah



Government ministers, ambassadors, politicians, academics, friends and businessmen, paid tribute to the late King Abdullah, his mission and wisdom, when signing the condolence book opened at the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia London.

The death of the King was announced in a press statement issued by the embassy.

In the statement the Ambassador HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf said: "King Abdullah was an extraordinary man, a leader who will be remembered by history for his dynamic role in strengthening and developing our nation, in bringing together people of all faiths, in searching for peaceful solutions to world conflicts and for striving for a just solution for the Palestinian people."

Those writing to the London embassy or signing the condolence book included: HRH The Prince of Wales, General Sir Peter de la Billiere, the Rt. Hon Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean and Edward Oakden, Director of the Middle East and North Africa at the Foreign Office who commented: "The United Kingdom was privileged to work closely with his governments... benefiting from his wisdom and experience."

Condolences for Saud Al-Faisal

A condolence book for Prince Saud was opened at the embassy and signed by politicians, diplomats, academics and friends remembering the long life of an extraordinary man.

The world pays tribute to King Abdullah

Leaders from around the world visited Riyadh in January to offer their condolences to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman following the death of King Abdullah.

HRH the Prince of Wales travelled to Riyadh to offer King Salman the personal condolences of the Queen and the British Royal family. He was accompanied by British Prime Minister David Cameron who issued a statement saying he was deeply saddened to hear of the death of King Abdullah: "He will be remembered for his long years of service, for his commitment to peace and for strengthening understanding between faiths.

"My thoughts and prayers are with the Saudi royal family and the people of the Kingdom at this sad time. I sincerely hope that the long and deep ties between our two kingdoms will continue and that we can work together to strengthen peace and prosperity in the world."

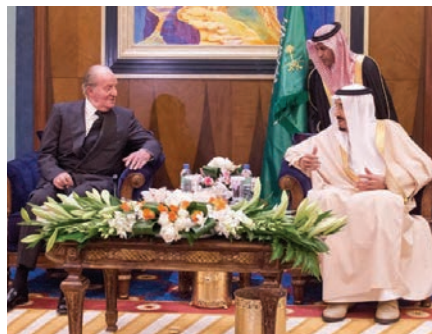
US President Barack Obama made an official visit to the Kingdom to offer his condolences. He said King Abdullah "was always candid and had the courage of his convictions. One of those convictions was his steadfast and passionate belief in the importance of the US -Saudi relationship as a force for stability and security in the Middle East and beyond."

UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon said: "King Abdullah made major contributions to the development of the Kingdom. Under his leadership Saudi Arabia achieved remarkable progress and prosperity for its people."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that King Abdullah's policies "brought him and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia respect and recognition. With wisdom, foresight and great personal dedication, he strove for a cautious modernisation of his country and for dialogue between the Islamic world and the West."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said: "I would like to express my sadness and pain at the loss of the great Arab knight, King Abdullah.

"We wish the new King Salman success in his task for the good of the Saudi people and in his ongoing service of the Arab-Muslim nation."





National Day

Celebrating Unity and Remembrance

**“We remember and honour
soldiers and civilians who
have died in past years
in the fight for security, stability
and peace in our country
and in our region.”**

Produced by:

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 30 Charles Street, London W1J 5DZ Tel: 020 7917 3000

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