



Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz was proclaimed the sixth King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on August 1, 2005, upon the death of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin Abdulaziz.

King Abdullah is also Prime Minister of the Council of Ministers and Commander of the National Guard.

King Abdullah was born in Riyadh in 1924, and received his early education at the royal court. Influenced by his father, founder of the modern Kingdom King Abdulaziz Al Saud, he developed a profound respect for religion, history and the Arab heritage. His years spent living in the desert with Bedouin tribes taught him their values of honor, simplicity, generosity and bravery, and instilled in him the desire to assist in the development of his people.



In 1962, Prince Abdullah was chosen by King Faisal to command the National Guard. He was appointed Second Deputy Prime Minister in 1975 on the succession of King Khalid, and when King Fahd came to the throne in 1982, he was named Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister. In the latter capacity, he presided over cabinet meetings and governed the country as deputy to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin Abdulaziz.

Since ascending the throne in 2005, King Abdullah has made development a central focus of his reign. He has initiated a range of major economic, social, education, health, and infrastructure projects that have brought about remarkable changes throughout the Kingdom.

King Abdullah's notable achievements in this area include the launch of four mega economic cities, the creation of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology and the Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University for Girls, projects to expand the Two Holy Mosques and major welfare projects. He also approved a historic reorganization of Saudi Arabia's judicial system and enacted laws to formalize the Royal succession. As Crown Prince in 2005, he closely monitored the ongoing election process for the country's municipal councils.

On a global level, King Abdullah's participation in international diplomacy reflects the Kingdom's leadership role in defense of Arab and Islamic issues and for the achievement of world peace, stability and security.

He has taken a leading role in promoting dialogue among the world's leading faiths. His call for interfaith dialogue has resulted in the convention of the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid, Spain and a United Nations conference on dialogue in 2008.

King Abdullah has also sought to resolve conflicts in the Arab and Islamic world. Peace in the Middle East and the plight of the Palestinians are of particular concern to him, and the initiative on these that he presented at the Beirut Arab Summit in 2002 has been adopted by the League of Arab States, as has his forward-looking strategy for a unified Arab stance on international issues. He has played a key role in brokering agreements for a Palestinian national unity government and a reconciliation accord between Sudan and Chad on Darfur.

A strong advocate of constructive global cooperation, King Abdullah has held a number of important international summits and meetings in the Kingdom. In June 2008, he hosted the Jeddah energy summit to discuss ways of stabilizing global oil markets. Other major international meetings include the Third OPEC Summit of Heads of State and the 19th Arab League Summit in 2007 and the 27th summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Supreme Council in 2006.

On the issue of terrorism, King Abdullah has been unwavering in his condemnation of the taking of innocent lives, and in his denunciation of deviant groups that falsely claim to be Islamic. At the Counter-Terrorism International Conference in Riyadh in February, 2005, he urged international cooperation to fight this global scourge.

In 2008, King Abdullah launched an international interfaith dialogue initiative, an idea first discussed between the King and Pope Benedict XVI during a visit to the Vatican in November 2007. To initiate the dialogue, King Abdullah convened the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue, organized by the Muslim World League, in Makkah on June 4, 2008. The Makkah conference was followed by the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid on July 16, 2008. In what was a culmination of growing unity, on November 12 and 13, 2008, the United Nations convened a High-Level Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue.

King Abdullah has undertaken numerous state visits both as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and as Crown Prince to strengthen Saudi Arabia's relations with countries around the world. Recent state visits include Spain, France, Egypt, Jordan, Britain, Italy, Germany and Turkey in 2007, and China, India, Pakistan and Malaysia in 2006.

The King's first official visit to the United States was as Prince Abdullah in 1976, when he met with President Gerald Ford. His second visit was in October 1987, as Crown Prince, when he met with President George H.W. Bush. In September 1998, he made his third state visit to the United States, meeting in Washington, DC with President Bill Clinton. He met again with President Clinton in September 2000 while attending the Millennium event at the UN in New York.

On April 25, 2002, and again on April 25, 2005, Crown Prince Abdullah was received by President George W. Bush at the presidential ranch in Crawford, Texas. In 2008, King Abdullah twice hosted President Bush at the royal ranch in Jenadriyah, most recently in May when the president visited Saudi Arabia to mark the 70th anniversary of Saudi-US relations. On November 15, 2008, King Abdullah and President Bush met in Washington on the sidelines of the G-20 economic summit.

On April 2, 2009, King Abdullah met with President Barack Obama in London, where both leaders attended the G-20 economic summit.

Throughout his life, King Abdullah has retained a love of the desert, along with a love of horsemanship. He is a breeder of pure Arabian horses, and founder of the equestrian club in Riyadh. Another life-long passion is reading, to which he attributes great importance. He has established two libraries, the King Abdulaziz Library in Riyadh, and one in Casablanca, Morocco.

* * *