

SEPTEMBER 27, 2005

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S.

Foreign minister discusses Iraq and oil prices while in the U.S.

In remarks to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York September 20, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal described Israel's withdrawal from Gaza as a positive move, and called for a comprehensive plan for Israeli withdrawal from other occupied territories. He also urged the U.S. to make the immediate resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a priority.

Speaking on oil issues in an address to the Baker Institute in Houston on September 21, Prince Saud warned that high energy costs can harm the global economy. In order to address the problem of high oil prices, he said, countries should construct and expand refineries; standardize fuel specifications; and pursue stability in the Middle East to prevent unhealthy market speculation, particularly a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Saudi Arabia has a proven record of meeting its oil production commitments, even during the most volatile times, he remarked.

In a September 22 interview with reporters at the Saudi Embassy in Washington, Prince Saud warned that the situation in Iraq is very dangerous and could lead to disintegration if things continue as they are. "There seems to be no dynamic now that is pulling the country together. All the dynamics there are pushing the people away from each other," he said. He also expressed the concern that the disintegration of Iraq could lead to regional conflict.

Turning to US public diplomacy, Prince Saud said that he believes America's image in the Arab world is basically healthy and likely to improve once the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is justly resolved.

Prince Saud meets with Senate Foreign Relations Committee members

Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Saud Al-Faisal met with members of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the US Capitol. The September 23 meeting, hosted by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar (R-Indiana), focused on the situation in Iraq. Prince Saud warned that the situation in Iraq is very dangerous and could lead to the disintegration of Iraq if things continue as they are. The Kingdom's objective in Iraq, Prince Saud told the senators, is a stable, secure and united Iraq.

SAUDI ARABIA

Cabinet enacts new labor law

The Cabinet on September 26 approved a new labor law that aims to increase the number of Saudi nationals employed by companies in the Kingdom. Minister of Labor Dr. Ghazi Al-Qusaibi said that the law extends protection to groups who were not covered under previous labor laws, including maids and disabled workers.

The new legislation requires that at least 75 percent of a company's workforce be Saudi; the Minister of Labor, however, can reduce that percentage if it is not feasible. Businesses with 25 or more employees must hire at least four percent qualified disabled people, and companies with 50 or more female workers are required to establish day care facilities for children under six. The law also significantly increases the number of vacation days workers receive, and bars the employment of juveniles under 18.

Shura Council approves draft memorandum to combat money laundering

The Shura Council on September 26 approved a draft memorandum of understanding designed to help Middle East and North African nations combat money laundering. It also approved recommendations for improving the Real Estate Development Fund.

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