

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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TERRORISM

Foreign Minister calls for international cooperation to fight terrorism

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal stressed the importance of an international approach to fighting terrorism in a keynote address at a two-day counterterrorism conference in London organized by Britain's Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in cooperation with the Saudi Embassy in London.

"In Saudi Arabia, we strongly believe that international cooperation is crucial for fighting terrorism," he stated. "Bilateral and multilateral cooperation among security and intelligence services must be the backbone of efforts to combat terrorism. The sharing and exchanging of information is necessary to deter and prevent terrorist acts, and to stay ahead of our mutual enemy at all times," Prince Saud said.

The prince stressed Saudi Arabia's extensive counterterrorism efforts, including foiling more than 52 terrorist operations, killing 120 terrorists and arresting more than 800 suspects. Al Qaeda cells have been broken up, arms caches seized, and new financial regulations introduced to crack down on terrorist financing.

Due to the global intent of terrorism, however, an international effort is required. As part of that international cooperation, the prince called for extremists who condone, support, incite or legitimize terrorism as well as those who abuse the Internet in order to incite terrorism to be punished. He also called for the creation of an international counterterrorism center and the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is breeding anger and has an enormous potential for encouraging violence.

Prince Saud urged nations not to allow cultural or religious misunderstandings to get in the way of eradicating terrorism.

Five suspects arrested for planning attacks on the Kingdom

The Ministry of Interior confirmed that five men suspected of planning terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia were arrested January 16 in Riyadh. Four of the men were Saudi citizens. The nationality of the fifth man has not been disclosed.

The arrests took place after raids uncovered equipment for forging documents, a laboratory for making explosives, and electronic devices that indicated links to the deviant group as well as plans for terrorist operations inside the Kingdom.

HAJJ

King Abdullah calls for adherence to Islamic principles

At a January 11 reception for distinguished pilgrims, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz delivered a speech in which he encouraged Muslims to apply principles exemplified during the Hajj throughout the year. These principles, which epitomize the teachings of Islam, are unity, equality, consultation, identity and a mutual love and respect, the King said. He added that these five principles represent the path for the future.

Tragic stampede at Jamarat Bridge kills 363, injures 289

A serious stampede occurred January 12 at the entrance of the Jamarat Bridge in Mina, where thousands of pilgrims were heading towards the location for the ritual of stoning of Satan. As a result of the stampede, 363 died and 289 injured, the Ministry of Interior confirmed. Most of the injuries were minor. The stampede was caused when some pilgrims dropped their luggage in the overcrowded area and panic ensued.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz has also ordered an investigation into the matter. In addition, construction has begun on a new four-story bridge at Jamarat that will ease the flow of pilgrims and avoid future stampedes. The bridge is expected to be finished in three years at a cost SR 4 billion [\$1.07 billion].

FOREIGN RELATIONS

King Abdullah to visit China, India, Malaysia and Pakistan

The Royal Court announced January 17 that King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz will visit China, India, Malaysia and Pakistan, beginning at the end of this month. The trip will be the king's first official one as ruler.

FOREIGN AID

King Abdullah approves \$300,000 to combat locusts in Eritrea

On January 16, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz approved a \$300,000 contribution to fight locusts in Eritrea, as part of ongoing efforts to provide assistance to that country. The Saudi Embassy in Eritrea will present a check to the Ministry of Agriculture.

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