



*FEBRUARY 21, 2006*

## ISLAM

### **King Abdullah calls for dialogue and respect among nations**

In remarks at a reception for intellectuals, members of the literary establishment and the media February 18, King Abdullah spoke out against extremism and called on intellectuals to help usher in a period of dialogue and respect for identity and religion among nations.

King Abdullah said that today, as the Muslim nation is subject to an attack on the religion of Islam, it is up to the intellectuals and thinkers to highlight the nation's true image of tolerance, justice and moderation. They should clarify to the world that the actions of a few fanatical extremists do not reflect the spirit of the Muslim nation, its heritage – only the destructive illusions of criminals.

The King condemned the idea of clashes between civilizations, and called for such clashes to be replaced by a constructive and peaceful coexistence between and civilizations. Arab intellectuals and thinkers would be the vanguard of a stage of real dialogue between nations, a stage in which each party respects the other, its religions and identities, he said.

The Cabinet echoed King Abdullah's call for respect among nations in its February 20 session.

## FOREIGN POLICY

### **Saudi Ambassador discusses Kingdom's role in the global community**

Saudi Ambassador to the US Prince Turki Al-Faisal discussed Saudi Arabia's role in the global community and the Saudi-US partnership in remarks at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) February 16 and at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government February 17.

At MIT, Prince Turki said that education is critical to success in today's global economy. To that end, he pointed out that Saudi Arabia has not only invested heavily in its own educational system – which is free and available to all Saudis – but also encourages its students to study abroad with full, four-year scholarship programs, many to the US.

The prince also noted that the King Faisal Foundation, of which he is a founder, is in the process of establishing with international partners the first truly private, nonprofit Saudi university for science and technology. Al-Faisal University, which will offer an American curriculum, is scheduled to open in 2007.

Turning to reform in the Kingdom, Prince Turki said that Saudi Arabia is changing and developing, but if change is to be lasting it must be deliberate and take into account the Kingdom's traditions and heritage. He noted last spring's elections for 178 municipal councils, the fact that more Saudi women are being elected to the boards of professional organizations and the increasing number of female graduates from Saudi educational institutions.

At Harvard, Prince Turki said that Saudi Arabia and the US have had a long, successful partnership for more than 60 years, and it continues to strengthen as the two nations work together to meet global challenges including terrorism and instability in the Middle East, Prince Turki said.

Prince Turki also dispelled several myths about Saudi Arabia that have become prevalent in the West in the last few years, including the myth that Saudi Arabia exports a type of extremism known as Wahhabism. He noted that many in the West misunderstand what Wahhabism is, and that it does not advocate the killing of innocents or acts of suicide. He also debunked the myths that immediately after the 9/11 attacks, flights with Saudis left the US while American airspace was still closed, and that the Saudi government funded acts of terrorism. In both cases, he referred to the 9/11 Commission report, which found both of these myths to be untrue.

## SAUDI ARABIA

### **King Abdullah opens 21<sup>st</sup> Jenadriyah Festival**

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz opened the 21st annual National Culture and Heritage Festival at Jenadriyah February 15, with Saudi and foreign dignitaries in attendance. The week-long festival, organized each year by the National Guard, showcases Saudi Arabia's rich cultural heritage with exhibits including traditional arts and crafts, poetry, singing and dancing, as well as the popular camel race.

Other programs this year included an opera presented by Saudi singers, dramas, poetry evenings, a book exhibit, art exhibitions, and a Qur'an recitation contest. The festival also offers seminars on relevant issues. This year, the main seminar was on "Unity of Arab and Islamic Ummah: A Future Vision."

