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FOREIGN POLICY

King Abdullah gives wide-ranging interview to Asharq Al-Awsat

In a wide-ranging interview with Asharq Al-Awsat August 26, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz expressed his disappointment about the general lack of interest in the Middle East peace process and the failure to act on initiatives such as the Arab Peace Initiative, which he proposed in 2002.

Commenting on the peace process, the King noted that circumstances have changed and that regional issues are ill defined, making a clear vision difficult. "The Kingdom's policy is to wait until a clear vision materializes, but at the same time we work along with all friends and all concerned to forge essential and fundamental solutions for these problems which threaten the stability of the region and the world at large," he said.

King Abdullah reiterated Saudi Arabia's support for Lebanon as it seeks to rebuild, and said that he feels great sorrow for the people of Iraq and the tragedies they are facing.

The King also emphasized the importance of Arab relations. "I respect whoever respects me and respect even those who disagree with me," the King said. "They deserve my respect as long as this disagreement is for the benefit of the nation and not triggered by narrow personal interests."

Turning to oil prices, King Abdullah said that Saudi Arabia's policy is to keep prices moderate. "I wonder why the market is fluctuating and why the prices are reaching unjustified heights since oil output is abundant," he said.

He also praised the strength of the Saudi economy and said that the Kingdom's doors are open to investors. "They are welcome," he noted.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi relief assistance continues to flow into Lebanon

On August 24, Saudi Arabia dispatched a convoy of 40 relief trucks with 800 tons medical supplies and equipment to Lebanon. The aid will be distributed in cooperation with the Lebanese Red Cross and the Lebanese Supreme Relief

Committee. Acting President of the Saudi Red Crescent Society Saleh Al-Tuwaijjeri said that more such relief convoys would be dispatched soon.

And on August 25, Saudi aid arrived at the Saudi Red Crescent Society's aid distribution center in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre.

Meanwhile, members of the medical team of the Saudi field hospital in Beirut visited one of the city's orphanages on August 25 to provide medical care for children there. The hospital staff has made similar visits to treat people who could not travel to the hospital. The hospital was set up July 31 to provide much-needed medical assistance to the people of Lebanon.

TERRORISM

Security forces arrest 34 militants around the Kingdom

Four suspects who were arrested in Jeddah August 21 were part of a wider group of Al-Qaeda militants arrested around the Kingdom, the Ministry of Interior said in an August 26 statement.

Security efforts resulted in the arrest of 34 suspected Al-Qaeda militants of different nationalities in Makkah, Madinah, Riyadh and Jeddah. The militants were linked to inmates who had escaped from Al-Malaz Prison on July 6, 2006.

The four suspects arrested in Jeddah surrendered after security forces besieged their hideout in an apartment building in Al-Jamea district. A gunfight ensued, but security forces were able to evacuate the building's residents and no one was killed. Two of the suspects had escaped from Al-Malaz Prison on July 6, 2006. In the militants' hideout, security forces seized weapons, explosives, documents and communication devices.

In an August 26 interview with *Asharq Al-Awsat*, King Abdullah said that he requested that none of the militants be killed in the Jeddah operation. "The souls of citizens are valuable including those of the deviant group," he said.

