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FOREIGN POLICY

Crown Prince affirms Saudi support for preserving Iraqi unity

Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz has reaffirmed the Kingdom's support for preserving Iraqi unity and warned against any division of the country. He also urged the coalition forces to adopt a new approach to the crisis in Iraq.

The Crown Prince made the remarks in an interview published January 6 by the London-based *Asharq Al-Awsat*.

"Our policy towards Iraq stems from our Arab and Islamic responsibilities and duties, and we are keen on ending bloodshed and preserving the unity of Iraq," Crown Prince Sultan told *Asharq al-Awsat*.

Crown Prince Sultan also suggested coalition forces should consider a new approach to Iraq.

"Iraq should never be a compromising platform for realization of political goals, and it is high time for the coalition forces to revise the goals of their presence in Iraq," he said.

"What these forces have realized since their entry into Iraq? Has the strategy being worked out by these forces attained any positive development? Are there strategic alternatives which we should think of in the light of the deteriorating situation in Iraq?"

The Crown Prince called on Iraq's political factions to begin a comprehensive national dialogue for establishing a new Iraq based on the common interests, not sectarian or ethnic ones.

Furthermore, he stressed that Saudi Arabia opposes foreign intervention in Iraq's internal affairs, and welcomes any effort to help Iraqis find a way to resolve the crisis.

In the interview, Crown Prince Sultan also discussed the Kingdom's efforts to end the bloodshed in Lebanon and expressed concern that events there have reached a dangerous turning point, threatening Lebanese security. He called on the Lebanese to seek unity through dialogue.

On other issues, the Crown Prince praised Saudi-Syrian relations and noted that the current crises in the Arab world require unified ranks. He also reiterated the Kingdom's call for a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction.



SAUDI ARABIA

Women appointed to top jobs at Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education has appointed more than 27 women in top positions, the Arab News reported January 5. The appointments are part of a wider plan to reserve top jobs for women, particularly in the ministries of Education and Higher Education.

Last year, the Ministry of Education announced that it had reserved five deanships for women in order to give them more autonomy over girls' education. The Ministry of Labor is currently working to create more job opportunities for women in various sectors of the Saudi economy.

The Ministry of Labor has already begun a campaign to provide jobs for 200,000 women and appointed 30 women officials at its offices in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. Ministry offices are currently accepting job applications from women.

Women are also benefiting from training programs organized by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVOT). They are currently being trained as cashiers and receptionists as well as other areas, with a focus on retail sales and reception. These programs are being offered in Jeddah, Dammam, Ras, Madinah, Ahsa, Buraydah, Onaiza and Bekaryaia.

These women's training programs were organized after the Ministry of Labor's decision to employ women in a wide variety of jobs. The programs have attracted thousands of women job seekers, with more than 10,000 trainees. Several companies and businesses have also announced plans to employ women.

