



JANUARY 29, 2008

## FOREIGN POLICY

### **Saudi Arabia calls on Lebanon to hold presidential elections**

In its weekly meeting January 28, the Cabinet urged Lebanese parties to commit themselves to the Arab League initiative to end the political crisis there, beginning with a presidential election.

The Cabinet also condemned the recent riots and violence in the country, and warned that such fighting will lead to suffering and only serves the interest of Lebanon's enemies.

Last week, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz met with Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora in Riyadh to discuss the crisis in Lebanon.

Arab League foreign ministers also discussed Lebanon at an extraordinary meeting in Cairo January 26. In a statement, the ministers expressed deep concern over the ongoing violence in Lebanon and urged the Lebanese parties to exercise self-restraint and seek unity.

They unanimously supported an Arab League initiative that calls for electing Lebanon Army Chief Michel Suleiman as president on February 11, 2008, forming a national unity government and establishing a new electoral law. The ministers also agreed that Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa would try to help the Lebanese parties resolve the political crisis.

### **Kingdom, Arab League urge Israel to end blockade of Gaza**

This week, the Cabinet, Shura (Consultative) Council and Arab League foreign ministers all condemned the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

At its January 28 meeting chaired by King Abdullah, the Cabinet stated that Israeli policies are responsible for the suffering of the Palestinian people and called on countries in the region to safeguard their rights. It urged Palestinian leaders to resolve their differences and form a national unity government.

On January 27, the Shura Council warned that the blockade has resulted in a significant deterioration of the humanitarian, economic and security situation in Gaza. The Saudi parliament called on the UN Security Council to condemn the blockade and appealed to the international community to act swiftly to end it.

Arab League foreign ministers also addressed the situation in Gaza at their January 26 meeting in Cairo. The ministers called on Israel to end the blockade immediately and allow the free flow of people and goods. They rejected Israeli assertions that it is no longer responsible for Gaza after withdrawing from the territory, and urged Israel to take legal and humanitarian responsibility for the Palestinians in line with international law.

The Arab foreign ministers also said Gaza should be considered a disaster zone and called on the international community – Arab countries in particular – to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, President of the Saudi Red Crescent Society Prince Faisal bin Abdullah warned that the situation in Gaza is on the verge of becoming a humanitarian disaster. The prince urged international Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations to coordinate their relief efforts and establish a mechanism for distributing aid to the Palestinians.

## SAUDI ARABIA

### **Saudi Arabia enacts new law to combat IT crimes**

The Cabinet this week passed a new law to combat information technology crimes. The law will also support Saudi Arabia's successful anti-terrorism campaign. It stipulates that individuals who are found guilty of running websites in support of terrorist organizations will receive a 10-year jail sentence and be fined \$1.3 million [SR 5 million].

The law, which has 16 articles, also states that people who illegally take others' money or obtain bank and credit data will be jailed for three years and fined around \$533,000 [SR2 million]. Those who attack others' private life using devices such as mobile phone cameras and try to defame them will be sentenced to one year and around \$133,000 [SR500,000].

### **Kingdom to receive 72 Eurofighters next year**

Saudi Arabia will take delivery of 72 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft next year, Deputy Defense Minister for Military Affairs Prince Khalid bin Sultan said January 26.

Saudi Arabia signed a contract with Great Britain to purchase the Typhoons at a cost of £4.43 billion [\$8.8 billion] in September 2007. The deal followed an August 2006 agreement between Saudi Arabia and Britain to modernize the Saudi armed forces. The agreement also includes a transfer of technology, investment in the Saudi military industry and aviation training for Saudis.

