



ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA FACT SHEET

Efforts to Combat Extremism

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns terrorism in all its forms. The Kingdom itself has been a frequent target of terrorists. As home of the Two Holy Mosques of Islam, in Makkah and Madinah, Saudi Arabia stands as a target of extremists and terrorists who aim to subvert the country's faith. To combat this threat, Saudi government officials and religious scholars have repeatedly condemned both terrorist acts and the underlying mindset that supports terrorism. As Saudi Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah Al-Asheikh recently said, "Terrorism is criminal and spills the blood of innocents. It attacks security, spreads terror among people and creates problems for society ... Such acts are forbidden by Islamic law."

Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. Unfortunately, there are those who have used religion to advance perverted agendas. Anyone who resorts to violence and extremism in the name of religion is a deviant and a criminal. The open and public expression of these views has been a critical aspect of how Saudi Arabia continues to successfully fight against extremists. The Saudi government seeks to protect the nation from violence and destruction and its youth from deviant ideologies that would corrupt the Kingdom's future.

In addition to swift action against hard targets, Saudi Arabia wages a "war of ideas" to prevent the terrorist mindset from taking root among vulnerable populations in the Kingdom, such as the young and the potentially disenfranchised. These efforts include everything from direct outreach to Saudi society at large to extremism re-education efforts. This approach aims to instill the concepts of moderation and tolerance, and to undermine any intellectual or religious justifications for extremism and terrorism.

Broadly, Saudi Arabia has undertaken several initiatives to counter extremism and to promote moderation and tolerance among its citizenry.

- **Public Awareness Campaign:** Initiated a public awareness campaign to reinforce the true values of the Islamic faith and to educate Saudi citizens about the dangers of extremism and terrorism. The campaign included advertisements on television, radio and billboards, as well as programs on television, in schools and mosques, and at sporting events. The centerpiece of the campaign was a series of public service announcements that aired up to 25 times a day on a number of Arabic satellite networks, including Al-Arabiya, MBC and Future Television, as well as on Saudi TV channels. Six government ministries coordinated the development and implementation of the programs.
- **Public and Religious Education:** Conducting an ongoing program to modernize textbooks and curricula, to introduce enhanced teaching methods and provide better training for educators. Efforts such as these combat extremism and prepare Saudi citizens for life in a global economy. These developments also extend to Saudi religious schools. Imams have been prohibited from incitement and talk of intolerance, and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs

is conducting a program to educate imams and monitor mosques and religious education to purge extremism and intolerance.

- **Global Interfaith Dialogue Initiative:** Launched an international effort to promote interfaith dialogue. In early 2008, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz launched the interfaith dialogue as a way to underscore the commonalities among the world's religions. To initiate this endeavor, King Abdullah convened a meeting on June 4, 2008 of more than 500 Muslim scholars from around the world. The conference highlighted the importance of dialogue and emphasized the need for the faiths and cultures of the world to combat extremism and intolerance. This was followed by the World Conference on Dialogue in Spain on July 16, 2008. The conference, hosted by King Abdullah and King Juan Carlos I of Spain, brought together 300 delegates from around the world representing Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism and Shintoism. The culmination of this dialogue initiative was a special session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 12, 2008, attended by more than 25 world leaders including U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, former U.S. President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari, Philippino President Gloria Arroyo, Israeli President Shimon Peres and Jordan's King Abdullah II.
- **Counter-Radicalization and Rehabilitation:** In addition to public awareness campaigns to prevent the spread of terrorist ideologies, Saudi Arabia has taken direct, focused steps to neutralize sources of extremism. The Ministry of Interior – drawing on the expertise of an international array of social scientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other physicians – has created strategies tailored to neutralizing radicalism. In addition, the Ministry has been working in conjunction with King Fahd Security College and Naif Arab University for Security Sciences to develop and refine training for public security professionals.



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