

Saudi Arabia: Timeline

- 570 *19 January.* Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, is born in Mecca.
- 632 *8 June.* Prophet Muhammad dies in Medina. After his death, his companions compile his words and deeds in a work called the Sunna, which contains the rules for Islam. The most basic are the Five Pillars of Islam, which are 1) profession of faith; 2) daily prayer; 3) giving alms; 4) ritual fast during Ramadan; 5) hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca.
- 1400s The Sa'ud dynasty is founded near Riyadh.
- 1703 Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), Islamic theologian and founder of Wahhabism, is born in Arabia.
- 1710 Muhammad ibn Al Sa'ud is born.
- 1742–65 Muhammad bin Sa'ud Al Sa'ud joins the Wahhabists.
- 1744 Muhammad ibn Al Sa'ud forges a political and family alliance with Muslim scholar and reformer Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. The son of Ibn Sa'ud marries the daughter of Imam Muhammad.
- 1804 The Wahhabis capture Medina.
- 1811 Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali overthrows the Wahhabis and reinstates Ottoman sovereignty in Arabia.
- 1813 The Wahhabis are driven from Mecca.
- 1824 The Al Sa'ud family establishes a new capital at Riyadh.
- 1860s–90s The Al Sa'ud family moves to exile in Kuwait when the Ottoman Empire conquers their territory in Arabia.
- 1876 Sultana's grandfather, Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud, founder of the kingdom, is born.
- 1883 *20 May.* Faisal ibn Hussein is born in Mecca. He later becomes the first king of Syria (1920) and Iraq (1921).
- 1901 Muhammad bin Rasheed captures Riyadh, forcing the Al Sa'ud family out of the area. Abdul Aziz leaves Kuwait to return to Arabia with family and friends with plans to attack Riyadh.
- 1902 *January.* Abdul Aziz attacks Mismaak fort and recaptures Riyadh. Sa'ud ibn Abdul Aziz, son of Ibn Sa'ud, is born. At his father's death, he will rule Saudi Arabia from 1953 to 1964.
- 1904 Faisal ibn Abd al-Aziz, who one day will be a king of Saudi Arabia, is born.
- 1906 Abdul Aziz Al Sa'ud regains total control of the Nejd region.
- 1906–26 Abdul Aziz Al Sa'ud and his forces capture vast areas and unify much of Arabia.
- 1916 Mecca, under control of the Turks, falls to the Arabs during the Great Arab Revolt. British officer T. E. Lawrence meets Arab prince Faisal Hussein, forging a friendship. T. E. Lawrence is assigned as the British liaison to Faisal Hussein.
- 1917 *6 July.* Arab forces led by T. E. Lawrence and Abu Tayi capture the port of Aqaba from the Turks.
- 1918 *1 October.* Prince Faisal takes control of Syria when the main Arab force enters Damascus. Lawrence of Arabia blows up the Hejaz railway line in Saudi Arabia.
- 1921 At the Cairo Conference, Britain and France carve up Arabia and create Jordan and Iraq, making brothers Faisal and Abdullah kings. France is given influence over what is now Syria and Lebanon.
- 1923 Abdul Aziz's son Fahd is born in Riyadh. He will one day reign as king of Saudi Arabia.
- 1924 Ibn Sa'ud, king of the Nejd, conquers Hussein's kingdom of Hejaz. He rules over Saudi Arabia, later taking Mecca and Medina.
- 1926 *January.* Abdul Aziz is declared King of Hejaz and Sultan of Nejd.
- 1927 Saudi Arabia signs the Treaty of Jeddah and becomes independent of Great Britain.
- 1927–28 King Abdul Aziz crushes the fanatical Islamist tribes of central Arabia.

1931 Mohammed bin Laden (who one day will be the father of Osama bin Laden) emigrates to Saudi Arabia from Yemen. He works hard to establish his business, later building a close relationship with King Abdul Aziz and King Faisal.

1932 The kingdoms of Nejd and Hejaz are unified to create the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under King Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud. Saudi Arabia was named after King Ibn Sa'ud, founder of the Saudi dynasty, a man who fathered forty-four sons, who continue to rule the oil-rich kingdom.

1933 Saudi Arabia gives Standard Oil of California exclusive rights to explore for oil.

1938 Standard Oil of California strikes oil at Dammam No 7.

1945 *14 February.* Saudi king Abdul al-Aziz and American president Franklin D. Roosevelt meet on a ship in the Suez Canal, where they reach an understanding whereby the United States will protect the Saudi royal family in return for access to Saudi oil.

22 March. The Arab League is formed in Cairo, Egypt. Saudi Arabia becomes a founding member of the United Nations and the Arab League.

1953 King Abdul Aziz, Sultana's grandfather, dies, age seventy-seven. He is succeeded by his son Sa'ud.

1953–64 King Sa'ud rules.

1957 *Friday, 15 February.* Osama bin Laden is born in the early hours in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. His parents are Yemen-born Mohammed Awad bin Laden and Syrian Alia Ghanem.

1962 Saudi Arabia abolishes slavery.

1964 *2 November.* Faisal ibn Abdul Aziz Al Sa'ud (1904–75) succeeds his older brother, Sa'ud bin Abdul Aziz, as king of Saudi Arabia.

1964–75 King Faisal rules.

1965 King Faisal defies Islamist opposition when he introduces television and later women's education. Riots ensue. Later senior clerics are convinced by the government that television could be used to promote the faith.

1967 *6 June.* An Arab oil embargo is put into effect after the beginning of the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War.

3 September. Mohammed bin Laden, the wealthy father of Osama bin Laden, dies in a plane crash, leaving the well-being of his children to King Faisal.

1973 An oil embargo against Western nations is announced, lasting until 1974. Gasoline prices soar from 25 cents per gallon to \$1. As a result, stocks on the New York Stock Exchange fall.

1975 *25 March.* King Faisal of Saudi Arabia is assassinated by his nephew. Crown Prince Khalid becomes king.

18 June. Saudi Prince Faisal ibn Musaid is beheaded in Riyadh for killing his uncle, King Faisal. Crown Prince Khalid is declared king.

November. Armed men and women seize the Grand Mosque in Mecca. They denounce the Al Sa'ud rulers, demanding an end to foreign ways. The radicals are led by Saudi preacher Juhayman al Utaybi. The siege goes on until French special forces are flown to Mecca to assist. The extremists are shot and killed or captured, later to be beheaded.

1980 Osama bin Laden starts his struggle of fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan. This is where he will later found his Al Qaeda network.

Saudi Arabia executes the remaining radicals for the siege of the Grand Mosque. The radicals are beheaded in various towns across the country.

1982 *13 June.* King Khalid dies. He is succeeded by his half-brother Crown Prince Fahd.

1983–2005 Prince Bandar bin Sultan Al Sa'ud, one of King Fahd's favorite nephews, serves as Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Washington.

1985 Great Britain signs an \$80 billion contract with Saudi Arabia to provide 120 fighter jets and other military equipment over a period of twenty years.

1987 *31 July.* Iranian pilgrims and riot police clash in the holy city of Mecca. The Iranians are blamed for the deaths of 402 people.

1988 Saudi-born Osama bin Laden founds Al Qaeda (“the base”), a Sunni fundamentalist group with a goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate throughout the world.

1990 *July*. The worst tragedy in modern Saudi Arabia occurs at the hajj in Mecca, when 1,402 Muslim pilgrims are killed in a stampede inside a pedestrian tunnel.

6 November. A group of Saudi women drive cars in the streets of Riyadh in defiance of a government ban. The protest creates enormous problems for the women drivers: they are arrested and fired from their jobs, banned from traveling, and named as prostitutes. This event leads to a formal ban on driving for women.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait expel a million Yemeni workers as the government of Yemen sides with Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War.

1991 *January*. U.S.-led forces attack the Iraqi military in Kuwait. The ground war begins between Iraq and the Coalition forces. Iraqi forces are routed from Kuwait and are no longer a danger to Saudi Arabia.

1992 King Fahd outlines an institutional structure for the country. A law is passed that allows the king to name his brothers or nephews as successors and to replace his successor at will.

1994 *23 May*. 270 pilgrims are killed in a stampede in Mecca, as worshippers gather for the symbolic ritual of “stoning the devil.”

Osama bin Laden is disowned by his Saudi family and stripped of his Saudi citizenship. His fortune is estimated at \$250 million.

1995 192 people are beheaded in Saudi Arabia over the year—a record number.

1996 Osama bin Laden is asked to leave Sudan after the Clinton administration puts pressure on the Sudanese government. Osama takes his son Omar with him to return to Afghanistan. The rest of his family and close associates soon follow.

A nephew of King Fahd falsely accuses one of his employees of witchcraft. The employee, Abdul-Karim Naqshabandi, is executed.

An ailing King Fahd cedes power to his half-brother Crown Prince Abdullah.

1997 343 Muslim pilgrims die in a fire outside the holy city of Mecca. More than a thousand others are injured.

1998 150 pilgrims die at the “stoning of the devil” ritual during a stampede that occurs on the last day of the annual pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca.

1999 The Saudi Arabian government claims it will issue travel visas into the kingdom to upscale travel groups.

21 August. Members of the royal family are shocked when Prince Faisal bin Fahd, the eldest son of King Fahd, dies of a heart attack, age fifty-four. As head of the Arab Sports Federation, he had just returned from the Arab Games in Jordan.

17 November. A car bomb in Riyadh kills Christopher Rodway, a British technician. In 2001, three Westerners are charged with the bombing.

2001 *26 January*. A UN panel angers the Saudi government and citizens when it criticizes Saudi Arabia for discriminating against women, harassing minors, and for punishments that include flogging and stoning.

5 March. 35 Muslim pilgrims suffocate to death during the “stoning of the devil” ritual at the annual hajj in Mecca.

March. The Higher Committee for Scientific Research and Islamic Law in Saudi Arabia says that Pokémon games and cards have “possessed the minds” of Saudi children.

September. After 9/11, six chartered flights carrying Saudi nationals depart from the USA. A few days later, another chartered flight carrying twenty-six members of the bin Laden family leaves the USA.

2002 *17 February*. Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah presents a Middle East peace plan to *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman. The plan includes Arab recognition of Israel’s right to exist if Israel pulls back from lands that were once part of Jordan, including East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

March. There is a fire at a girls’ school in Mecca, but the police block the girls from fleeing the building because they are not wearing the veil. A surge of anger spreads across Saudi Arabia when fifteen students burn to death.

13 April. Saudi Arabian poet Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, Saudi ambassador to Britain, publishes the poem "The Martyrs" in the Saudi daily *Al Hayat*, praising a Palestinian suicide bomber.

25 April. American president George W. Bush meets with Crown Prince Abdullah, who tells Bush that the United States must reconsider its total support of Israel. Abdullah gives Bush his eight-point proposal for Middle East peace.

April. The Saudi Arabian government closes several factories that produce women's veils and abayas that are said to violate religious rules. Some of the cloaks are considered too luxurious, with jewels sewn on the shoulders.

May. There is a disagreement between Saudi diplomats and members of the UN Committee Against Torture over whether flogging and the amputation of limbs are violations of the 1987 Convention Against Torture.

December. Saudi dissidents report the launch of a new radio station, Sawt al-Islah (the Voice of Reform), broadcasting from Europe. The new station is formed with the explicit purpose of pushing for reforms in Saudi Arabia.

2003 *February.* In Mina, Saudi Arabia, fourteen Muslim pilgrims are trampled to death when a worshipper trips during the annual hajj pilgrimage.

29 April. The United States government announces the withdrawal of all combat forces from Saudi Arabia.

12 May. Multiple and simultaneous suicide car bombings at three foreign compounds in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, kill twenty-six people, including nine U.S. citizens.

14 September. Saudi national and marijuana trafficker Dhaher bin Thamer al-Shimry is beheaded; forty-one people have been beheaded by September.

14 October. Hundreds of Saudi Arabians take to the streets, demanding reform. This is the first large-scale protest in the country, as demonstrations are illegal.

Indonesian maid Ati Bt Abeh Inan is accused by her Saudi employer of casting a spell on him and his family and is sentenced to death. After serving ten years in prison, she is pardoned and sent back to West Java.

It is discovered that Libya planned a covert operation to assassinate Crown Prince Abdullah.
2004 *1 February.* During the hajj, 251 Muslim worshippers die in a stampede.

10 April. Popular Saudi Arabian TV host Rania al-Baz is severely beaten by her husband, who thought he had killed her. She survived, suffering severe facial fractures that required twelve operations. She allowed photos to be broadcast and opened discussions about ongoing violence against women in Saudi Arabia. She traveled to France, where she wrote her story. It was reported that she lost custody of her children after her book was published.

May. In Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, suspected militants spray gunfire inside the offices of an oil contractor, the Houston-based ABB Ltd. Six people are killed. Many are wounded. Police kill four brothers in a shoot-out after a car chase in which the attackers reportedly dragged the naked body of one victim behind their getaway car.

6 June. Simon Chambers, thirty-six, an Irish cameraman working for the BBC, is killed in a shooting in Riyadh. A BBC correspondent is injured.

8 June. An American citizen working for a U.S. defense contractor is shot and killed in Riyadh.

12 June. An American is kidnapped in Riyadh. Al Qaeda posts the man's picture on an Islamic Web site. He is identified as Lockheed Martin businessman Paul M. Johnson Jr. Islamic militants shoot and kill American Kenneth Scroggs in his garage in Riyadh.

13 June. Saudi Arabia holds a three-day "national dialogue" in Medina on how women's lives could be improved and the recommendations are passed on to Crown Prince Abdullah.

15 June. Al Qaeda threatens to execute Paul M. Johnson Jr. within seventy-two hours unless fellow jihadists are released from Saudi prisons.

18 June. Al Qaeda claims to have killed American hostage Paul M. Johnson Jr. They post photos on the Internet showing his body and severed head.

June. The Saudi parliament passes legislation overturning a law banning girls and women from participating in physical education and sports. In August, the Ministry of Education announces that it will not honor the legislation.

20 July. The head of slain American hostage Paul M. Johnson Jr. is found during a raid by Saudi security forces.

30 July. In the United States, in a Virginia court, Abdurahman Alamoudi pleads guilty to moving cash from Libya to pay expenses in the plot to assassinate Saudi Prince Abdullah.

28 September. The use of mobile phones with built-in cameras is banned by Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority. The edict claims that the phones are "spreading obscenity" throughout Saudi Arabia.

6 December. Nine people are killed at the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah when Islamic militants throw explosives at the gate of the heavily guarded building. They force their way into the building and a gun battle ensues.

2005 *13 January.* Saudi judicial officials say a religious court has sentenced fifteen Saudis, including a woman, to as many as 250 lashes each and up to six months in prison for participating in a protest against the monarchy.

10 February. While women are banned from casting ballots, Saudi male voters converge at polling stations in the Riyadh region to participate in city elections. This is the first time in the country's history that Saudis are taking part in a vote that conforms to international standards.

3 March. Men in eastern and southern Saudi Arabia turn out in the thousands to vote in municipal elections. It is their first opportunity to have a say in decision making in Saudi's absolute monarchy.

1 April. Saudi Arabia beheads three men in public in the northern city of al-Jawf; in 2003 the three men killed a deputy governor, a religious court judge, and a police lieutenant.

8 May. A Pakistani man is beheaded for attempting to smuggle heroin into the kingdom.

15 May. Three reform advocates are sentenced to terms ranging from six to nine years in prison. Human rights activists call the trial "a farce."

15 May. Saudi author and poet Ali al-Dimeeni is sentenced to nine years in prison for sowing dissent, disobeying his rulers, and sedition. His 1998 novel *A Gray Cloud* centers on a dissident jailed for years in a desert nation prison where many others have served time for their political views.

27 May. King Fahd, Saudi Arabia's monarch for twenty-three years, is hospitalized for unspecified reasons.

1 August. King Fahd dies at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh. His half-brother Crown Prince Abdullah is named to replace him.

8 August. Hope rises in Saudi Arabia after the new king, Abdullah, pardons four prominent activists who were jailed after criticizing the country's strict religious environment and the slow pace of democratic reform.

15 September. The Saudi government orders a Jeddah chamber of commerce to allow female voters and candidates.

21 September. Two men are beheaded in Riyadh after being convicted of kidnapping and raping a woman.

17 November. A Saudi high school chemistry teacher, accused of discussing religion with his students, is sentenced to 750 lashes and forty months in prison for blasphemy following a trial on 12 November.

27 November. To the delight of Saudi women, two females are elected to a chamber of commerce in Jeddah. This is the first occasion when women have won any such post in the country, as they are largely barred from political life.

8 December. Leaders from fifty Muslim countries promise to fight extremist ideology. The leaders say they will reform textbooks, restrict religious edicts, and crack down on terror financing.

Saudi Arabia enacts a law that bans state employees from making any statements in public that conflict with official policy.

2006 *12 January.* Thousands of Muslim pilgrims trip over luggage during the hajj, causing a crush in which 363 people are killed.

26 January. Saudi Arabia recalls its ambassador to Denmark in protest at a series of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published in the Danish *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper. Discontent spreads across the Muslim world for weeks, resulting in dozens of deaths.

19 February. Following the publication of the twelve cartoons of the Prophet—highlighting what it describes as self-censorship—the *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper prints a full-page apology in a Saudi-owned newspaper.

6 April. Cheese and butter from the Danish company Arla are returned to Saudi Arabian supermarket shelves following a boycott sparked by the country's publication of offensive cartoons.

April. The Saudi Arabian government announces plans to build an electrified fence along its 560-mile border with Iraq.

16 May. Newspapers in Saudi Arabia report that they have received an order from King Abdullah telling editors to stop publishing pictures of women. The king claims that such photographs will make young Saudi men go astray.

18 August. According to the *Financial Times*, Great Britain has agreed to a multibillion-dollar defense deal to supply seventy-two Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft to Saudi Arabia.

20 October. In an attempt to defuse internal power struggles, King Abdullah gives new powers to his brothers and nephews. In the future, a council of thirty princes will meet to choose the crown prince.

The kingdom beheaded eighty-three people in 2005 and thirty-five people in 2004.

2007 4 February. A Saudi Arabian judge sentences twenty foreigners to receive lashes and prison terms after convicting them of attending a mixed party where alcohol was served and men and women danced.

17 February. A report published by a U.S. human rights group reveals that the Saudi government detains thousands of prisoners in jail without charge, sentences children to death, and oppresses women.

19 February. A Saudi court orders the bodies of four Sri Lankans to be displayed in a public square after being beheaded for armed robbery.

26 February. Four Frenchmen are killed by gunmen on the side of a desert road leading to the holy city of Medina in an area restricted to Muslims only.

February. Ten Saudi intellectuals are arrested for signing a polite petition suggesting it is time for the kingdom to consider a transition to constitutional monarchy.

27 April. In one of the largest sweeps against terror cells in Saudi Arabia, the Interior Ministry says police arrested 172 Islamic militants. The militants had trained abroad as pilots so they could duplicate 9/11 and fly aircraft in attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil fields.

5 May. Prince Abdul-Majid bin Abdul-Aziz, the governor of Mecca, dies, age sixty-five, after a long illness.

9 May. An Ethiopian woman convicted of killing an Egyptian man over a dispute is beheaded. Khadija bint Ibrahim Moussa is the second woman to be executed this year. Beheadings are carried out with a sword in a public square.

Nayef al-Shaalan, a Saudi prince, is sentenced in absentia in France to ten years in prison on charges of involvement in a cocaine smuggling gang.

23 June. A Saudi judge postpones the trial of three members of the religious police for their involvement in the death of a man arrested after being seen with a woman who was not his relative.

9 November. Saudi authorities behead Saudi citizen Khalaf al-Anzi in Riyadh for kidnapping and raping a teenager.

Saudi authorities behead a Pakistani for drug trafficking. This execution brings to 131 the number of people beheaded in the kingdom in 2007.

14 November. A Saudi court sentences a nine-year-old girl who had been gang-raped to six months in prison and two hundred lashes. The court also bans her lawyer from defending her, confiscating his license to practice law and summoning him to a disciplinary hearing.

17 December. A gang-rape victim who was sentenced to six months in prison and two hundred lashes for being alone with a man not related to her is pardoned by the Saudi king after the case sparks rare criticism from the United States.

2008 *21 January.* The newspaper *Al-Watan* reports that the Interior Ministry issued a circular to hotels asking them to accept lone women as long as their information was sent to a local police station.

14 February. A leading human rights group appeals to Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah to stop the execution of a woman accused of witchcraft and performing supernatural acts.

19 May. Teacher Matrook al-Faleh is arrested at King Saud University in Riyadh after he publicly criticized conditions in a prison where two other human rights activists are serving jail terms.

24 May. Saudi authorities behead a local man convicted of armed robbery and raping a woman. The execution brings the number of people beheaded in 2008 to fifty-five.

20 June. Religious police arrest twenty-one allegedly homosexual men and confiscate large amounts of alcohol at a large gathering of young men at a rest house in Qatif.

8 July. A human rights group says domestic workers in Saudi Arabia often suffer abuse that in some cases amounts to slavery, as well as sexual violence and lashings for spurious allegations of theft or witchcraft.

30 July. The country's Islamic religious police ban the sale of dogs and cats as pets. They also ban owners from walking their pets in public because men use cats and dogs to make passes at women.

11 September. Sheikh Saleh al-Lihedan, Saudi Arabia's top judiciary official, issues a religious decree saying it is permissible to kill the owners of satellite TV networks who broadcast immoral content. He later adjusts his comments, saying owners who broadcast immoral content should be brought to trial and sentenced to death if other penalties do not deter them.

November. A U.S. diplomatic cable says donors in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates send an estimated \$100 million annually to radical Islamic schools in Pakistan that back militancy.

10 December. The European Commission awards the first Chaillot Prize to the Al-Nahda Philanthropic Society for Women, a Saudi charity that helps divorced and underprivileged women.

2009 *14 January.* Saudi Arabia's most senior cleric is quoted as saying it is permissible for ten-year-old girls to marry. He adds that anyone who thinks ten-year-old girls are too young to marry is doing those girls an injustice.

14 February. King Abdullah dismisses Sheikh Saleh al-Lihedan. King Abdullah also appoints Nora al-Fayez as deputy minister of women's education, the first female in the history of Saudi Arabia to hold a ministerial post.

3 March. Khamisa Sawadi, a seventy-five-year-old widow, is sentenced to forty lashes and four months in jail for talking with two young men who are not close relatives.

22 March. A group of Saudi clerics urges the kingdom's new information minister to ban women from appearing on TV or in newspapers and magazines.

27 March. King Abdullah appoints his half-brother Prince Naif as his second deputy prime minister.

30 April. An eight-year-old girl divorces her middle-aged husband after her father forces her to marry him in exchange for \$13,000. Saudi Arabia permits such child marriages.

29 May. A man is beheaded and crucified for slaying an eleven-year-old boy and his father.

6 June. The Saudi film *Menahi* is screened in Riyadh more than thirty years after the government began shutting down theaters. No women were allowed, only men and children, including girls up to ten.

15 July. Saudi citizen Mazen Abdul-Jawad appears on Lebanon's LBC satellite TV station's *Bold Red Line* program and shocks Saudis by publicly confessing to sexual exploits. More than two hundred Saudi Arabians file legal complaints against Abdul-Jawad, dubbed a "sex braggart" by the media, and many Saudis say he should be severely punished. Abdul-Jawad is convicted by a Saudi court in October 2009 and sentenced to five years in jail and one thousand lashes.

9 August. Italian news agencies report that burglars have stolen jewels and cash worth 11 million euros from the hotel room of a Saudi princess in Sardinia, sparking a diplomatic incident.

27 August. A suicide bomber targets the assistant interior minister Prince Mohammed bin Naif and blows himself up just before going into a gathering of well-wishers for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in Jeddah. His target, Prince Naif, is only slightly wounded.

23 September. A new multibillion-dollar co-ed university opens outside the coastal city of Jeddah. The King Abdullah Science and Technology University, or KAUST, boasts state-of-the-art labs, the world's fourth-fastest supercomputer, and one of the biggest endowments worldwide. Currently enrolled are 817 students representing 61 different countries, with 314 beginning classes in September 2009.

24 October. Rozanna al-Yami, age twenty-two, is tried and convicted for her involvement in the *Bold Red Line* program featuring Mazen Abdul-Jawad. She is sentenced to sixty lashes and is thought to be the first female Saudi journalist to be given such a punishment. King Abdullah waived the flogging sentence, the second such pardon in a high-profile case by the monarch in recent years. He ordered al-Yami's case to be referred to a committee in the ministry.

October. The bin Laden family goes under the spotlight in *Growing Up Bin Laden: Osama's Wife and Son Take Us Inside Their Secret World*, written by American author Jean Sasson. The book is based on interviews with Sasson conducted with Omar bin Laden and his mother, Najwa bin Laden.

9 November. A Lebanese psychic, Ali Sibati, who made predictions on a satellite TV channel from his home in Beirut, is sentenced to death for practicing witchcraft. When he traveled to Medina for a pilgrimage in May 2008, he was arrested and threatened with beheading. The following year a three-judge panel said that there was not enough evidence that Sibati's actions had harmed others. They ordered the case to be retried in a Medina court and recommended that the sentence be commuted and that Sibati be deported.

2010 19 January. A thirteen-year-old girl is sentenced to a ninety-lash flogging and two months in prison as punishment for assaulting a teacher who tried to take the girl's mobile phone away from her.

11 February. Religious police launch a nationwide crackdown on shops selling items that are red, as they say the color alludes to the banned celebration of Valentine's Day.

6 March. The Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association says that Saudi security officers stormed a book stall at the Riyadh International Book Fair and confiscated all work by Abdallah Al-Hamid, a well-known reformer and critic of the royal family.

20 April. When Ahmed bin Qassin al-Ghamidi suggests that men and women should be allowed to mingle freely, the head of the powerful religious police has him fired.

10 June. After a Saudi man kisses a woman in a mall, he is arrested, convicted, and sentenced to four months in prison and ninety lashes.

22 June. Four women and eleven men are arrested, tried, and convicted for mixing at a party. They are sentenced to flogging and prison terms.

15 August. Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, a Saudi statesman and poet, dies after a long illness. Al-Gosaibi was close to the ruling family, although his writings were banned in the kingdom for most of his life. The Saudi Culture Ministry lifted the ban on his writings the month before his death, citing his contribution to the nation.

26 August. T. Ariyawathi, a housemaid from Sri Lanka working in Saudi Arabia, is admitted to hospital for surgery to remove twenty-four nails embedded in her body. Her Saudi employer hammered the nails into her body as punishment.

17 November. King Abdullah steps down as head of the country's National Guard. His son assumes the position.

20 November. A young woman in her twenties defies the kingdom's driving ban and accidentally overturns her car. She dies, along with three female friends who were passengers.

22 November. King Abdullah visits New York for medical treatment and temporarily hands control to Crown Prince Sultan, his half-brother.

23 November. Saudi media announce that a Saudi woman accused of torturing her Indonesian maid has been sent to jail, while the maid, Sumiati Binti Salan Mustapa, is receiving hospital treatment for burns and broken bones.

An estimated 4 million Saudi women over the age of twenty are unmarried in a country of 24.6 million. It is reported that some male guardians forcibly keep women single, a practice known as *adhl*. Saudi feminist Wajeha al-Huwaider describes male guardianship as "a form of slavery."

2011 16 January. A group of Saudi activists launches "My Country," a campaign to push the kingdom to allow women to run in municipal elections scheduled for spring 2011.

24 January. New York–based Human Rights Watch says in its World Report 2011 that Saudi Arabia’s government is harassing and jailing activists, often without trial, for speaking out in favor of expanding religious tolerance, and that new restrictions on electronic communication in the kingdom are severe.

9 February. Ten moderate Saudi scholars ask the king for recognition of their Ummah Islamic Party, the kingdom’s first political party.

15 February. The Education Ministry says the kingdom plans to remove books that encourage terrorism or defame religion from school libraries.

24 February. Influential intellectuals say in a statement that Arab rulers should derive a lesson from the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, and listen to the voice of disenfranchised young people.

5 March. Saudi Arabia’s Interior Ministry says demonstrations won’t be tolerated and its security forces will act against anyone taking part in them.

11 March. Hundreds of police are deployed in the capital to prevent protests calling for democratic reforms inspired by the wave of unrest sweeping the Arab world.

18 March. King Abdullah promises Saudi citizens a multibillion-dollar package of reforms, raises cash, loans, and apartments in what appears to be the Arab world’s most expensive attempt to appease residents inspired by the unrest that has swept two regional leaders from power.

2 May. Osama bin Laden, the founder and head of the Islamic militant group Al Qaeda, is killed in Pakistan shortly after 1:00 a.m. PKT by U.S. Navy SEALs.

22 May. Saudi authorities rearrest activist Manal al-Sharif, who defied a ban on female drivers. She had been detained for several hours a day by the country’s religious police and released after she’d signed a pledge agreeing not to drive. Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world that bans women, both Saudi and foreign, from driving.

18 June. Ruyati binti Satubi, an Indonesian grandmother, is beheaded for killing an allegedly abusive Saudi employer.

28 June. Saudi police detain one woman driving in Jeddah on the Red Sea coast. Four other women accused of driving are later detained in the city.

25 September. King Abdullah announces that the nation’s women will gain the right to vote and run as candidates in local elections to be held in 2015 in a major advance for the rights of women in the deeply conservative Muslim kingdom.

27 September. Saudi female Shaima Jastina is sentenced to be lashed ten times with a whip for defying the kingdom’s prohibition on driving. King Abdullah quickly overturns the court ruling.

29 September. Saudi Arabian men cast ballots in local council elections, the second-ever nationwide vote in the oil-rich kingdom. Women are not allowed to vote in the election. The councils are one of the few elected bodies in the country, but have no real power, mandated to offer advice to provincial authorities.

Mansoor Arbabsiar, a U.S. citizen holding an Iranian passport, is arrested when he arrives at New York’s Kennedy International Airport. Mexico worked closely with U.S. authorities to help foil an alleged \$1.5 million plot to kill the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Washington. On 11 October Arbabsiar is charged in the U.S. District Court in New York with conspiring to kill Saudi diplomat Adel Al-Jubeir.

22 October. Saudi Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, heir to the Saudi throne, dies in the United States. He had been receiving treatment for colon cancer, first diagnosed in 2009.

27 October. Saudi Arabia’s powerful interior minister, Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz, is named the new heir to the throne in a royal decree read out on Saudi state television.

30 November. Amnesty International publishes a new report accusing Saudi Arabia of conducting a campaign of repression against protesters and reformists since the Arab Spring erupted.

6 December. Saudi Arabia sentences an Australian man to five hundred lashes and a year in prison after he is found guilty of blasphemy. Mansoor Almaribe was detained in Medina on 14 November while making the hajj pilgrimage and accused of insulting companions of the Prophet Muhammad.

10 December. Saudi Arabia’s *Okaz* newspaper reports that a man convicted of raping his daughter has been sentenced to receive 2,080 lashes over the course of a thirteen-year prison term. A court in Mecca found the man guilty of raping his teenage daughter for seven years while under the influence of drugs.

12 December. Saudi authorities execute a woman convicted of practicing magic and sorcery. Court records state that she had tricked people into thinking she could treat illnesses, charging them \$800 per session.

15 December. Police raid a private prayer gathering, arresting thirty-five Ethiopian Christians, twenty-nine of them women. They later face deportation for “illicit mingling.”

Seventy-six death row inmates are executed in Saudi Arabia in 2011.

Indonesian maid Satinah Binti Jumad Ahmad is sentenced to death for murdering her employer’s wife in 2007 and stealing money. In 2014, the Indonesian government agree to pay \$1.8 million to free her.

2012 *2 January.* Saudi Arabia announces that on 5 December, it will begin enforcing a law that allows female workers only in women’s lingerie and apparel stores.

12 February. Malaysian authorities deport Hamza Kashgari, a young Saudi journalist wanted in his home country over a Twitter post about the Prophet Muhammad, defying pleas from human rights groups who say he faces execution. His tweet read: “I have loved things about you and I have hated things about you and there is a lot I don’t understand about you.”

February. A royal order stipulates that women who drive should not be prosecuted by the courts.

22 March. Saudi Arabian media reports say single men in Riyadh will be able to visit shopping malls during peak hours after restrictions aimed at stopping harassment of women are eased.

4 April. A Saudi official reiterates that Saudi Arabia will be fielding only male athletes at the London Olympics. However, Prince Nawaf bin Faisal announces that Saudi women taking part on their own are free to do so, but the kingdom’s Olympic authority would “only help in ensuring that their participation does not violate the Islamic sharia law.”

A man found guilty of shooting dead a fellow Saudi is beheaded. His execution in Riyadh brings the total number of beheadings to seventeen for 2012.

23 May. An outspoken and brave Saudi woman defies orders by the notorious religious police to leave a mall because she is wearing nail polish and records the interaction on her camera. Her video goes viral, attracting more than a million hits in just five days.

16 June. Saudi Crown Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz, a half-brother of King Abdullah, dies. Naif is the second crown prince to die under King Abdullah’s rule.

18 June. Saudi Arabia’s defense minister, Prince Salman bin Abdul-Aziz, a half-brother to the king, is named the country’s new crown prince.

24 June. In Saudi Arabia, a man dies from severe pneumonia complicated by renal failure. He had arrived at a Jihad hospital eleven days earlier with symptoms similar to a severe case of influenza or SARS. In September, an Egyptian virologist says it was caused by a new coronavirus. Months later the illness is named MERS (Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome).

June. Blogger Raif Badawi is jailed for ridiculing Islamic religious figures.

20 July. Saudi authorities warn non-Muslim expatriates against eating, drinking, or smoking in public during Ramadan, or face expulsion.

30 July. Saudi Arabia implements a ban on smoking in government offices and most public places, including restaurants, coffee shops, supermarkets, and shopping malls.

2013 *9 January.* Saudi authorities behead a Sri Lankan domestic worker for killing a Saudi baby in her care. Rizana Nafeek was only seventeen at the time of the baby’s death and proclaimed her innocence, denying strangling the four-month-old boy. Many agencies and individuals worldwide pleaded with the boy’s family, and with the Saudi government, to pardon the girl.

11 January. King Abdullah issues two royal decrees granting women 30 seats on the Shura Council. The council has 150 members. Although the council reviews laws and questions ministers, it does not have legislative powers.

15 January. Dozens of conservative clerics picket the royal court to condemn the recent appointment of 30 women to the 150-member Shura Council.

1 April. A Saudi newspaper reports that the kingdom’s religious police are now allowing women to ride motorbikes and bicycles, but only in restricted recreational areas. They also have to be accompanied by a male relative and be dressed in the full Islamic abaya.

16 May. Riyadh vegetable seller Muhammad Harissi sets himself on fire after police confiscate his goods after he was found to be standing in an unauthorized area. He died the next day.

29 July. Raif Badawi, editor of the Free Saudi Liberals Web site, is sentenced to seven years in prison and six hundred lashes for founding an Internet forum that violates Islamic values and propagates liberal thought. Badawi has been held since June 2012 on charges of cyber crime and disobeying his father.

20 September. U.S. prosecutors drop charges against Meshael Alayban, a Saudi princess accused of enslaving a Kenyan woman as a housemaid, forcing her to work in abusive conditions, and withholding her passport. Lawyers for the Saudi royal accused the thirty-year-old Kenyan, who has not been named, of lying in an attempt to obtain a visa to stay in the United States.

8 October. A Saudi court sentences a well-known cleric convicted of raping his five-year-old daughter and torturing her to death to eight years in prison and 800 lashes. The court also orders the cleric to pay his ex-wife, the girl's mother, one million riyals (\$270,000) in "blood money." A second wife, accused of taking part in the crime, is sentenced to ten months in prison and 150 lashes.

18 October. Angered by the failure of the international community to end the war in Syria and act on other Middle East issues, Saudi Arabia says it will not take up its seat on the UN Security Council.

22 October. A source says that Saudi Arabia's intelligence chief revealed that the kingdom will make a "major shift" in relations with the United States in protest at its perceived inaction over the Syria war and its overtures to Iran.

24 October. Saudi women are warned that the government will take measures against activists who go ahead with a planned weekend campaign to defy a ban on women drivers in the conservative Muslim kingdom.

26 October. Saudi activists say more than sixty women claimed to have answered their call to get behind the wheel in a rare show of defiance against a ban on female driving. At least sixteen Saudi women received fines for defying the ban on female driving.

27 October. Saudi police detain Tariq al-Mubarak, a columnist who supported ending Saudi Arabia's ban on women driving.

3 November. A Kuwaiti newspaper reports that a Kuwaiti woman has been arrested in Saudi Arabia for trying to drive her father to a hospital.

12 December. Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti, the highest religious authority in the birthplace of Islam, condemns suicide bombings as grave crimes, reiterating his stance in unusually strong language in the Saudi-owned *Al Hayat* newspaper.

20 December. Saudi Arabia beheads a drug trafficker. So far in 2013, seventy-seven people have been executed, according to an AFP count.

22 December. Saudi Arabia's official news agency says King Abdullah has appointed his son, Prince Mishal, as the new governor of Mecca.

2014
20 February. Human rights groups criticize an agreement between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia aimed at giving Indonesian maids more protection in the kingdom, with one saying "justice is still far away."

16 March. The local *Okaz* daily reports that organizers at the Riyadh International Book Fair have confiscated "more than 10,000 copies of 420 books" during the exhibition, which began on 4 March. Organizers had announced ahead of the event that any book deemed "against Islam" or "undermining security" in the kingdom would be confiscated.

8 April. Saudi Arabia's Shura Council recommends that a long-standing ban on sports in girls' state schools, which was relaxed in private schools in 2013, be ended altogether