

The First Six Kings of Saudi Arabia

Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud
1876-1953

Sa'ud, son of Abdul Aziz
1902-1969, second king

Faisal, son of Abdul Aziz
1904-1975, third king

Khalid, son of Abdul Aziz
1912-1982, fourth king

Fahd, son of Abdul Aziz
Born 1921-2005, fifth king

Abdullah, son of Abdul Aziz
Born 1923, present ruler

KEY FIGURES

(In alphabetical order)

ABDUL Egyptian employee of Princess Sultana (married to Fatma).

King ABDUL AZIZ AL SA'UD Grandfather of Princess Sultana. Was the first king and founder of Saudi Arabia. Died in 1953.

ABDULLAH AL SA'UD Son of Princess Sultana.

AISHA Girlfriend of Princess Maha.

ALHAAN Egyptian girl who is sexually mutilated against the wishes of her grandmother, Fatma.

ALI AL SA'UD Brother of Princess Sultana.

AMANI AL SA'UD Youngest child and daughter of Princess Sultana.

ARAFAT, YASSIR Chairman of the PLO.

ASAD AL SA'UD Brother-in-law of Princess Sultana (husband of Sara).

CONNIE Filipino maid who was employed to work in the home of Saudi friends of Princess Sultana's.

CORA Filipino maid of Princess Sultana.

ELHAM Egyptian woman who is daughter of Abdul and Fatma (employees of Princess Sultana).

King FAHD Current ruler of Saudi Arabia who is highly regarded by Princess Sultana, his niece.

FATMA Egyptian housekeeper of Princess Sultana (married to Abdul).

FAYZA Daughter of Saudi friends of Princess Sultana's. She elopes with Jafer, a Palestinian.

FOUAD Father of Fayza.

HANAN Younger sister of Prince Kareem (sister-in-law of Princess Sultana).

HUDA African slave who worked in the childhood home of Princess Sultana. Huda is now deceased.

JAFER Palestinian employee of Prince Kareem and close friend to his son, Abdullah. Jafer elopes with Fayza.

KAREEM AL SA'UD A prince in the ruling family who is Sultana's husband.

King KHAUD Fourth king of Saudi Arabia who was greatly loved by his people. Died in 1982.

KHOMEINI Iranian religious leader who led the revolution against the shah of Iran and succeeded in establishing an Islamic Republic.

LAWAND AL SA'UD First cousin of Kareem who was confined to the woman's room.

MAHA AL SA'UD Oldest daughter of Princess Sultana.

MAJED AL SA'UD Son of Ali (nephew of Princess Sultana).

MISHA'IL Royal cousin of Princess Sultana who was put to death for the moral crime of adultery.

MOHAMMED Brother-in-law of Princess Sultana. Mohammed is married to Kareem's sister, Hanan.

MOUSA Egyptian driver for Princess Sultana's family.

NADA Childhood friend of Princess Sultana who was killed by her father for a crime against "honor."

NASHWA Niece of Princess Sultana. Nashwa is the teenage daughter of Princess Sara.

NASSER Son-in-law of Fatma.

NOORAH Mother-in-law of Princess Sultana.

NURA AL SA'UD Oldest sister of Princess Sultana.

REEMA Child bride from Yemen.

REEMA AL SA'UD Sister of Princess Sultana.

SALEEM Brother-in-law of Princess Sultana. Saleem is married to Reema.

SAMEERA Childhood friend of Tahani, who is sister of Princess Sultana. Sameera was confined to the woman's room until her death.

SAMIA Member of the royal family who married Fouad and is the mother of Fayza.

SARA AL SA'UD Sister of Princess Sultana. Sara is married to Asad, brother of Kareem.

TAHANI AL SA'UD Sister of Princess Sultana.

WAFI Childhood friend of Princess Sultana who was married at a young age to an old man.

YOUSIF Egyptian man who was college friend of Prince Kareem and who later joined radical Islamic group in Egypt.

Appendix A: Glossary

ABAAYA A black, full-length outer garment worn by Saudi women.

ABU Father.

AL RAS School for girls in Saudi Arabia.

AL SA'UD Ruling family of Saudi Arabia.

ARABIC Language relating to Arabs or Arabia.

ASSIUT Village in southern Egypt.

BACKGAMMON Board game popular in Middle East.

BAHRAIN Island nation in the Arabian Gulf.

BEDOUIN A nomadic desert people, the original Arabs.

BIN (or Ibn) Following a man's given name and preceding a man's father's or grandfather's name. Means "son of."

CAIRO Capital of Egypt.

CHRISNANITY Religion derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ.

DHU AL HIJAH The twelfth month of the hejira calendar.

DHU AL QIDA The eleventh month of the hejira calendar.

DUBAI A city located in the federation of the United Arab Emirates bordering Saudi Arabia.

EGYPT Country in Africa and on Sinai Peninsula.

EMIRATES United Arab Emirates, which is a federation of small emirate states located on the Arabian Peninsula.

FRENCH RIVIERA Fashionable Mediterranean resort area in south-eastern France famed for its scenery, warm climate, and excellent beaches.

GAMAA AL ISLAMIYA Islamic extremist group formed in Egypt in the early 1980s.

GREEN BOOK Qaddafi's Green Book: Philosophy of Colonel Qaddafi of Libya.

HADITHS Sayings and traditions of Prophet Mohammed that help to formulate Islamic law.

HAJ Annual pilgrimage to Makkah made by those of the Islamic faith.

HAJJI Pilgrim who makes the pilgrimage to Makkah (a title that denotes honor).

HEJIRA Islamic calendar that started on the date that Prophet Mohammed fled Makkah and escaped to Madinah (622).

IHRAM Special time during Haj that all Muslims refrain from normal life and dwell on nothing but religious matters.

IMAM Person who leads communal prayers and/or delivers the sermon on Fridays.

INFANTICIDE Practice of killing an infant. In pre-Islamic times a common practice in Arabia of ridding the family of unwanted female children.

ISLAM Religious faith of Muslims of which Mohammed was the Prophet. Islam is the last of the three great monotheistic religions to appear.

JEDDAH Saudi Arabian city located on the Red Sea.

JUDAISM Religion developed among the ancient Hebrews.

KAABA Islam's holiest shrine, a sacred sanctuary for all Muslims. The Kaaba is a small building in the Holy Mosque of Makkah, nearly cubic in shape, built to enclose the Black Stone, which is the most venerated Muslim object.

KOHL A black powder used by Saudi Arabian women that goes on the eyelid of the eye to enhance the beauty of a woman.

KORAN The Holy Book of all Muslims that contains the words of God as they were given to Prophet Mohammed.

KUWAIT Small sheikhdom that borders Saudi Arabia that has more than 10 percent of the world's oil reserves.

LA Arabian word meaning "no."

MADINAH Second holiest city of Islam. The burial place of Prophet Mohammed.

MAHRAM Males to whom a woman cannot be married, such as her father, brother, or uncle, who are allowed to be a woman's escort when traveling. Must be a close relative.

MAKKAH Holiest city of Islam. Each year, millions of Muslims travel to Makkah to perform the annual pilgrimage.

MONOTHEISM Belief that there is only one God.

MORALS POLICE Religious authorities in Saudi Arabia who have the power to arrest those they believe

commit moral wrongs or crimes against Islam or go against the teachings of Islam.

MUEZZIN The crier who calls the faithful to pray five times a day.

MUSLIM Adherent of the religion founded by Prophet Mohammed in the year 610.

MUT'A Temporary marriage allowed to those of the Islamic faith.

MUTAWWA The religious police, also known as the morals police. Men who seek out, arrest, and punish those who do not abide by Saudi religious law.

NAJD The traditional name for central Arabia. The inhabitants of this area are known for their conservative behavior. The ruling family of Saudi Arabia are Najdis.

PLO Palestine Liberation Organization.

POLYGAMY Marriage to more than one spouse at the same time. Men of the Muslim faith are legally allowed four wives at one time.

PURDAHA practice of confining women to their homes. This total seclusion of females can occur in some Muslim countries.

PURIFICATION The ritual of cleansing prior to offering prayers to God practiced by Muslims.

RED SEA The sea between Arabia and Africa.

RIYADH The capital city of Saudi Arabia, which is located in the desert.

RIYAL Saudi Arabian currency. The exchange varies but was recently about 3.75 to the dollar.

RUB AL KHALI An enormous desert wilderness that occupies the southeast portion of Arabia. It is often referred to as the "Empty Quarter."

SAN'A The capital city of Yemen.

SAUDI ARABIA Country in Asia that occupies most of Arabia. Saudi Arabia has at least one quarter of the world's known oil reserves.

SECULAR Not religious.

SHAWARMA Popular sandwich sold in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries made of lamb, beef, or chicken wrapped in pita bread, mixed with sauces and tomatoes and peppers.

SHAYLA Black gauzy scarf worn by women of the Muslim faith in Saudi Arabia.

SHIITE The branch of Islam that split from the Sunni majority over the issue of Prophet Mohammed's successor. One of two main sects.

SUNNA Traditions of the Islamic faith as addressed by Prophet Mohammed.

SUNNI The majority orthodox branch of Islam. Saudi Arabia is 95 percent populated by those of the Sunni sect. The word means “traditionalists.” One of two main sects.

TAIF Mountain resort city in Saudi Arabia that is located close to Makkah.

TEHRAN The capital city of Iran.

THOBE A long shirt-like dress that is worn by Saudi men. It is usually made of white cotton, but can be made of heavier, darker colored fabric for the winter months.

UMM AL QURRAH “Mother of Cities” or “The Blessed City” that is Makkah.

UMRAH A short pilgrimage (to Makkah) undertaken by those of the Muslim faith that can be made anytime of the year.

VEIL Black fabric that is used to cover a Saudi Arabian Muslim woman’s face. The material can be sheer or thick.

WOMAN’S ROOM Room in a man’s house used to confine Saudi Arabian women who go against the wishes of their husbands, fathers, or brothers. The punishment can be for a short period or a life sentence.

YEMEN Country located in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, neighboring Saudi Arabia.

ZAKAH Obligatory alms giving required of all Muslims that is the third pillar of Islam.

Appendix B: Chronology of Key Events in Saudi Arabia

570 (A.D.) Prophet Mohammed is born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

610 Prophet Mohammed sees a vision from God proclaiming him to be the messenger of God. Islam is born.

622 Prophet Mohammed flees an angry mob in Makkah and escapes to Madinah. This flight is forever after known as, “the Hegira”, the great crisis of Mohammed’s mission on earth. The Muslim calendar begins on that date and is called Hegira in honor of that journey.

632 Prophet Mohammed dies in Madinah.

650 The sayings of Prophet Mohammed are collected and written. Known as the Koran, this book, which recorded the word of God as told by Mohammed, became the holy book of Muslims.

1446 The first documented Al Sa’ud, ancestor of Sultana, leaves the nomadic life of the desert and settles in Dar’iyah (old Riyadh).

1744 Mohammed Al Sa’ud establishes a partnership with Mohammed Al Wahhab, a teacher who believes in the strictest interpretation of the Koran. Combined forces of a warrior and a teacher unleash a rigid system of punishment upon the people.

1802–1806 Sons of Mohammed Al Sa’ud and Mohammed Al Wahhab, inspired by the teachings of the Koran, attack and capture Makkah and Madinah. They were ruthless, massacring the entire male population of Taif, a settlement above Makkah. With this victory, most of Arabia united under one authority.

1843–1865 The Al Sa’uds extend authority southward to Oman.

1871 The Ottomans take control of the province of Hasa.

1876 Sultana’s grandfather, Abdul Aziz ibn Sa’ud, founder of the kingdom, is born.

1887 The city of Riyadh is captured by the Rasheeds.

1891 The Al Sa’ud clan flees Riyadh into the Empty Quarter.

1893–1894 The Al Sa’ud clan marches across the desert to Kuwait.

1901 (Sept.) Abdul Aziz, now twenty-five years old, along with his warriors departs Kuwait for Riyadh.

1902 (Jan.) Abdul Aziz and his men capture Riyadh. The new Al Sa’ud dynasty begins.

1912 The Ikhwan (Brotherhood) is founded based on Wahhabism; it grows quickly and provides key

support for Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud.

1913 Hasa is taken from the Ottomans by Abdul Aziz

1915 Abdul Aziz Al Sa'ud enters into an agreement with the British government to receive five thousand pounds per month to fight the Turks.

1926 Abdul Aziz is proclaimed King of the Hijaz in the Grand Mosque of Makkah.

1932 Unification of the dual kingdoms of Hijaz and Najd. Named the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it becomes the twelfth largest country in the world.

1933 King Abdul Aziz's eldest son, Sa'ud, is named Crown Prince.

1933 (May) America wins concessions (over the British) to search for oil in Saudi Arabia.

1934 Saudi Arabia goes to war against Yemen; peace is established one month later.

1934 (May 15) In revenge for the Yemen war, King Abdul Aziz is attacked at a holy mosque in Makkah by three knife-wielding Yemenis. His eldest son, Sa'ud, flings himself in front of his father and is wounded instead.

1938 (March 20) Oil is discovered in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

1939 War in Europe halts oil production.

1944 Oil production in the kingdom rises to eight million barrels a year.

1945 (Feb. 14) President Roosevelt meets with King Abdul Aziz aboard the USS *Quincy*.

1945 (Feb. 17) Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Great Britain, meets with King Abdul Aziz aboard the USS *Quincy*.

1946 Oil production soars to sixty million barrels a year.

1948 (May 14) The state of Israel is established.

1948 (May 14) The first Arab-Israeli war begins.

1948 Radio Makkah, the first radio station in the kingdom, is opened despite fierce opposition from the Ulema (religious men).

1952 King Abdul Aziz bans alcohol imports for nonbelievers.

1953 (Nov. 9) King Abdul Aziz, Sultana's grandfather, dies at age seventy-seven.

1953 (Nov. 9) The late king's eldest son, fifty-one-year-old Sa'ud, becomes king. His half-brother Faisal becomes crown prince.

1960 Saudi Arabia is a founding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, known as OPEC.

1958 (March) With the kingdom in financial turmoil, Crown Prince Faisal takes administrative control of the government.

1960 (Dec.) King Sa'ud dismisses his brother from administrative duties and assumes control of the government.

1962 Slavery is abolished in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Most slaves continue to live with the families that owned them.

1963 The first girls' school opens; religious factions riot.

1964 (Nov. 3) King Sa'ud abdicates and departs the kingdom for Beirut. Faisal is declared king, and his half-brother Khalid, crown prince.

1965 Despite protests, the first television station is opened in Riyadh.

1965 (Sept.) Prince Khalid ibn Musaid, nephew of King Faisal, is killed as he leads an armed protest against the opening of the television station.

1967 (June) The Six-Day War begins between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Saudi Arabia sends forces.

1969 (Feb.) Deposed ex-king Sa'ud ibn Abdul Aziz dies in Athens, Greece, after spending more than fifteen million dollars each year of his exile.

1973 (Oct. 6) The October 1973 war begins between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Saudi Arabia sends troops.

1973 (Oct. 20) Furious at America's military assistance to Israel, King Faisal announces a holy war and an oil embargo against America.

1975 (March 25) King Faisal is assassinated by his nephew Prince Faisal ibn Musaid, brother of the prince who was shot and killed during riot in 1965.

1975 (March 25) Crown Prince Khalid is declared king. His half-brother Fahd is named new crown prince.

1977 King Khalid issues a government decree that forbids women to travel outside their homes unless accompanied by a male family member. A second order follows that forbids women to travel abroad to study. Both decrees resulted from the international incident of Princess Misha'il, who was publicly executed after meeting and falling in love with another Saudi student at the American University in

Lebanon. Her lover was beheaded.

1979 Saudi Arabia severs diplomatic relations with Egypt after it makes peace with Israel.

1979 (Nov.) The Grand Mosque in Makkah is attacked. Protestors complain of women working outside the home in the kingdom. In the months to follow, freedoms for women are curtailed, in response to government fear of increased fundamentalist unrest.

1980 Saudi Arabia takes full control of ARAMCO from the United States.

1982 (June) King Khalid dies of a heart attack. Fahd, his half-brother, is declared king; his half-brother Abdullah is named new crown prince.

1987 Saudi Arabia resumes diplomatic relations with Egypt (severed since 1979).

1990 (August 5) Kuwait is invaded by Iraq.

1990 Saudi Arabia condemns the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The Saudi government asks the United States to intervene. Although the Saudi government allows foreign troops and Kuwaiti citizens to remain in the country, they expel citizens of Yemen and Jordan due to their governments' support of Iraq.

1991 *Mutawas* react with fear and hostility to the presence of foreign female soldiers. Pressure increases to force the Saudi government to tighten restrictions on the female population of all nationalities as religious factions return to strict interpretation of the Koran.

1991 Saudi Arabia is involved in the war against Iraq.

1994 Islamic dissident Usamah Bin-Ladin is stripped of his Saudi nationality.

1995 King Fahd suffers a stroke. The day-to-day running of the country is entrusted to Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al Sa'ud.

1996 A bomb explodes at the US military complex near Dhahran killing 19 and wounding over 300.

1999 Twenty Saudi women attend the session of the Consultative Council for the first time in Saudi history.

2000 The London-based human rights group Amnesty International describes Saudi Arabia's treatment of women as "untenable" by any legal or moral standard.

2001 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia received unwelcome attention from the West when it was discovered that 15 of the 21 terrorists hijackers who attacked America on September 11, 2001 were citizens of the oil-rich Kingdom.

2001 October: It was reported that Sheik Hamoud bin Uqlaa al-Shuaibi (80), a militant Wahhabi, called on Muslims to wage jihad on supporters of the US military action in Afghanistan.

2001 October: The Bush administration said the Saudi government has issued an order to freeze assets of people and groups suspected of links to terrorism.

2002 January: An editorial by former US Army officer Ralph Peters blamed Saudi Arabia as the source of fundamentalist terrorism. "We must be prepared to seize the Saudi oil fields and administer them for the greater good."

2002 February: Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah presented a Middle East peace plan to NY Times columnist Thomas Friedman. It included Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist if Israel pulled back from lands that were once part of Jordan, including East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

2002 Feb In Saudi Arabia some 2 million Muslims gathered in Mecca for the annual hajj.

2002 March: A fire at a girl's school in Mecca killed 15 students when religious authorities would not allow rescue because the girls were unveiled.

2002 April: The UN released \$995 million in compensation to Kuwait for Iraq's 1990 invasion. Most went to 1,058 individuals. Saudi Arabia received \$82.6 million and Jordan got \$44.9.

2002 April: Ghazi Algosaibi, Saudi ambassador to Britain, published a poem in the Saudi daily Al Hayat titled "The Martyrs," in praise of Ayat Akhras, the Mar 29 Palestinian suicide bomber.

2002 April: President Bush met with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, who told him bluntly that the US must temper its support of Israel. Abdullah gave Bush an 8-point proposal for Middle East peace.

2002 April: The Saudi government closed factories producing women's cloaks that violated religious rules.

2002 May: Saudi diplomats clashed with the UN Committee Against Torture over whether flogging and the amputation of limbs are violations of the 1987 Convention Against Torture.

2002 June: Moroccan police arrested three Saudi nationals who were allegedly planning attacks against U.S. and British war ships in the Strait of Gibraltar

2002 June: President Bush met with Saudi Prince Saud al-Faisal and indicated that he would support the creation of a Palestinian state.

2002 June: Saudi Arabia announced its first al-Qaida-related arrests since Sept. 11 and said it was holding 11 Saudis, an Iraqi and a Sudanese man behind a plot to shoot down a U.S. military plane taking off from a

Saudi air base.

2002 June: John Veness, a British employee at Al Bank al Saudi al Fransi, was killed in a car bomb explosion in Riyadh.

2002 July: Princess Sultana's cousin, Ahmed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz (43), the genial Saudi prince who dominated racing the last two years with Kentucky Derby winner War Emblem and 2001 horse of the year Point Given, died.

2002 August: Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Saud said his country had made it clear to Washington, publicly and privately, that the U.S. military will not be allowed to use the kingdom's soil in order to attack Iraq.

2002 August: Prince Bandar bin Sultan of Saudi Arabia announced that war with Iraq was not acceptable and that Saudi Arabia would not cooperate.

2002 November: Saudi Arabia said it would not permit bases on its soil in an attack against Iraq and would not grant flyover rights to US military planes even if the UN sanctions an invasion.

2002 December: Saudi dissidents reported a new radio station, Sawt al-Islah (the Voice of Reform), had started broadcasting from Europe to push for reforms.

2003 February: Nearly 2 million Muslims converged on Mecca for the annual pilgrimage. Some of the faithful offered prayers to avert a U.S.-led war on Iraq.

2003 February: 24 Muslim pilgrims were trampled to death when some worshippers tripped amid a jostling crowd during the devil-stoning ritual of the annual Hajj pilgrimage.

2003 February: Saudi Arabia said it has referred 90 Saudis to trial for alleged al Qaeda links. Another 250 were reported under investigation.

2003 February: A British defense worker was killed by Saud bin Ali bin Nasser, a Saudi citizen.

2003 April: The United States moved an air operation center from Saudi Arabia to Qatar.

2003 April: The United States announced that it would withdraw all combat forces from Saudi Arabia.

2003 May: In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, multiple, simultaneous suicide car bombings at 3 foreign compounds killed 26 people, including 9 US citizens.

2003 June: The Saudi interior minister linked last month's Riyadh bombings to the al-Qaida terror network in an interview, and his ministry identified 12 of the attackers.

2003 June: Ahmed Omar Abu Ali (22), a US citizen, was arrested in Medina as Saudi authorities were investigating a wave of bombings. He was convicted in 2005 in a Virginia federal court of conspiring with Al-Qaida. In 2008 a federal appeals court upheld the conviction, but ordered a new sentencing hearing. In 2009 he was sentenced to life in prison for plotting to kill Pres. George W. Bush.

2003 July: Turki Nasser al-Dandani, the top suspect wanted in the May 12 Riyadh suicide bombing, was killed along with three other militants in a gun battle when police raided their hideout.

2003 July: The Saudi government announced that police arrested 16 al-Qaida-linked terror suspects over the last 4 days and used tractors to dig up an underground arsenal: 20 tons of bomb-making chemicals, detonators, rocket propelled grenades and rifles.

2003 August: Former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, blamed for the murder of tens of thousands of his people in the 1970s, died in a Saudi hospital where he had been critically ill for weeks.

2003 September: Dhafer bin Thamer al-Shimry, a Saudi marijuana trafficker, was beheaded, bringing the number of beheadings in the kingdom in 2003 to 41.

2003 September: A fire that swept through el-Haer prison in Riyadh and 94 were reported killed.

2003 October: The Saudi Cabinet announced that first-ever elections would be held for local councils in 14 municipalities throughout the country.

2003 October: Hundreds took to the streets in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, demanding reforms, the first large-scale protest in this conservative kingdom where demonstrations are illegal.

2003 November: A suicide car bombing that devastated a Riyadh housing complex, killing 17 people and wounding more than 120. Officials pointed to al-Qaida terrorists as responsible.

2003 November: Talal al-Rashid, a prominent Saudi poet, was shot to death by attackers while on a hunting trip in Algeria.

2003 The Saudi-owned news channel al-Arabiya was launched from Dubai.

2003 Libya planned a covert operation to assassinate Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia according to 2004 testimony by 2 jailed participants.

2003 Doctors at St. Vincent Medical Center in LA, Ca., performed a liver transplant on a Saudi citizen, who was 52nd on a transplant list. The Saudi Arabian Embassy paid \$339,000 for the operation. In 2005 the hospital suspended its liver program after determining that the 2003 operation was improper.

2004 January: 2 million Muslims from around the world gathered at the start of the annual Hajj.

2004 February: 251 Muslim worshipers died in a hajj stampede during the annual stoning of Satan ritual.

2004 April: Rania al-Baz, a popular Saudi TV host, was severely beaten by her husband. She suffered 13 facial fractures that required 12 operations. She allowed photos to be broadcast and opened discussions of ongoing violence against women in Saudi Arabia. Later Rania had to flee Saudi Arabia to escape her husband. She was not allowed to take her children.

2004 May: In Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, suspected militants sprayed gunfire inside the offices of Houston-based ABB Ltd., an oil contractor, killing at least six people — including two Americans and three other Westerners — and wounding dozens. Police killed four brothers in a shootout after a car chase in which the attackers reportedly dragged the naked body of one victim behind their getaway car.

2004 May: Suspected Islamic militants sprayed gunfire inside two oil industry compounds on the Persian Gulf, killing at least 10 people including one American.

2004 May: Saudi Arabia gunmen shot down security guards and entered 2 office complexes in Khobar searching for and murdering anyone looking western.

2004 May: Saudi commandos stormed the expatriate resort of Khobar to free up to 60 foreign hostages seized by Islamic militant gunmen who had attacked oil industry compounds, killing 22 people. Americans were among those killed and taken captive. 3 suspects escaped.

2004 June: Simon Chambers (36), an Irish cameraman working for the BBC, was killed in a shooting in Riyadh. A BBC correspondent was injured.

2004 June: An American citizen who worked for a US defense contractor was shot and killed in Riyadh.

2004 June: An American was kidnapped in Saudi Arabia. An al-Qaida statement, posted on an Islamic Web site, showed a passport-size photo of a brown-haired man and a Lockheed Martin business card bearing the name Paul M. Johnson. Islamic militants shot and killed Kenneth Scroggs of Laconia, New Hampshire, in his garage in Riyadh.

2004 June: Saudi Arabia held a 3-day “national dialogue” in Medina on how women’s lives could be improved. On Jun 15, recommendations (19) were given to Crown Prince Abdullah.

2004 June: A Saudi al Qaeda group threatened to execute Paul M. Johnson Jr. within 72 hours unless fellow jihadists were released from prison. Later the Saudi al-Qaida group said it killed

American hostage Paul M. Johnson Jr., posting 3 photos on the Internet showing his body and severed head. Hours later Saudi security forces killed Abdulaziz al-Moqrin (31), a top al-Qaida leader, and 3 other militants in Riyadh.

2004 June: Saudi Arabia offered Islamic militants a limited amnesty, saying their lives would be spared if they surrendered but they would face the "full might" of state wrath if they did not. Prince Nayef said foreign residents may be allowed to carry guns.

2004 June: The Saudi parliament passed legislation overturning a law banning girls and women from participating in physical education and sports. In August the ministry of education announced that it had no intention of honoring the legislation.

2004 June: Fawaz al-Nashimi (aka Turki bin Fuheid al-Muteiry), an al-Qaida operative, was killed in a gunbattle with Saudi forces. He was involved in the May 29 attack inside two oil industry compounds. In 2006 an al-Qaida statement identified him as the would-be 20th hijacker for the Sep. 11 attacks.

2004 July: A Sri Lankan woman was beheaded in the Saudi capital for murdering her employer. Bader el-Nisaa Mibari had been convicted of killing Sara bint Mohammed al-Haqeel, a Saudi woman, after trying to rob her with the help a male companion.

2004 July: The head of slain American hostage Paul M. Johnson Jr., who was kidnapped and decapitated by militants last month, was found by security forces during a raid that targeted the hideout of the Saudi al-Qaida chief. Two militants were killed.

2004 July: Abdurahman Alamoudi pleaded guilty in a Virginia court to moving cash from Libya and involvement in a plot to assassinate Saudi Prince Abdullah.

2004 August: The official Saudi Press reported that municipal elections across Saudi Arabia, the first such polls in decades, have been have been pushed back two months to November.

2004 September: 3 people were killed in a stampede in Riyadh when a Ikea branch opened.

2004 September: A French national was shot and killed in the Saudi Arabian city of Jiddah.

2004 September: Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority issued an edict barring the use of cell phones with built-in cameras, blaming them for "spreading obscenity."

2004 November: In an open letter to the Iraqi people and posted on the Internet, 26 Saudi scholars and

religious preachers stressed that armed attacks launched by militant Iraqi groups on U.S. troops and their allies in Iraq were "legitimate" resistance.

2004 December: Islamic militants threw explosives at the gate of the heavily guarded US consulate in Jeddah in a bold assault, then forced their way into the building, prompting a gun battle that left 9 people dead and several injured. In 2005 two AK-47 assault rifles used in the attack were later traced to Yemen's Ministry of Defense.

2004 December: Saudi Arabia announced it was withdrawing its ambassador to Libya and ordered out Libya's envoy in response to reports that Tripoli plotted to assassinate the Saudi crown prince.

2004 Carmen bin Ladin authored "Inside the Kingdom: My Life in Saudi Arabia." Carmen, the ex-wife of Osama's older brother Yeslam, grew up in Geneva.

2004 In Saudi Arabia women until this year were legally required to conduct business through a male agent.

2005 January: 2 men, a Pakistani and an Iraqi, were beheaded for smuggling in drugs.

2005 January: Saudi judicial officials said a religious court has sentenced 15 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.

2005 February: A Saudi woman was beheaded after she was convicted of murdering her mother-in-law. Noura bint Khalaf al-Harbi was found guilty of setting her mother-in-law, Noura bint Salem al-Harbi, on fire as she slept following a dispute.

2005 February: Male voters converged at polling stations in the Riyadh region to participate in city elections, marking the first time Saudis are taking part in a vote that largely conforms to international standards. Women were banned from casting ballots.

2005 March:, Men in eastern and southern Saudi Arabia turned out in the thousands to vote in municipal elections. They expect to provide their first say in decision-making in this absolute monarchy.

2005 April: Saudi Arabia beheaded 3 men in public in the northern city of al-Jawf where in 2003 they killed a deputy governor, a religious court judge and a police lieutenant.

2005 April: President Bush sought relief from record-high gas prices and support for Middle East peace as

he opened his Texas ranch to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

2005 May: A Pakistani man was beheaded for attempting to smuggle heroin into the kingdom.

2005 May: In Saudi Arabia 3 reform advocates were sentenced to terms ranging from six to nine years in prison, prompting a human rights activist to call their trial a "farce."

2005 May: Ali al-Dimeeni (al-Domeini), already jailed more than a year in a Saudi prison outside Riyadh, was sentenced to nine years in prison for sowing dissent, disobeying his rulers and sedition. His 1998 novel "A Gray Cloud," centered on a dissident jailed for years in a desert nation prison where many others have done time for their political views.

2005 May: King Fahd, Saudi Arabia's monarch for the last 23 years was hospitalized for unspecified tests.

2005 August 1, King Fahd (83), the Saudi ruler since 1982, died at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre in Riyadh. He moved Saudi Arabia closer to the US but ruled the nation in name only since suffering a stroke in 1995. His half brother, Crown Prince Abdullah, was named to replace him.

2005 August: In a surprise move toward moderation, new Saudi King Abdullah pardoned 4 prominent activists who were jailed after criticizing the strict religious environment and the slow pace of democratic reform.

2005 August: Saudi Arabia granted a 15% pay raise to government employees, their 1st pay raise in 22 years.

2005 September: In a surprise move, the Saudi government ordered a Jeddah chamber of commerce to allow female voters and candidates.

2005 September: 2 men were beheaded in Riyadh, after being convicted of kidnapping and raping a woman.

2005 October: A new Syrian TV series began broadcasting around the Middle East. It tells the story of Arabs living in residential compounds in Saudi Arabia and the militant Islamists who want to blow them up so they can collect their rewards in heaven, 72 beautiful virgins.

2005 October: The International Organization for Migration (IMO) said "Ethiopian women and girls who migrate to Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia suffer from maltreatment, physical, sexual and emotional abuses," in a report based on interviews with 443 women returning from the region.

2005 November: The US State Department issued its 7th annual report to Congress on religious freedom.

It cited Saudi Arabia, Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Sudan and Vietnam as restricting religious freedom.

2005 November: The World Trade Organization (WTO) approved Saudi Arabia's bid to become the 149th member of the global group, winding up a 12-year negotiating process slowed by the country's participation in the Arab League boycott of Israel.

2005 November: Saudi judicial officials said a Saudi high-school chemistry teacher, accused of discussing religion with his students, was sentenced to 750 lashes and 40 months in prison for blasphemy following a trial on Nov 12.

2005 November: History was made in Saudi Arabia when two women were elected to a chamber of commerce in Jeddah, the first to win any such post in Saudi Arabia, where women are largely barred

2005 December: Representatives of Islamic countries met ahead of a two-day summit in Saudi Arabia, with delegates saying the world's largest Islamic organization must reform to face new challenges.

2005 December: Saudi Arabia leaders from more than 50 Muslim countries promised to fight extremist ideology, saying they would reform textbooks, restrict religious edicts and crack down on terror financing.

2005 Saudi Arabia enacted a law that banned state employees from saying anything in public that conflicts with official policy.

2006 January: Thousands of Muslim pilgrims rushing to complete a symbolic stoning ritual during the hajj tripped over luggage, causing a crush in which 363 people were killed.

2006 January: Saudi Arabia recalled its ambassador in Denmark to protest a published series of caricatures of the prophet Muhammad. Protests spread across the Muslim world for weeks, and dozens of people were killed.

2006 February: Almost five months after publishing 12 cartoons of the prophet to highlight what it described as self-censorship, Denmark's Jyllands-Posten newspaper printed a full-page apology in a Saudi-owned pan-Arab newspaper.

2006 February: Suicide bombers in explosives-laden cars attempted to attack an oil processing facility at the Abqaiq facility that handles about two-thirds of Saudi Arabia's petroleum output, but were stopped when guards opened fire on them, causing the cars to explode..

2006 March: French President Jacques Chirac on a trip to Saudi Arabia preached greater tolerance and

respect after the publication of satirical cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad a month ago whipped up protests around the world.

2006 April: Cheese and butter from the Danish company Arla were back on supermarket shelves in Saudi Arabia after an Islamic group ended a boycott of the dairy producer sparked by Denmark's publication of drawings of the Prophet Muhammad.

2006 April: Saudi King Abdullah issued a decree lowering domestic gasoline prices by about 25%. That would lower the cost to about 16 cents per liter.

2006 April: Saudi Arabia caused an uproar when they announced plans to build an electrified fence along its 560-mile border with Iraq.

2006 May: Cuba, Saudi Arabia, China and Russia won seats on the new UN Human Rights Council despite their poor human rights records. Two rights abusers, Iran and Venezuela, were defeated.

2006 May: Saudi newspapers reported that King Abdullah has told Saudi editors to stop publishing pictures of women as they could make young men go astray.

2006 June: Three Guantanamo Bay detainees, 2 from Saudi Arabia and one from Yemen, hanged themselves with nooses made of sheets and clothes, bringing further condemnation of the isolated camp where hundreds of men have been held for years without charge.

2006 September: Saudi Arabia's religious police issued a decree in Jeddah and Mecca banning the sale of the pets, seen as a sign of Western influence.

2006 September: 15,000 students from Saudi Arabia were enrolling on college campuses across the United States this semester under a new educational exchange program brokered by President Bush and Saudi King Abdullah.

2006 October: Saudi Arabia's state-run news agency reported that the king gave new powers to his brothers and nephews in an overhaul of the way the kingdom chooses future monarchs, in what appeared to be an attempt to defuse internal power struggles.

2006 October: Shiite and Sunni religious figures met in Mecca in a bid to stop sectarian bloodshed, and issued a series of edicts forbidding violence between Iraq's two Muslim sects.

2006 December: Saudi Arabia beheaded a Pakistani citizen and his daughter for smuggling heroin into the kingdom. The kingdom beheaded 83 people in 2005 and 35 people in 2004.

2006 December: The oil-rich Arab states on the Persian Gulf said that they will consider starting a joint nuclear program for peaceful purposes. The six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council included Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

2006 December: More than 30 prominent Islamic clerics from Saudi Arabia called on Sunni Muslims around the Middle East to support their brethren in Iraq against Shiites and praised the insurgency.

2006 December: Nearly 3 million Muslims from around the world marched through a desert valley outside Mecca on the first day of the annual hajj pilgrimage.

2007 January: Jamal Khalifa, a Saudi citizen married to a sister of Osama bin Laden, was killed when gunmen broke into his house in village in Madagascar in an apparent robbery.

2007 February: A Saudi Arabian judge sentenced 20 foreigners to receive lashes and spend several months in prison after convicting them of attending a party where alcohol was served and men and women danced.

2007 February: A US human rights watchdog that recently sent a team to Saudi Arabia to investigate abuses said in a new report the kingdom keeps thousands of prisoners in jail without charge, sentences children to death and oppresses women.

2007 February: A Saudi court ordered the bodies of four Sri Lankans to be displayed in a public square after being beheaded for armed robbery.

2007 February: Seven Saudis released from the US prison in Guantanamo Bay returned home but were detained by Saudi security to see if they had terrorist connections.

2007 February: Three Frenchmen who lived in Saudi Arabia were killed by gunmen on the side of a desert road leading to the holy city of Medina in an area restricted to Muslims only. Soon after a 4th died from his wounds.

2007 February: Saudi Arabia arrested 10 intellectuals for signing a polite petition suggesting it was time for the kingdom to consider a transition to constitutional monarchy.

2007 April: Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry said police had arrested 172 Islamic militants, some of whom had trained abroad as pilots so they could fly aircraft in attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil fields. A spokesman said all that remained in the plot "was to set the zero hour." More than \$32.4 million was seized in the operation, one of the largest sweeps against terror cells in the kingdoms.

2007 May: Princess Sultana's uncle, Prince Abdul-Majid bin Abdul-Aziz (65), the governor of Mecca,

died after a long illness.

2007 May: Saudi authorities beheaded an Ethiopian woman convicted of killing an Egyptian man over a dispute. She was the second woman to be executed this year. The kingdom last beheaded two women in 2005. Beheadings are carried out with a sword in a public square.

2007 June: British media reported that Saudi Arabia's Prince Bandar bin Sultan pocketed about \$2 billion in secret payments as part of an \$80 billion arms deal between Britain and Saudi Arabia first signed in 1985.

2007 June: A Saudi judge postponed the trial of 3 members of the religious police for their alleged involvement in the death of a man arrested after being seen with a woman who was not his relative.

2007 July: The US freed 16 Saudis from Guantanamo and flew them home, where they were taken into custody for investigation of possible links to terrorism.

2007 August: Saudi Arabia has banned the influential Arab newspaper Al Hayat from distribution in the kingdom, just days after it reported a Saudi man had served as a key figure for an al-Qaida front group in Iraq.

2007 October: First lady Laura Bush helped launch a screening facility in Saudi Arabia as part of a U.S.-Saudi initiative to raise breast cancer awareness in the kingdom where doctors struggle to break long-held taboos about the disease.

2007 October: In London Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah received a lavish welcome from Queen Elizabeth II as he started a state visit amid angry protests and headlines after accusing Britain of anti-terrorism failures. The Policy Exchange, an independent think tank, said Agencies linked to the Saudi government have distributed extremist literature to mosques and Islamic centers in Britain.

2007 November: Benedict XVI raised concerns about restrictions on Christian worship in Saudi Arabia in the first meeting ever between a pope and a reigning Saudi king.

2007 November: Saudi authorities beheaded Saudi citizen Khalaf al-Anzi in Riyadh for kidnapping and raping a teenager.

2007 November: 131 people were beheaded in the kingdom this year. Saudi Arabia beheaded 38 people last year and 83 people in 2005.

2007 November: Airbus said it was building a custom, 380 VIP double-decker jet for Princess Sultana's

cousin, Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal with a price tag of over \$320 million.

2007 November: Enraging women all over the world, A Saudi court sentenced a woman (19) who had been gang raped to six months in jail and 200 lashes, more than doubling her initial penalty for being in the car of a man who was not a relative. The court also roughly doubled prison sentences for the seven men convicted of raping the woman. Their new sentences range from two to nine years. The court also banned the lawyer from defending her, confiscated his license to practice law and summoned him to a disciplinary hearing later this month.

2007 December: Millions of Muslims from around the world gathered in Mecca for the start of the annual Islamic hajj pilgrimage, as the Saudi Interior Ministry announced tough security precautions.

2007 December: A gang-rape victim who was sentenced to six months in prison and 200 lashes for being alone with a man not related to her was pardoned by the Saudi king after the case sparked rare criticism from the United States, the kingdom's top ally.

2007 The population of Saudi Arabia passed 24 million. The country imported \$6 billion in food this year.

2008 January: Saudi authorities beheaded an Indonesian maid convicted of killing her employer. The Interior Ministry said the maid used a pillow to suffocate her employer Aisha Al Makhaleh and then stole her jewelry in the southern province of Asir.

2008 January: The daily Al-Watan, which is deemed close to the Saudi government, reported that the Interior Ministry issued a circular to hotels asking them to accept lone women as hotel guests, as long as their information is sent to a local police station.

2008 February: A leading human rights group appealed to Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah to stop the execution of a woman accused of witchcraft and performing supernatural acts.

2008 April: Saudi Arabia beheaded two Nigerian men convicted of smuggling cocaine into the kingdom. 42 people have been beheaded this year, according to an AP count.

2008 May: A German-based quartet staged the first-ever performance of European classical music in a public venue before a mixed gender, largely expatriate audience.

2008 May: Matrook al-Faleh was arrested at King Saud University in the Saudi capital Riyadh, where he teaches political science. A rights group said it came after al-Faleh publicly criticized conditions in a prison where two other human rights activists are serving jail terms. Faleh was released in January, 2009.

2008 May: In Saudi Arabia authorities beheaded a local man convicted of armed robbery and raping a woman. The execution brings the number of people beheaded this year to 55.

2008 June: In Saudi Arabia religious police arrested 21 allegedly homosexual men and confiscated large amounts of alcohol at a large gathering of young men at a rest house in Qatif.

2008 July: A human rights group said 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.

2008 July: Saudi Arabia's Islamic religious police banned the sale dogs and cats as pets, as well as walking them in public due to "the rising of phenomenon of men using cats and dogs to make passes at women and pester families" as well as "violating proper behavior in public squares and malls."

2008 September: Sheik Saleh al-Lihedan (79), Saudi Arabia's top judiciary official, issued a religious decree saying it is permissible to kill the owners of satellite TV networks that broadcast immoral content. On Sep 14 he adjusted his comments saying owners who broadcast immoral content should be brought to trial and sentenced to death if other penalties do not deter them.

2008 November: A group of Saudi activists began a rare public hunger strike to demand judiciary reform and draw attention to the detention without trial of 11 political reformists.

2008 December: In Saudi Arabia nearly 3 million Muslims from all over the world gathered in Mecca, on the eve of the start of the annual hajj pilgrimage.

2008 December: The European Commission awarded the first Chaillot Prize to the Al-Nahda Philanthropic Society for Women, a Saudi charity which helps divorced and underprivileged women.

2009 January: Princess Sultana is enraged when Saudi Arabia's most senior cleric was quoted as saying it is permissible for 10-year-old girls to marry and those who think they're too young are doing the girls an injustice.

2009 January: Princess Sultana's cousin, Saudi Arabia's prince Alwaleed bin Talal said his conglomerate Kingdom Holding Co. lost about \$7.9 billion in 2008.

2009 February: Saudi King Abdullah (86), in an apparent bid to reform the religious establishment, dismissed the head of the feared religious police and a hard-line cleric who issued an edict last year saying it was permissible to kill owners of satellite TV stations that show "immoral" content. King Abdullah

delighted Saudi women when he also appointed Noura al Fayez as deputy minister of women's education, the 1st female to hold a ministerial post.

2009 March: Khamisa Sawadi, a 75-year-old widow, was sentenced to 40 lashes and four months in jail for mingling with two young men who are not close relatives. The case drew new criticism for the kingdom's ultraconservative religious police and judiciary.

2009 March: A huge sandstorm blanketed the city of Riyadh with a thick layer of yellow dust.

2009 March: A group of Saudi clerics urged the kingdom's new information minister to ban women from appearing on TV or in newspapers and magazines, making clear that the country's hardline religious establishment is skeptical of a new push toward moderation.

2009 March: Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah (84) appointed his half-brother, Prince Nayef (75), as his 2nd deputy prime minister. Prince Nayef is known as a hardline prince.

2009 April: Saudi authorities beheaded 3 Pakistanis convicted of killing a fellow Pakistani during a jewelry heist. This brought to 20 the number of beheadings in the kingdom this year.

2009 April: A Saudi man convicted of rape and robbery was beheaded, becoming the 22nd prisoner to be executed by sword this year in the kingdom. An Interior Ministry statement says the man committed the crimes after drinking alcohol.

2009 April: A lawyer said an 8-year-old girl has divorced her middle-aged husband after her father forced her to marry him last year in exchange for about \$13,000. Saudi Arabia has come under increasing criticism at home and abroad for permitting child marriages. The United States, a close ally of the conservative Muslim kingdom, has called child marriage a "clear and unacceptable" violation of human rights.

2009 May: Saudi authorities beheaded and crucified a man convicted of brutally slaying an 11-year-old boy and his father.

2009 June: Iranian nuclear scientist Shahram Amiri vanished during a pilgrimage to the Saudi kingdom. In October Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said: "We hold Saudi Arabia responsible for Shahram Amiri's situation and consider the US to be involved in his arrest."

2009 June: In Saudi Arabia a screening of the Saudi film, "Menahi," brought a taste of the moviegoing experience to Riyadh more than 30 years after the government began shutting down theaters. No women were allowed. Men and children, including girls up to 10, were allowed to attend the show at a government-

run cultural center.

2009 July: Mazen Abdul-Jawad (32), a Saudi man, appeared on the Lebanese-based LBC satellite TV station's "Bold Red Line" program and shocked Saudis by publicly confessing to sexual exploits. More than 200 people soon filed legal complaints against Abdul-Jawad, dubbed a "sex braggart" by the media, and many Saudis said he should be severely punished. On July 31 Abdul-Jawad was detained for questioning. The Jiddah offices of the LBC station were closed soon thereafter.

2009 July: Amnesty International reported that Saudi Arabia is holding more than 3,000 people in secret detention and has used torture to extract confessions in its anti-terrorism crackdown since the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks.

2009 July: Arab health ministers decided to ban children, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions from attending the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia this year in effort to slow the spread of swine flu.

2009 Aug 9, Italian newspapers reported that burglars earlier in the week had made off with jewels and cash worth 11 million euros (15.6 million dollars) from the hotel room of a cousin to Princess Sultana. The theft occurred in Sardinia, sparking a diplomatic incident. On Sep 15 Sardinia police said most of the jewels had been recovered.

2009 August: A suicide bomber targeted the assistant interior minister, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, and blew himself up just before going into a gathering of well-wishers for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in Jiddah. Nayef was slightly wounded.

2009 September: Saudi Arabia opened a new multibillion dollar coed university outside the coastal city of Jeddah. The King Abdullah Science and Technology University, or KAUST, boasts state-of-the-art labs, the world's 14th fastest supercomputer and one of the biggest endowments worldwide. 817 students representing 61 different countries were currently enrolled, with 314 beginning classes this month.

2009 October: A Saudi court convicted Mazen Abdul-Jawad for publicly talking about sex after he bragged on a TV talk show about his exploits, sentencing him to five years in jail and 1,000 lashes. The program, which aired July 15 on the Lebanese LBC satellite channel, was seen in Saudi Arabia and scandalized conservative viewers where such frank talk is rarely heard in public.

2009 October: A Saudi court convicted a female journalist for her involvement in a TV show, in which a

Saudi man, Abdul-Jawad, publicly talked about sex, and sentenced her to 60 lashes. Rozanna al-Yami (22) is believed to be the first Saudi woman journalist to be given such a punishment. The same court sentenced Abdul-Jawad earlier this month to five years in jail and 1,000 lashes. 3 other men who appeared on the show, "Bold Red Line," were also convicted of discussing sex publicly and sentenced to two years imprisonment and 300 lashes each. Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah waived the flogging sentence of the female journalist, the second such pardoning of such a high profile case by the monarch in recent years. He ordered al-Yami's case and that of another journalist, a pregnant woman also accused of involvement in the program, be referred to a committee in the ministry.

2009 October: The Bin Laden family went under the spotlight in "Growing Up Bin Laden," written by American writer Jean Sasson who interviewed Osama's 4th son, Omar bin Laden, and Osama's first wife, Najwa bin Laden. In Dec, 2009, Omar bin Laden, revealed that many of the children who had been with their father in Afghanistan escaped to Iran following the 2001 US-led invasion, and were still together in a walled compound under Iranian guard.

2009 November: In Saudi Arabia Ali Sibat (49), a Lebanese psychic who made predictions on a satellite TV channel from his home in Beirut, was sentenced to death for practicing witchcraft. He was arrested by religious police in Medina during a pilgrimage there in May, 2008. In 2010 Saudi authorities said Sibat would not be beheaded. A 3-judge panel said that there was not enough evidence that Sibat's actions harmed others. They ordered the case to be retried in a Medina court and recommended that the sentence be commuted and that Sibat be deported.

2009 November: In Saudi Arabia rare, heavy rainstorms soaked pilgrims and flooded the road into Mecca, snarling Islam's annual hajj as some 2.5 million Muslims headed for the holy sites. The downpours add an extra hazard on top of intense concerns about the spread of swine flu. The torrential rains killed at least 106 people. Most of the deaths occurred in Jiddah, where streets were swamped with water, some houses collapsed and mudslides took place, and in areas around the main highway to Mecca.

2010: November/December: Saudi King Abdullah is out of the kingdom for three months while being treated for an undisclosed medical problem. Talk is centered around the transfer of power should King Abdullah die. The king survives but remains in poor health.

Appendix C: Facts about Saudi Arabia

GENERAL INFORMATION

HEAD OF STATE: H.M. King Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz Al Sa'ud

OFFICIAL TITLE: The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

AREA: 864,866 square miles

POPULATION: Est. 22,024,505

MAIN CITIES:

Riyadh—capital

Jeddah—port city

Makkah—holiest city of Islam, toward which Muslims pray

Madinah—burial place of Prophet Mohammed

Taif—summer capital and summer resort area

Dammam—port city and commercial center

Dhahran—oil industry center

Al Khobar—commercial center

Yanbu—natural gas shipping terminal

Hail—trading center

Jubail—industrial city

Ras Tanura—refinery center

Hofuf—principal city of the Al Hasa Oasis

RELIGION: Islam

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:

Eid Al Fitr—five days

Eid Al Adha—eight days

SHORT HISTORY

Saudi Arabia is a nation of tribes that can trace their roots back to the earliest civilizations of the Arabian Peninsula. The ancestors of modern-day Saudis lived on ancient and important trade routes and much of their income was realized by raiding parties. Divided into regions and ruled by independent tribal chiefs, the various warring tribes were unified under one religion, Islam, led by the Prophet Mohammed, in the seventh century. Before the Prophet died at age sixty-three, most of Arabia was Muslim.

The ancestors of the present rulers of Saudi Arabia reigned over much of Arabia during the nineteenth century. After losing most of Saudi territory to the Turks, they were driven from Riyadh and sought refuge in Kuwait. King Abdul Aziz Al Sa'ud, father of the present-day king, returned to Riyadh and fought to regain the country.

He succeeded and founded modern Saudi Arabia in 1932. Oil was discovered in 1938 and Saudi Arabia began a rapid climb as one of the world's wealthiest and most influential nations.

GEOGRAPHY

Saudi Arabia, with an area of 864,866 square miles, is one-third the size of the United States and is the same size as Western Europe.

Saudi Arabia lies at the crossroads of three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. The country extends from the Red Sea on the west to the Persian Gulf in the east. It borders Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait on the north, and Yemen and Oman to the south. The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain lie to the east.

A harsh desert land with no rivers and few permanent streams, Saudi Arabia is home to the Rub Al Khali (Empty Quarter), which is the largest sand desert in the world. The mountain ranges of Asir Province rise to over nine thousand feet in the southwest.

CALENDAR

Saudi Arabia uses the Islamic calendar that is based on a lunar year rather than the Gregorian calendar that is based on a solar year.

A lunar month is the time between two successive new moons. A lunar year contains twelve months, but is eleven days shorter than the solar year. For this reason, the holy days gradually shift from

one season to another.

Lunar year dates are derived from A.D. 622, the year of the Prophet's emigration, or Hejirah, from Makkah to Madinah. The Islamic holy day is Friday. The work week in Saudi Arabia begins on Saturday and ends Thursday.

ECONOMY

More than one quarter of the world's known oil reserves lie beneath the sands of Saudi Arabia.

In 1933, Standard Oil Company of California won the rights to prospect for oil in Saudi Arabia. In 1938 oil was discovered at Dammam Oil Well #7, which is still producing oil today. The Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) was founded in 1944 and held the right to continue to search for oil in the kingdom. In 1980 the Saudi Government assumed ownership of ARAMCO.

The kingdom's oil wealth has ensured that the citizens of that country live an opulent life-style enjoyed by few. With free education and interest-free loans most Saudis prosper. All Saudi citizens, as well as Muslim pilgrims, receive free health care. Government programs provide support for Saudi Arabians in the case of disability, death, or retirement. The entire country is an impressive socialist state. Economically, Saudi Arabia has developed into a modern, technologically advanced nation.

CURRENCY

The Saudi riyal is the basic monetary unit in Saudi Arabia. The riyal consists of 100 halalahs and is issued in notes and coins of various denominations. The riyal is 3.7450 to the American dollar.

POPULATION

Saudi Arabia has a population of approximately 22 million. All Saudis are Muslims. Ninety-five percent of the Muslims belong to the Sunni branch while 5 percent belong to the Shiite branch. The Shiite population of Saudi Arabia suffers much discrimination and injustice from the Sunni Government, since there is great distrust and dislike between the Sunni and Shiite sects of the Muslim faith.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Arabic is the official language while English is used for commercial and business purposes.

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state and the law is based on the *Shari'a*, the Islamic code of law taken from the pages of the Koran, and the *Sunna*, which are the traditions addressed by Prophet Mohammed. The Koran is the constitution of the country and provides guidance for legal judgments.

Executive and legislative authority is exercised by the king and the Council of Ministers. Their decisions are based on *Shari'a* law. All ministries and government agencies are responsible to the king.

RELIGION

Saudi Arabia is home to Islam, one of the three monotheistic religions. Muslims believe in one God and that Mohammed is his Prophet. As the heartland of Islam, Saudi Arabia occupies a special place in the Muslim world. Each year, millions of Muslim pilgrims journey to Makkah, in Saudi Arabia, to pay homage to God. For this reason, Saudi Arabia is one of the most traditional Muslim countries and its citizens adhere to a strict interpretation of the Koran.

A Muslim has five obligations, called the Five Pillars of Islam. These obligations are: 1) Profession of faith: "There is no god but God; Mohammed is the messenger of God." 2) A Muslim should pray five times a day, facing the city of Makkah. 3) A Muslim must pay a fixed proportion of his income, called *zakat*, to the poor. 4) During the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, a Muslim must fast. During this time, called Ramadan, Muslims must abstain from food and drink from dawn to sunset. 5) A Muslim must perform the Hajj, or pilgrimage, at least once during his lifetime (if he has the economic means).