

# SAUDI ARABIA

*"I will return Saudi Arabia to moderate Islam"*

- Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman

## AREA

**2,149,690 square km**

(13th largest country in the world)

## NEIGHBOURS

Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Oman and Yemen

## DID YOU KNOW?

World's tallest tower under construction

Saudi Arabia's Kingdom Tower began in 2014 - will stand 1 km (3,280 feet) high and will dwarf the Burj Khalifa in Dubai by 183 meters (600 feet)!

Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the world without any permanent rivers

## COUNTRY QUICK FACTS

### POPULATION

✓ **28,571,770** (July 2017 est.)

(Note: immigrants = 30% of population (UN data - 2015))

### GOVERNANCE

✓ **Absolute monarchy** - has been ruled by the Al Saud family since inception as a nation on 23 September 1932

### RELIGION

✓ Muslim (85-90% Sunni & 10-15% Shiite, citizens only)

✓ Home to Islam's two holiest sites - Mecca and Medina

✓ Other faiths = Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh (2012 est.)

✓ Non-Muslims are not allowed to have Saudi citizenship

✓ Non-Muslim places of worship are not allowed in Saudi Arabia

### WORKFORCE

✓ 80% of Saudi Arabia's workforce are non-nationals

### MILITARY BUDGET

✓ Largest military budget in region, 3rd in the world behind US and China (Overall - 10% of GDP)



King Abdulaziz Al-Saud

Ruled 1932-1953

## THE HOUSE OF SAUD



King Salman

King Saud

King Faisal

King Khaled

King Fahd

King Abdullah

Ruled 1953-1964

Ruled 1964-1975

Ruled 1975-1982

Ruled 1982-2005

Ruled 2005-2015

Ruled 2015- present



Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman

## RELIGION IN SAUDI ARABIA

### DOMINANCE OF ISLAM



Islam = state religion & law – all citizens should be Muslim

Non-Muslims desiring Saudi nationality must convert to Islam

Proselytizing by non-Muslims (including distribution of non-Muslim religious material, e.g. Bibles) is illegal

## WAHHABISM

- Founded by Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-92)
- Stressed absolute sovereignty of God, rejected reliance on intercession of Mohammed, denounced pilgrimages to saints' tombs, opposed innovation, advocated return to "purity of the first generation of Islam" in Arabian peninsula by mid-1700s
- Politically supported by Al Saud family (current rulers)
- Enforces public attendance at prayers, forbids shaving and tobacco smoking
- 1970s: Saudi charities started funding Wahhabi schools and mosques across globe
- 1975-2000: More than 1,500 mosques built around the world paid for by Saudi funds
- Over past 40 years, Riyadh has invested more than \$10bn (estimated) into 'charitable foundations'
- 15-20% of this may have been diverted to al-Qaeda and other jihadists

### SHARIA LAW

- ✗ Saudi Arabia = 1 of 5 top executing countries in world for more than a decade (300 people executed in past 2 years)
- ✗ Death penalty regularly imposed for non-violent offences – e.g. political protests, drug offences, adultery, blasphemy, sorcery
- ✗ Death penalty usually carried out publicly by sword beheading or firing squad

## GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONS

### FOES



IRAN

QATAR

SYRIA



YEMEN



IRAQ

JORDAN



### FRIENDS



USA

TURKEY

CHINA

## SOCIO-CULTURAL SHIFTS

- ✗ Saudi Arabia has guardianship system based on Wahhabi interpretation of Islam
- Women cannot marry, divorce, travel, get a job or have elective surgery without permission from male guardians; cannot mix freely with opposite sex; must wear full-length black abaya in public

## Recent changes

- ✓ December 2015: women allowed to vote for first time (17 elected to office)
- ✓ September 2017: women allowed to drive
- ✓ October 2017: women to be allowed in sports stadiums from 2018