



JOHNSON &
PUMP IN
ASSOCIATION WITH
AL-SHARIF LAW

AN INTERNATIONAL
FIRM WITH SAUDI
ROOTS

Introduction

National Transformation: Entertainment, Culture, Tourism, and Sports

Vision 2030 contemplates thoroughgoing reforms in all sectors of society and the economy, including entertainment, culture, and sports, introducing Saudis to the latest and best that the modern world offers while challenging them to contribute in their own culturally unique ways and remaining faithful to their heritage and traditions.

“Entertainment and culture are very important to change the standard of living of a Saudi citizen in a short period of time.”

-- Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, April 2016.

“Our old course was not sustainable, and change is now underway in virtually every aspect of society.”

-- HRH Khalid bin Salman, Saudi Deputy Defense Minister, March 2019.

Entertainment

- The General Entertainment Authority (GEA) was created in May, 2016 with a mandate to open and liberalize Saudi society by expanding access to entertainment, goals broadly welcomed by the 65% of Saudis who are under 30.
- A modern art museum outside Riyadh was announced in October 2019.
- Gender segregation for restaurants and cafés was relaxed in December 2019.
- Thunaiyat Ad-Diriyah Foundation was founded in May 2020 by Culture Minister Prince Badr to promote contemporary arts, featuring an annual arts festival.

Events

- A first Comic-Con convention was held in Jeddah in May 2016.
- Yanni performed to a mixed-gender audience in November 2017, followed by Mohammed Abdu, Mariah Carey, DJ Tiesto, BTS, and Andrea Bocelli.
- The Jeddah Art Festival in January 2018 allowed contemporary young artists to express ideas on society, politics, and life through art.
- A new Ministry of Culture was formed in June 2018 separate from the Ministry of Information, headed by Prince Badr bin Abdullah Al Saud.
- A 900-seat Opera House opened in June 2018 at the King Abdulaziz International Cultural Center (Ithraa) in Dhahran.
- The Entertainment Authority, headed by Turki Al al-Sheikh, launched a series of government-sponsored events in January 2019 including a concert by Jay-Z, an NBA basketball game, Disney musicals, a Madame-Tussauds

exhibition, and a Pamplona-style running of the bulls, and offered live music licenses for cafés and restaurants.

- The Jeddah World Fest music festival attracted 40,000 attendees in August 2019, with performances by 50 Cent, Janet Jackson, and DJ Steve Aoki.

Film Industry

- A plan to license 300 cinemas and 2,000 screens by 2030 was announced in December 2017, with a projected \$24 billion in revenues, 30,000 permanent and 130,000 temporary jobs, and 35 million annual customers.
- Barakah Meets Barakah, the Kingdom's first romantic comedy, was released in February 2016, premiered in Berlin, and shown at the Toronto Film Festival.
- The Marvel superhero film Black Panther opened in April 2018 at an AMC cinema.
- Hana al-Omair, director of Complain, won a Golden Palm Tree Award for best drama at the February 2018 Saudi Film Festival.
- A Saudi delegation to the May 2018 Cannes Film Festival showed short films, participated in meetings, and offered rebates of 35% for production and 50% for labor costs in producing films in the Kingdom.
- The Saudi film Roll'em, directed by Abdulelah al-Qurashi with an all-Saudi cast and crew, was shown at a Vox cinema in March 2019.
- An inaugural Red Sea Film Festival in Jeddah was screened virtually in March 2020.

- The Royal Commission for Al-Ula launched Film Al-Ula to promote Al-Ula as a filming destination in April 2021 by attracting producers to shoot films, TV series, commercials, and documentary projects.

Tourism

- Vision 2030 includes ambitious plans to attract foreign visitors, businesses and investors generally, with a particular emphasis on tourism.
- Visas for sports events and concerts have been available since December 2018, and one-year multiple-entry SR440 (\$117) tourist visas with maximum 90-day stays have since September 2019 been available for citizens of 49 countries, including in the US, Europe, and Asia.
- While females are expected to dress modestly, unaccompanied females are welcome and abayas optional; unmarried foreign couples may share hotel rooms, and females (Saudis included) are free to travel and stay in hotels without guardians' permission.
- 400,000+ tourist visas (excluding pilgrims) were issued between September 2019 and February 2020; 24,000 arrived in the first ten days.
- Plans were unveiled in April 2017 for Qiddiya, an entertainment city 50 times the size of Gibraltar featuring Six-Flags and safari parks.
- The Crown Prince announced plans in July 2017 to turn 50 Red Sea islands into luxury tourist resorts, designated as tourist zones with eased visa restrictions.
- During a visit of the Crown Prince to France in April 2018, the two countries agreed to develop UNESCO World Heritage Site Mada'in Saleh for tourism.

- Al-Ahsa Oasis was in June 2018 designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The *shareek* visa process was introduced in December 2018 for the Formula E series race, available online within 24 hours since March 2019.
- UK architecture firm Foster + Partners is designing a new airport for Red Sea tourism.
- The UN World Tourism Organization in September 2020 announced plans to open a Middle East regional office in Saudi Arabia.
- The Public Investment Fund committed \$3 billion in February to develop tourism and infrastructure in Asir, including Rijal Alma in the mountainous Soudah region.

Sports

- Three ABB FIA Formula E Championships have been hosted since December 2018.
- A Clash of the Dunes heavyweight boxing title bout was hosted in December 2019 between Anthony Joshua and Andy Ruiz Jr.
- Denmark's Emily Pedersen in November 2020 won the \$1 million Aramco Saudi Ladies International Golf Tournament prize.
- Saudi Arabia was in December 2020 chosen to host the 2034 Asian Games, second only to the Olympics among global multi-sport events.
- The Dakar Rally was held in Saudi Arabia in January 2020 and again this year.

- Saudi Arabia's first Formula 1 Grand Prix is scheduled for December in Jeddah.

Rather than resisting Western traditions and offerings like Iran and other Islamists, Saudi Arabia has committed to engaging other nations and traditions in the spirit of mutual respect, accommodation, curiosity, and openness, as this impressive record of outreach, commitment and engagement eloquently demonstrates.

Upcoming Holidays, Events, Webinars, and Conferences

- **Eid al Adha:** July 20-22

COVID-19 Status, Restrictions, Aid, and Enforcement

- **Status:** Saudi Arabia [reports](#) as of June 10, 2021, a sustained [spike](#) in COVID cases, with:
 - 1,274 new coronavirus cases daily, led by Jeddah, Riyadh, and Makkah;
 - 461,242 cumulative cases, 9,929 active;
 - 1,028 recoveries daily, 443,810 cumulative (>98% recovery rate);
 - 15 deaths daily, 7,503 cumulative (<2% fatality rate);
 - 92,124 tests administered daily, 20,021,161 cumulative;
 - 15,340,073 vaccine doses administered.
- **Vaccine:** Saudi Arabia has approved both the Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines for [import and use](#), while the Johnson & Johnson and Moderna vaccines are [accepted for travelers](#). Inoculation is [not compulsory](#). Health

authorities have initiated a major vaccination campaign, which consists of [several phases](#) scheduled to be completed by late 2021. The stated goal is to reach [80% population immunity](#).

- **Registration:** Registration for the vaccine is now available for [citizens and residents](#). To register, visit [here](#) or use the [iOS](#) or [Android](#) “*Sehanty*” apps. Within 24 hours applicants will receive a message providing a date for receiving [vaccine doses](#).
- **Second Dose Availability:** Authorities have announced that the second dose of COVID vaccines will only be available to members of five categories: patients who are on kidney dialysis, have active cancer, recently underwent organ transplants, are obese, [or are over 60](#). The Minister of Health has stated that the administration of second doses will start when stock is available [in large quantities](#).
- **Upcoming Vaccine Requirements:** Saudi Arabia's interior ministry has stated that vaccination will be required to enter any governmental, private, or educational establishments and to use public transportation [from August 1](#). Vaccination will also be mandatory to attend any social, economic, commercial, cultural, scientific, entertainment, or [sports event](#).

Public Sector Updates

- **Privatization Goals:** Saudi Arabia aims to raise \$55 billion from its privatization plan, which includes identifying 160 projects in 16 sectors, including asset sales and \$16.5 billion in [public-private partnerships](#).

Corporate / Employment

- **Worker Rights App:** The Ministry of Justice has launched the “Labour Calculator” app designed to protect workers from exploitation and unfair labor practices. Users will have online access to digitized contract documents so they can easily view their [terms and conditions](#).
- **Saudi Workers’ Retraining Preferences:** A survey by Boston Consulting Group indicated that 66% of Saudi workers are prepared to pursue different career paths post-crisis, expressing a high willingness to retrain and develop new skillsets before [embarking on new roles](#).

Legal

- **Al Tamimi Legal Magazine:** For Al Tamimi Law’s latest magazine issue (May 2021, focus is on the UAE government), see [here](#).
- **Women Allowed to Live Alone:** Saudi Arabia has officially allowed single, divorced or widowed women to live independently in a house [without permission from a male guardian](#).

Visas, Travel, and Repatriation

- **Travel Resumes:** Saudi Arabia has lifted its ban on travelers from all countries except Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan.
 - **Travel Guidelines:** For an outline of travel guidelines to and from Saudi Arabia, see [here](#). For Saudia’s travel guidelines, see [here](#).

- **Visa Extensions:** The General Directorate of Passports (Jawazat) has clarified that exit and reentry visas of expatriates who are outside the Kingdom can be extended electronically through the employer's Absher or Muqem platform, after paying fees through the [SADAD payment system](#).
- **Saudi Citizens:** Vaccinated Saudi citizens may also resume international travel, though they are banned from direct or indirect travel without prior permission to Libya, Yemen, Armenia, Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Somalia, Belarus, India, Lebanon, Turkey, Democratic Republic of the Congo, [and Venezuela](#).
- **Tawakkalna Requirements:** The General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) requires airlines operating in the Kingdom that boarding passes can only be issued to passengers who have either been vaccinated or have not been infected as registered in the [Tawakkalna application](#). GACA said that Tawakkalna is mandatory for entering airports and [boarding flights in the Kingdom](#).
- **Health Insurance Requirements:** Foreign visitors who come to Saudi Arabia are required to have health insurance coverage [against COVID-19 infection](#).
- **Institutional Quarantine Requirement:** All non-Saudi unvaccinated arrivals in the Kingdom must undergo a week-long institutional quarantine [starting May 20](#). Foreign visitors arriving by air from most countries are exempted from the quarantine [if they have been vaccinated](#). Approved vaccines are [Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Pfizer, and AstraZeneca](#).

- **COVID Test Requirement:** Non-Saudi travelers over eight years old must show a negative PCR Covid-19 test result [less than 72 hours old](#).
- **Immunization Portal:** Saudi Arabia has launched an online portal for travelers to [register immunization data](#).
- **Potential Tourism Reopening:** The Kingdom reportedly plans to soon [reopen to foreign tourists](#). The Saudi Central Bank announced the possibility of adding COVID-19 coverage to insurance policies for [non-Saudi tourists](#).
- **Sinovac/Sinopharm Recipients Barred:** Saudi Arabia has barred the entry of individuals inoculated with Chinese vaccines (Sinovac and Sinopharm) [into the country](#).
- **Free Visa Extensions:** Saudi Arabia has started the automatic extension of visas and residency permits of expatriates stranded abroad who are citizens of [20 countries](#).

Economy

- **General:**
 - **G7 Tax Policy Reaction:** Saudi Arabia welcomed the deal agreed upon by the G7, which includes requiring multinationals paying a [minimum tax of 15%](#).

- **Finance, Insurance, Investment, and Sovereign Wealth:**
 - **Islamic Finance Guidelines:** The Saudi Central Bank has issued new directives to financing companies in the Kingdom that seek to bring the industry in line with [Sharia provisions](#).
 - **Gulf Infrastructure Funding:** The PIF is set to become an anchor investor in a new \$800 million Gulf infrastructure fund set up by Aberdeen Standard Investments and [Investcorp](#).
 - **Startup Investment Growth:** Saudi Arabia dominated the startup investment market in the MENA region during May, raising around [\\$110 million across 35 deals](#).
- **Retail, Luxury, and E-Commerce:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Real Estate, Construction, Infrastructure, and Megaprojects:**
 - **Saudization of Real Estate Advertisers:** According to the new Real Estate Ads Controls issued by the General Real Estate Authority, all real estate advertisers [must be citizens](#).
- **Defense:**
 - **Joint Exercises:** The Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF) launched a joint exercise with US counterparts in Saudi Arabia's northwestern region dubbed ["Falcon Claws 4."](#)
- **Tourism, Hospitality, Culture, and Entertainment:**
 - **Support for Sports Clubs:** Saudi Arabia has finalized a plan to provide support to [sports clubs](#).

- **Netflix Hardship Fund:** Netflix has announced a \$500,000 fund to provide \$2,000 individual grants to crew, craftsmen, and freelancers in the television and film industry in the [Arab region](#).
- **Religion:**
 - **Hajj Plans:** Authorities have stated that the mechanism for this year's Hajj pilgrimage hinges on the developments related to the pandemic, though the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah will announce a plan [in the coming days](#).
- **Education:**
 - **In-Person Graduations:** The Ministry of Education announced that it will permit limited in-person graduation ceremonies at schools and universities amid [strict COVID protocols](#).
 - **Secondary Education Changes:** The Minister of Education announced the creation of a common study year program for first-year secondary students. He also stated that starting from 2023 five tracks will be [available for secondary students](#).
- **Healthcare:**
 - **Domestic Respirator Production:** Saudi Arabia has launched its first [locally-produced respirators](#).
- **Technology and Telecom:**
 - **5G Expansion:** The Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) has announced that 5G coverage now extends to [53 governorates](#).

- **ITC Rebranding:** The Integrated Telecom Company (ITC) has announced a rebranding of the company to [‘Salam’](#).
- **Food and Agriculture:**
 - **Digitization of Agricultural Subsidies Program:** The Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture has launched an electronic linkage service with six government bodies to serve the beneficiaries of the [agricultural subsidies program](#).
 - **Organic Farm Growth:** Saudi Arabia’s organic farms increased to 312 last year, compared to 244 in 2019, a [growth rate of 27.7%](#).
 - **C3 Expansion:** Food consortium C3 is expanding in the Kingdom through a \$100 million joint venture with investment group [WK Holding](#).
 - **Red Sea Farms Funding:** Agricultural technology company Red Sea Farms secured \$10 million to develop commercial farming using saltwater sources to help improve [food security in Saudi Arabia](#).
- **Industry, Utilities, and Transportation:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Natural Resources, Mining, and Environment:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Oil and Energy:** Oil prices [stand](#) on June 10 at \$72.10 pbb for Saudi oil (Arab Light) and \$69.72 pbb for West Texas Intermediate (WTI).
 - **Arabian Sun:** For Aramco’s most recent weekly newsletter (June 9) see [here](#).

- **Reframing Energy Policy:** The Minister of Energy stated that, “Saudi Arabia is no longer an oil country, it’s an energy-producing country”, citing the country’s low cost of gas, hydrogen, and [renewable energy](#).
- **Aramco Sukuk:** Aramco locked in another \$6 billion to help fund a [\\$75 billion dividend](#).

Geopolitical

- **Philippines PIF Hopes:** The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) is looking to attract Saudi Arabia’s sovereign wealth fund for potential [foreign direct investments](#).
- **Yemen:** Houthi forces continue to target Saudi Arabia with [drones and missiles](#).

GCC

- **Concern over Chinese Vaccines:** Bahrain and the UAE are seeing spikes in COVID cases despite high vaccination rates, raising concerns over the effectiveness of the [Sinopharm vaccine](#).
- **UAE-Qatar Resolution:** A diplomatic adviser to the UAE’s president stated that his country has “turned the page” on its [rift with Qatar](#).
- **UAE:**
 - **Whistleblower Mechanism:** The Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates (CBUAE) has set up an encrypted whistleblowing portal for internal and external stakeholders to voice concerns about

misconduct or policy violations made by its [contractors, representatives, and employees](#).

- **Flight Restrictions:** The UAE has suspended the entry of travelers from Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda on all flights of national and foreign carriers, [effective June 11](#).

- **Qatar:**

- **Israel Normalization Prospects:** Qatar is unlikely to normalize relations with Israel unless the conflict with the Palestinians has been resolved, according to the country's [foreign minister](#).
- **Airbus Deliveries Halted:** Qatar Airways said it will halt deliveries by Airbus SE A350 jets after issues required [urgent landing of some aircraft](#).

- **Kuwait:**

- **Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Approved:** Kuwait has approved the COVID vaccine [developed by Johnson & Johnson](#).

- **Bahrain:**

- **Potential Bond Sale:** Bahrain has reportedly started talks with banks for a potential debt sale in [H2 2021](#).

- **Oman:**

- **Sukuk Sales:** Oman sold \$1.75 billion in nine-year sukuk after drawing more than \$11.5 billion in orders for its [second international bond issuance this year](#).

Other

- **Miscellaneous:** For earlier developments, see [here](#).

Resources

- [Previous Newsletters](#)
- [Ministry of Health Dashboard](#)
- [Ministry of Health Coronavirus Guidance](#)
- [New Companies Law](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce Global Policy Dashboard](#)
- [Ministry of Investment Guide to Business Continuity](#)
- [US Embassy in Saudi Arabia](#)
- [US State Department Travel Information](#)

We will be happy to provide more specific advice in the context of particular circumstances, concerns, and priorities; please let us know.

Christopher H. Johnson, Managing Attorney

Disclaimer: While the above information was gathered from sources believed to be accurate at the time, we cannot be responsible for errors due to human or technical error.

Al Mousa Commercial Centre, Tower 2
5th Floor, # 259

Riyadh 11413, Saudi Arabia

Tel: +966 11 462 5925

<https://www.alshariflaw.com/>

Chris@alshariflaw.com