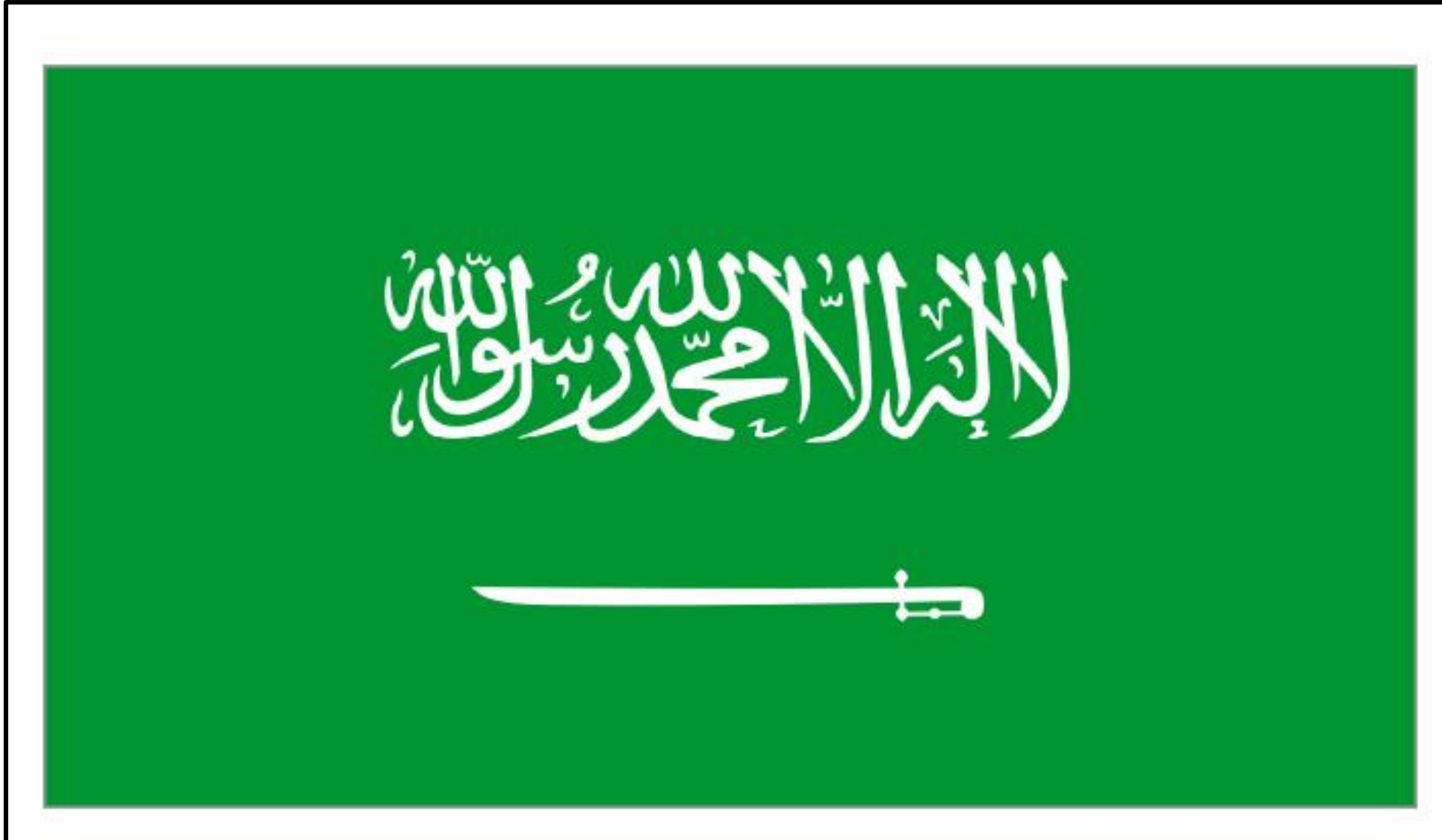
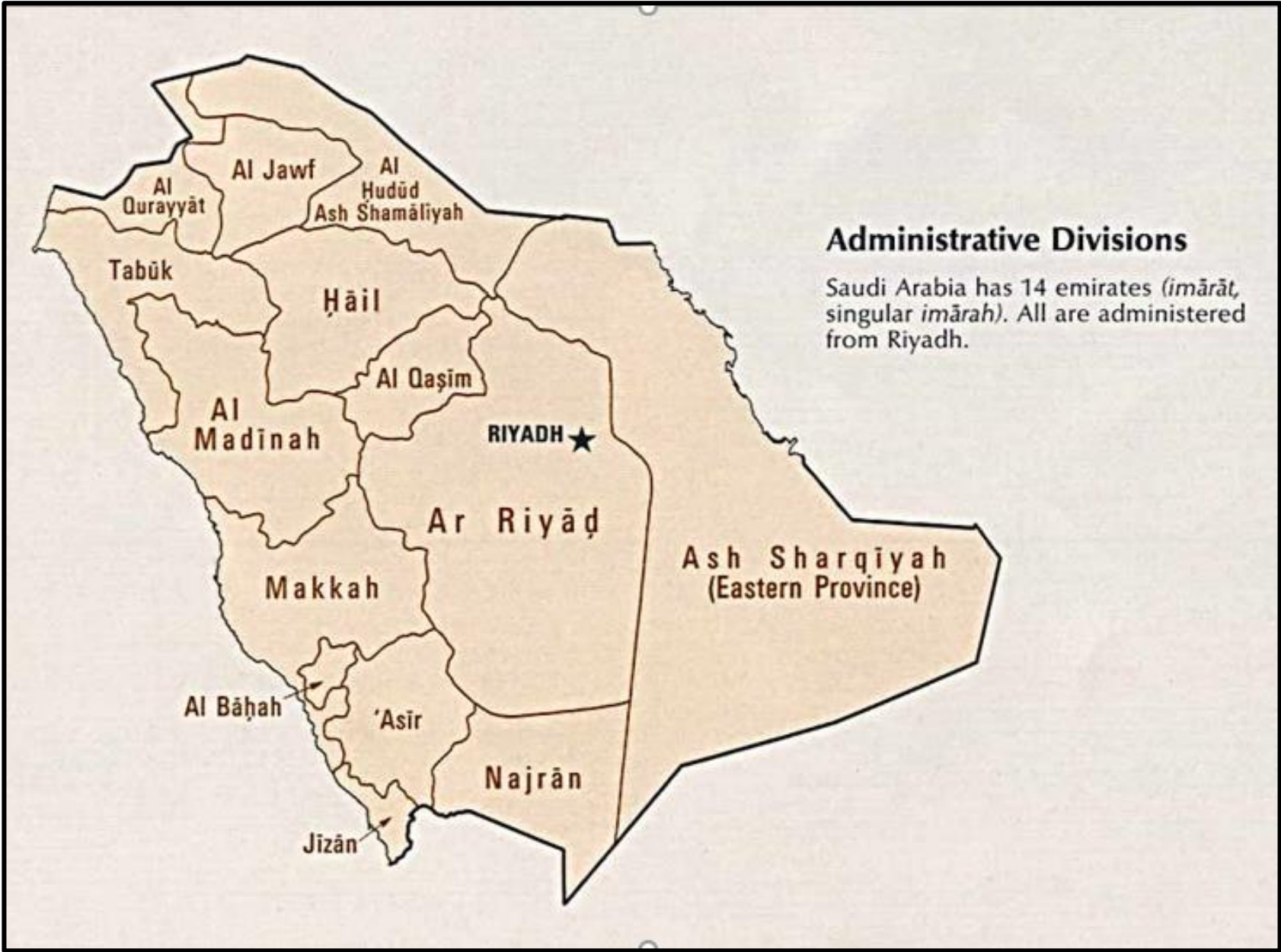


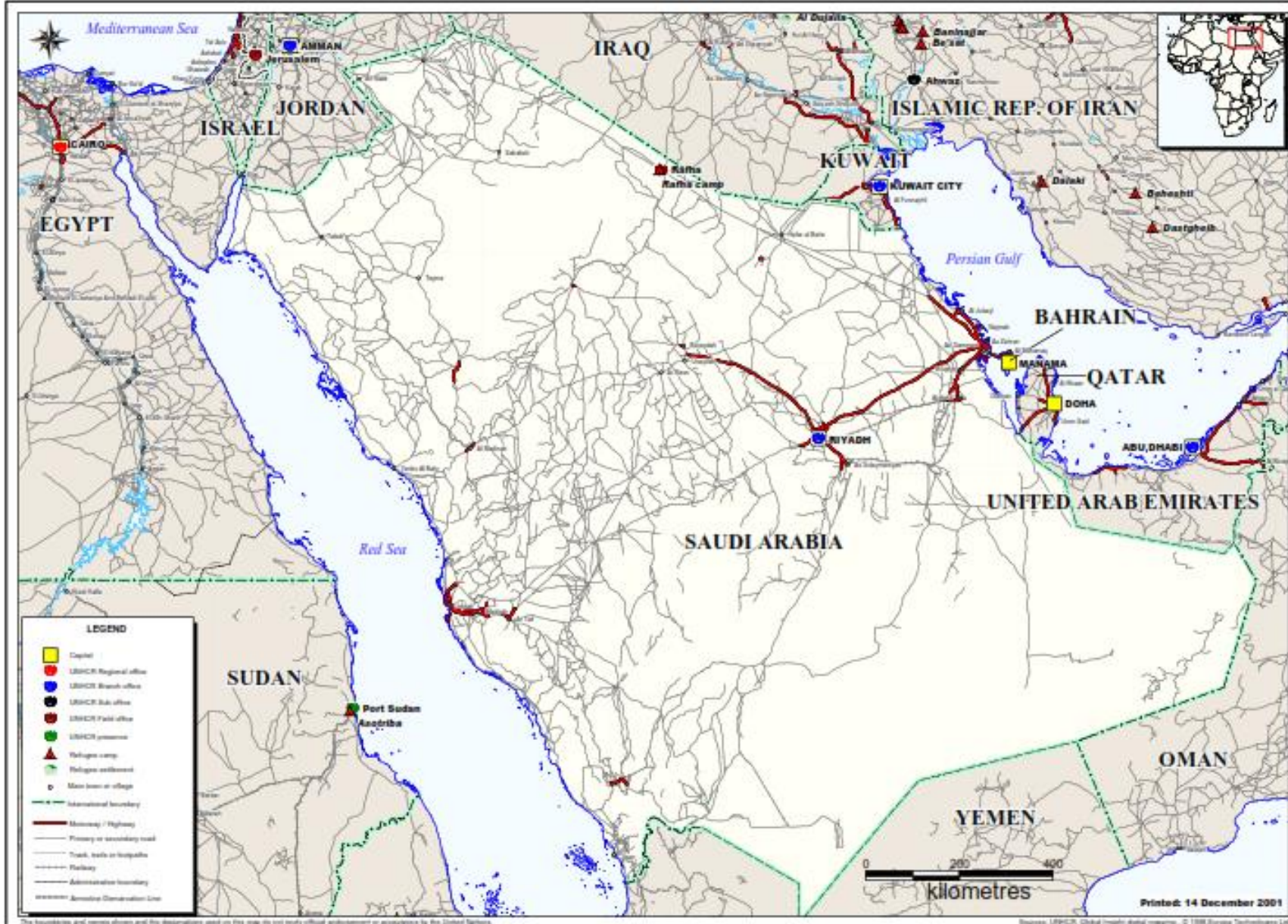
# SAUDI ARABIA





### Administrative Divisions

Saudi Arabia has 14 emirates (*imārāt*, singular *imārah*). All are administered from Riyadh.



**LEGEND**

- Capital
- UNHCR Regional office
- UNHCR Branch office
- UNHCR Sub office
- UNHCR Field office
- UNHCR presence
- Refugee camp
- Refugee settlement
- Main town or village
- International boundary
- Main road / Highway
- Primary or secondary road
- Track, route or footpath
- Railway
- Administrative boundary
- Administrative Demarcation Line

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Source: UNHCR, Global Insight digital mapping. © 1998 Europa Technologies Ltd.



## Bedouin in Saudi Arabia

People Group Location from IMB. Other Map Data/Geography from GMMS (GMI). Map by Joshua Project



# Saudi Arabia



**LIFE EXPECTANCY**  
73 (M), 77 (W)



**CAPITAL**  
Riyadh



**LARGEST CITY**  
Riyadh



**NATIONALITY**  
Saudi



**RELIGIONS**  
Islam

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## SAUDI ARABIA OVERVIEW

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**CURRENCY**  
Riyal (SAR)



**POPULATION**  
32,742,664



**LANGUAGES**  
Arabic



**AGRICULTURE**  
Wheat, Barley, Tomatoes,  
Melons, Dates, Citrus,  
Mutton, Chicken, Eggs, Milk



**INDUSTRIES**  
Petroleum, Crude Oil, Gases,  
Ammonia, Fertilizers, Cement,  
Petrochemicals, Ship Repair

# GEOGRAPHY

Saudi Arabia is a large country located between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Because of its large size, Saudi Arabia borders a number of other countries in the Middle East: Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Oman, and Bahrain (accessible by bridge). It has an area of approximately 1,960,582 square kilometers and occupies an area about the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. Saudi Arabia's geography is diverse, with forests, grasslands, mountain ranges and deserts. The climate in Saudi Arabia varies from region to region; temperatures can reach over 110 degrees in the desert during the summer, while in the winter, temperatures in the north and central parts of the country can drop below freezing. The majority of Saudi Arabia is uninhabited due to its extensive harsh, dry desert that experiences wide temperature ranges.

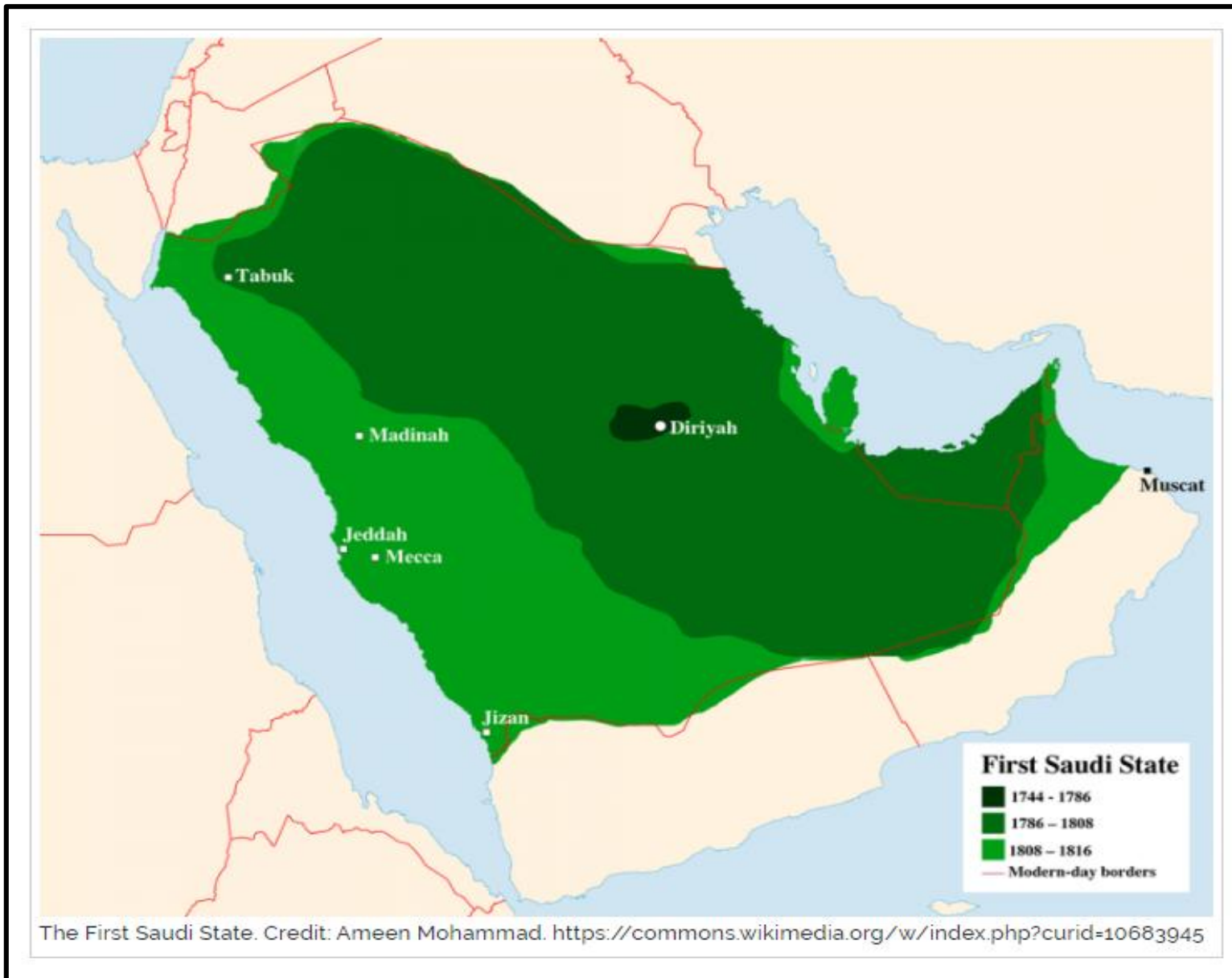
Less than 2% of the land in Saudi Arabia is arable and the percentage is dropping. Saudi Arabia gets very little rain, averaging only about four inches a year. There are frequent dust and sand storms. Underground water resources are quickly becoming depleted, so the Saudi government is experimenting with desalination plants off its coasts. There is also a pollution problem due to oil spills.

# HISTORY & GOVERNMENT

The major cities along the coasts and oases inland have been some of the only civilizations in Saudi Arabia for centuries because of the extreme climate and geography of other parts of the country. The major empires throughout time traded with these cities, but few ventured to establish new settlements. In its pre-Islamic history, Arabia was home to distinct nomadic groupings that became more unified when trade routes were established in the province of Hijaz during the Roman Empire in 106 CE. **Arabia Petraea**, also known as **Provincia Arabia** or **Arabia**, was a frontier province of the Roman Empire consisting of the former Nabataean kingdom in Jordan, the southern Levant, the Sinai Peninsula, and the northwestern Arabian peninsula, whose capital was Petra in modern day Jordan. Arabia Petraea did not face the harsh incursions experienced in other areas of the empire, such as Germany and North Africa, but parts of the territory were transferred to the Byzantine Empire in 390 CE (where it was known as **Palaestina Salutaris**), and later to the Persian Sassanid empire, both of which would be defeated by the spread of Islam thereafter.

In 610 CE, Muhammad, a native of Mecca in western Saudi Arabia, began receiving messages from Allah ("god" in Arabic) through the angel Gabriel in 610 CE. Thus began the third monotheistic faith, Islam, which would have a profound effect on geopolitics not only in Arabia but from Africa to large parts of Europe and Asia. For the next several centuries, Arabia was governed by Islamic rulers and experienced prosperity beginning with the Rashidun Caliphate following Muhammad's death in 632 CE. The traditional overland trade routes and cities languished as sea-based trade routes flourished. Following the Muslim conquests, an era known as the Golden Islamic Age from the 8th-13th centuries brought major, influential advancements in science, math, philosophy, culture, physics, medicine, language and other areas.

The first Saudi state was founded in 1750 by Muhammad bin Saud, a political leader and Muhammad Abd Al-Wahhab, an Islamic leader. The next 150 years was a turbulent time as Saudi Arabia dealt with invasions by the Egyptians and Ottomans and internal conflict with other Arab families vying for control of the land.



Keterangan:



Modern day Saudi Arabia was founded by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud (**below left in grid**) when he recaptured the capital of Riyadh in 1902 from the Al Rashid family, bitter rivals of the House of Saud and rulers of the Emirate of Jabal Shammar in the Najd region. Over the next 30 years he united all the provinces of Saudi Arabia under the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia officially became a nation in 1932. While uniting the provinces, Al-Saud also made a series of treaties to establish borders with Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait. Border conflicts with Qatar and Yemen were resolved in the early 2000s. When King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud died in 1953, his son Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud became king and his descendants have continued to rule Saudi Arabia since.

Since 1962, the king has also taken on the role of prime minister. The Saudi Arabian people have been instrumental in bringing together allies that formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Current King Salman (**below middle in grid**) was born on December 31, 1935, and is reported to be the 25th son of King Abdulaziz; Salman and his six brothers make up the Sudairi Seven, the commonly used name for a powerful alliance of brothers who share the same parents (King Abdulaziz and his Husa Sudairi). Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud also holds the title of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the head of the House of Saud. He ascended the throne in January 2015 after his predecessor and half-brother, King Abdullah, passed away. Salman's nephew, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, 56, was largely inactive as his deputy and in June 2017, was replaced by the defense minister and King Salman's son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, 32 (**below right in grid**). MBS, as he is known, has been a dominant player on multiple fronts, from military campaigns to national development. He has openly expressed his support for reform in the kingdom particularly on social issues. In September 2017, an end of the prohibition of women driving in the country was announced. In addition, girls are now able to participate in school sports and there are also plans to allow movies to screen in the country. The crown prince and his brother, the 28-year-old Saudi ambassador to the United States, represent a distinct departure from the more conservative and traditional old guard. With an understanding of the impact decreasing oil reserves will have on the country, the new generation is making changes in order to sustain the country's economy and influence. Though his father is officially recognized as the king, MBS is generally considered to be the de facto leader of the country.

In April 2016, Saudi Arabia released its "Vision 2030" development plan, a comprehensive roadmap that includes various economic and social reforms. The vision is set to prepare the kingdom for an era in which it does not rely heavily on oil, which many of its GCC partners have already initiated. MBS is spearheading the project and has indicated that the focus of the National Transformation Plan (NTP) includes asset sales, tax increases, spending cuts, changes to the way the state manages its financial reserves, an efficiency drive, and a much bigger role for the private sector.



The kingdom is an absolute monarchy that uses an Islamic rule of law (Sharia) with some elements of Egyptian, French, and customary law. There are secular codes in use and commercial disputes are handled by special committees. An important element of the government is its consultative assembly, also known as the *Majlis Al-Shura*, that acts as a formal advisory board to the king. The majlis has limited powers in government but is able to propose laws to the king and the cabinet, and acts as an intermediary between the king and the people. Its 150 members, all of whom are appointed by the king, **include approximately 30 women**. Women make up 19.9% of the majlis which is slightly higher than the **percentage of women (19.5) in the United States Congress**. In addition to the consultative council, Saudi Arabia has a council of ministers known as the *Majlis Al-Wezara Al-Saudi*. The council of ministers, also called the cabinet, advises the king and facilitates the country's development. It represents 22 different government ministries and is presided over each week by the king or his deputy. The **cabinet is responsible** for drafting and overseeing implementation of the internal, external, financial, economic, education and defense policies as well as the general affairs of the state. The cabinet consists of the prime minister (the king), the deputy prime minister (the crown prince), 21 other ministers with portfolios and seven ministers of state.

# INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL ISSUES

Saudi Arabia is a major economic, religious and political player in the Middle East, so it should come as no surprise that differences can arise between the kingdom and its neighbors on occasion. Since March 2015 Saudi Arabia has led a military operation in Yemen, a conflict that is tied to the kingdom's long-term feud with Iran. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia has aided the Sunni Yemeni government in airstrikes against the Shi'a Houthi rebels. The Saudi government was especially close to Ali Abdullah Saleh, who served as the Yemeni president for 22 years until he was forced to step down in 2011. There are several reasons why Saudi Arabia has an interest in strengthening Yemen: first, Yemen's porous border with Saudi Arabia means that members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi's biggest terrorist threat, can cross the border into the kingdom. Second, the Houthi rebels are backed by Iran, an alliance which is a direct threat to the security of Saudi Arabia. The kingdom's long-standing rivalry with Iran would surely gain momentum if Iran had members of its military stationed so close to Saudi land.

Though the Saudi Arabia-Iran relationship has been beset by mutual ambitions for regional dominance, Saudi-Iranian ties were formally severed in January of 2016 when Saudi Arabia executed Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a Shia cleric important to Iran and outspoken about his disapproval of Saudi Arabia's treatment of Shia minorities. This intensified the cold war stance between the two states. Iran sends arms to the Houthi rebels in Yemen, fueling the proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Each country accuses the other of meddling in their country's internal affairs, which violates a tacit agreement they have held for years. Iran's involvement in the crises in Syria and Iraq has also been a source of constant frustration to the Saudis because it foments sectarianism and instability.

The United States has been an ally of Saudi Arabia for close to 7 decades despite stark differences in values. Americans are involved in Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism efforts and export of oil. Since the World War II, the United States has aided Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich Gulf countries in their defense efforts. Saudi and American armies worked together during the 1991 Gulf War to defeat Iraqi forces in Kuwait, and the US has a long-standing military presence in Saudi Arabia. The attacks on the World Trade Centers on 11 September 2001, in which 15 of the 19 attackers were of Saudi origin, put a significant strain on US-Saudi relations. A bill that would allow families of the victims of the terrorist attacks to sue the Saudi government for any perceived involvement passed through congress on 9 September 2016, bringing harsh rebuke from other Gulf States. Because of the vulnerability of US-Saudi ties, the kingdom has sought with other countries and regions.

Saudi Arabia displays leadership in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), whose aim is "to confront [the Gulf States'] security challenges collectively." The Kingdom funds the intervention force codenamed the "Peninsula Shield Force," and is extremely influential in the decisions made in the council because of its large financial stake. OPEC, or the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, is another multi-lateral organization in which Saudi Arabia is heavily involved. Due to its vast oil reserves, Saudi Arabia has greatly impacted oil prices in the past. Leaders in the Saudi oil industry believe there should be an output ceiling on the amount of oil all OPEC member states produce, which is at odds with the ideology some other OPEC member states, namely Iran, who believes each country should have a quota system.

As of June 2017, Saudi Arabia along with Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain have severed diplomatic and economic ties with Qatar over its alleged support of Islamist groups, and irresponsible use of its media platforms. It remains to be seen how hard-hitting the withdrawal of diplomats and Qatari-owned businesses, the suspension of flights to and from Qatar and the imposition of sanctions will be on the country. The anti-Qatar bloc issued Qatar with a list of demands that the latter rejected as threats to its sovereignty. Attempts to mediate the crisis have been fruitless.

The kingdom has been criticized by international leaders for not doing enough to limit civilian casualties in its military operations. Every year, the United Nations releases a report on children and armed conflict, naming and shaming nations and armed groups responsible for injuring and killing children during war. In 2016, Saudi Arabia was placed on the list for the death of 510 children in Yemen but after a tremendous amount of pressure, the country was removed from the list and put under pending review. Former-UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon made the decision to take Saudi Arabia off of the list because of threats to pull its funding to the United Nations which would adversely affect many other lives. In 2017, the annual report placed Saudi Arabia on blacklist due to the deaths of 683 children resulting from the ongoing Saudi military-led coalition in Yemen.

# ECONOMY

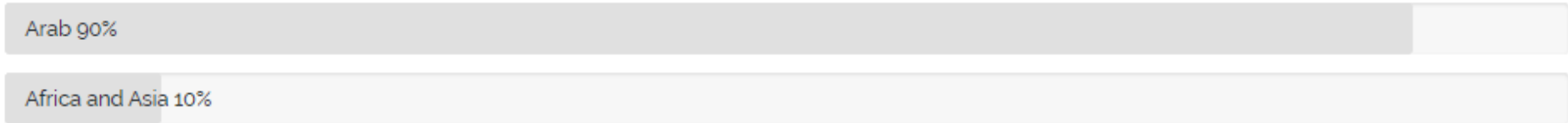
Saudi Arabia has an oil-based economy. The petroleum sector in Saudi Arabia's economy accounts for about 87% of their budget revenues, 42% of GDP and 90% of export earnings. The economy heavily relies on the production of petroleum. Saudi Arabia is the number 1 trader of petroleum in the world.

In 2014, the global demand for oil dropped. It created a huge budget deficit and billions in debt to private firms—mostly construction companies. This caused the Saudi government to raise more than \$20 billion dollars from international bonds. They realized they cannot depend on oil, in result, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman announced Saudi's **Vision 2030**. It is an ambitious economic plan that raises government transparency and efficiency. The plan also aims to reduce government spending while increasing government revenues. The vision has announced to forthcoming sale of 5% of the state owned oil company ARAMCO to increase revenue and outside investment. Saudi's government was forced to make critical changes sooner rather than later. It took investments from power generation, telecommunications, natural gas exploration and petrochemical sectors into healthcare, education and tourism industries.

As of 2016, Saudi Arabia's unemployment rate is at 11.3%. Another important reform goal is to reduce the unemployment rates of Saudi nationals as well as the over-saturation of the public sector. The short-term outlook generally looks good for Saudi Arabia especially with a new ambitious prince trying to modernize Saudi Arabia but there is long-term uncertainty with a weak global market that decreases the global demand for oil.

# SOCIETY

According to the CIA World Fact Book, the most recent population estimate is 32,742,664 million. 90% of the population is of Arab descent and the remaining 10% are from Africa or Asia. 30% of the Saudi Arabian population is immigrants. The foreign population typically works domestically and in the oil and service industries. Part of the Arab population is nomadic, while the majority of the population lives in the major cities. Arabic is the official language; however, English is often used in business transactions and taught in secondary school. The human development index ranking for Saudi Arabia is 38. The **Human Development Index** is a composite statistic that ranks countries into four tiers of human development. A country scores higher HDI when the lifespan is higher, the education level is higher, and the GDP per capita is higher. Saudi Arabia is a relatively young country with a median age of 28.6.



Arab 90%

Africa and Asia 10%

There is a public education system through high school that is available for students to attend. Education is not mandatory, however. There has been a push in the last years to improve the education system and keep children, especially girls, in school. The male literacy rate still exceeds the female, at 97% to 91% respectively. In school, the primary focus is on religious instruction but math, science and other courses are offered. Saudi Arabia has several universities—King Saud University, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals and King Abd al Aziz University were named the **top three universities** in the Arab world in 2017. Institutes of higher education for women have multiplied over the last several years and women now exceed men in terms of enrollment and graduation rates throughout the country.

The first mixed-gender university campus in Saudi Arabia, the graduate level King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) was established in 2009. The professional world is gradually opening up more opportunities for women, though they currently are inactive in many fields.

**The King Abdullah Scholarship Program** aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to be world leaders through funding Saudi students abroad. They focus on patriotic commitments, cultural exchanges, creating mutual understand and intellectual development. It is an important source of support for Saudi's public and private sectors, it develops, qualifies and prepares Saudi students with a global education in which they come back to Saudi Arabia and implement what they learned back home. After an agreement with King Abdullah and President George W. Bush in 2005, the agreement increased the number of Saudi students in the United States. Now, the majority of KASP students are in the United States but the UK, Australia and Canada have also hosted significant numbers of Saudi students.

Saudi Arabians can receive healthcare from government agencies around the country, as well as with the growing number of private healthcare providers. The Ministry of Health oversees the public health system, which encompasses almost 2,000 facilities. They also provide referrals for specialty center like the King Khalid Eye Specialist Hospital. Both citizens and expatriates are eligible for health benefits in Saudi Arabia.



# RELIGION

Islam is the official religion in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Most people follow Sunni Islam as interpreted by Muhammed ibn Abd Al Wahhab, a form of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism. There is a small sect of Shiite Muslims in Northeast Saudi Arabia. There is not a law that states that all people must be Muslim; however, proselytizing by non-Muslims is illegal and apostasy (leaving the Islamic faith) is punishable by death. Public practice of any religion other than Islam is illegal and there is no government protection of religious rights. Non-Muslims may not acquire Saudi citizenship. The government discourages celebrations that are not linked to a religious holiday.



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Religion Resources

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# CULTURE



Saudi Arabian culture is rooted in Islam. Music and dress guidelines are prescribed by the ruling family's interpretation of Islamic law. Because of the pervasiveness of the conservative Wahhabi influence, movies and theater were illegal up until recently. Still, theaters remain officially banned, and only one exists in all of Saudi Arabia. Literature is subject to censorship so it is often printed outside the country. Saudi cultural expression is not as diverse as some other countries due to religious principles. Although women will be able to drive in June 2018, they remain subject to strict guardianship laws that require permission from male relatives for many aspects of daily life. It is forbidden for unwed or unrelated men and women to interact in public, but many attempt to supersede this rule by claiming relations. Strict codes of conduct are routinely enforced by government-authorized religious police though they were **stripped of their arrest powers** in 2016.

## Food

Saudis enjoy a wide variety of traditional Middle Eastern food items, like rice, tabbouleh, dates, hummus, and Arabic coffee. Saudi Arabian cuisine has a handful of flatbreads unique to its cultural tradition, like hawayij—a spiced bread that includes black peppercorns and turmeric. The country's reputation for being closed-off belies its cosmopolitan nature; the oil and service industries have long brought a plurality of cultures to the kingdom, and this is also reflected in its cuisine and culture.

## Clothing

Saudi men often wear the traditional shumagh (headscarf) and dishdasha or thobe. Women must wear the abaya and hijab in public though some choose to wear the face-covering niqab and gloves to increase modesty.

## Art

Saudi Arabia is recognized for its unique rock art. This ancient art form can be seen on the huge rocks southwest of Riyadh. Little is known about who created these works, or when they were made. Other Saudi Arabian art has been influenced by Bedouin tradition and Islam. Painting and calligraphy are popular art forms. In recent years, painting has grown in popularity. In fact, Prince Khalid al-Faisal, governor of the Asir Province, is an avid painter. Art and design are growing in popularity as fields of study and sources of income for women. Sculptures and fountains are common displays of creativity, particularly in the coastal city of Jeddah. In addition, there are attempts to preserve historical architectural styles that can be seen in the old city sections of urban areas. Another important project has been the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Al-Turaif, a district in the historic city of Ad-Dariyah, and the first capital of the Saudi Dynasty, dating back to the 15th century. In the 18th century, Ad-Dariyah became the capital of an independent Arab State. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Al-Turaif, and other parts of Ad-Dariyah, will be renovated to ensure the public has continued access to its country's rich heritage.



## Sites



The two holy sites of Mecca and Medina are located in Saudi Arabia. Each year, Muslims from around the world embark on hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca required of all able-Muslims (those not barred by health, money, or other extenuating circumstances) to complete at least once in their lifetime. Pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five pillars of Islam, and thus an important life experience for Muslims. Hajj refers to the annual pilgrimage set during a certain time frame, whereas umrah is the term used for pilgrimage made to Mecca at any time of the year.



Masmak Fort

region.

The country also has several little-known economic, cultural and historical places of interest. Built out of clay and mud-brick with four watchtowers, the **Masmak Fort** played a major role in the kingdom's history. It was built around 1865 by the prince of Riyadh Abdulrahman ibn Sulaiman ibn Dabaan, under the reign of Mohammed ibn Abdullah ibn Rasheed, the ruler of Ha'il to the north, who also wrested Riyadh from the rival clan of Al Saud. In 1902, a young man living in exile in Kuwait, Amir Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman bin Faisal Al Saud, succeeded in capturing the castle. This restored Al Saud control over Riyadh. This story has gained mythical status in the history of Saudi Arabia as it has been told many times but it has a central theme of heroism and bravery the future King Abdulaziz showed to regain power over the

**Mada'in Saleh** (below right) was once a thriving city along the ancient spice route that played a crucial role in building a trade empire, but even as a UNESCO World Heritage Site it remains relatively unknown. Mada'in Saleh was the second largest city in the Nabatean Empire. In 106 AD, the Nabatean Empire was annexed by the Romans which eventually led to its abandonment. Today, historians and archaeologists help to preserve the monumental tombs with decorated facades dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. These tombs have inscriptions that provide insight into an empire that had no extensive written history, so these texts reveal names, relationships, occupations, laws and gods of the people who lived there.

