

## **Saudi National Day By. Fahad Nazer**

On September 23 of each year, Saudis around the globe, and here in the United States, celebrate Saudi National Day. Comparable to America's Independence Day, our National Day commemorates the unification of Saudi Arabia 90 years ago by King Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the first king and founder of modern-day Saudi Arabia.

Every Saudi National Day is special. Each year Saudis around the world, from Riyadh to Indianapolis, share our culture with the world. With food, arts, cultural events, and history-telling, Saudis reach out to their neighbors, colleagues, friends and family to share their pride in their home and in our future. Major announcements, like the opening of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, are often made on National Day to further highlight our nation's progress and future.

However, this year, as the world faces incredible challenges and Saudi Arabia continues our unprecedented transformation under Vision 2030, our National Day has added significance. For the Saudi people, this National Day is uniquely suited for our times and is an opportunity to take stock of the accomplishments of the past year.

Saudi Arabia has a wide array of amazing achievements, trailblazers, and exciting programs worthy of celebrating and highlighting this National Day. This includes the recent World Bank report 'Women, Business and the Law 2020,' which ranked Saudi Arabia as the top global reformer in advancing women's economic participation. It further underscores the leaps and bounds being made in environmentally-sustainable development initiatives in the Kingdom, like our focus on solar and renewable energy. And it includes the economic diversification being made under Vision 2030, moving Saudi Arabia away from an oil dependent economy to one with a vibrant tourism, entertainment and tech sectors.

Recently in Indiana, Ambassador Reema Bint Bandar Al Saud, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, spoke to the Indiana Council on World Affairs. While focusing her remarks on several topics impacting the U.S.-Saudi partnership, the ambassador additionally highlighted Saudi Arabia's bold transformation under Vision 2030. She spoke passionately about this transformation and her personal experiences, sharing Saudi Arabia's culture and history with friends and colleagues in America.

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Of course, this is no ordinary year. Celebrations and gatherings for Saudi National Day, a staple of previous years, have been transitioned online. The amazing cultural exchanges on American college campuses, where Saudi students share traditional foods with fellow students on National Day, have been postponed. Tourism, a relatively new way for my country to share our exciting transformation with the world, has been complicated due to the challenges of international travel.

Yet, the positivity and excitement of the Saudi people remains strong and forward looking. This National Day, Saudis will celebrate a country that is changing and growing, excelling and transforming into a modern and economically diverse nation. As these efforts continue, we look forward to sharing this special day and our future with our friends and partners in America.

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