

IIC Meets with Top Ranking Saudi Shia Scholar

May 26, 2010

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Information Alert

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Regarding the positive changes, they are as follows:

- For the past 40 years, the kingdom had made it illegal to construct Shia masjids and imambargahs, however within the last 5 years the government has lifted this ban and many Shia centers have been built.
- Within this period of 5 years, 40 Shia centers have been constructed and are now in use.
- For the past 40 years, the Saudi government had banned any Shia hawzahs (Islamic seminaries) from operating, however within the last 5 years the government has lifted this ban.
- There are six active Shia hawzahs in Saudi Arabia, 3 in the region of Al Qatif, 2 in the region of Al Ahsaa, and 1 in the Holy city of Medina.
- The Shia adhaan is now publically permitted in the entire Qatif region, and some parts of the Al Ahsaa region.
- Previous bans in the import or publication of Shia literature have now been lifted, although not entirely, and there is now a Shia publication company in Qatif.
- There are multiple Shia publishing companies now opened in Saudi Arabia. Due to these efforts there is now an officially recognized publication of Sahifa Sajjediya in Saudi Arabia.
- Saudi media organizations regularly discuss Shia beliefs and philosophies in a positive and fair light. However, despite this, the needs and situation of the Saudi Shia community are not discussed in any public forum.
- The media is open to accurate portrayals of Shiaism. One example of this is that after certain Saudi individuals insulted Grand Ayatollah Syed Sistani, more than 40 news paper articles appeared in Saudi media in defense of the Ayatollah, from non-Shia sources. The progress and changes effected by the Shia community have had a moralizing effect on the Saudi Arabian Shia community. Members of the community feel energized and are prepared to continue with efforts to equalize rights and protections in Saudi Arabia. While there has been some progress, there is still much to be needed. Despite permission from the government to construct Shia masjids, the government still does not allow such construction in majority Shia regions, to the detriment of the Shia community, and Jannatul Baqee remains in a dilapidated state.

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