



Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) of the European Parliament

Press statement

"Zero tolerance for extremism and radicalisation", said Saudi Arabia Foreign Affairs Minister to MEPs

The fight against terrorism, conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya, as well as Iraq's reconstruction were amongst the topics Saudi Arabia Minister of Foreign Affairs and MEPs discussed on Thursday.

As a direct follow up of their visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 11-15 February, Foreign Affairs MEPs debated the crisis in the Gulf region with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Adel Al-Jubeir, on Thursday morning.

"Saudi Arabia is an important partner for the EU", introduced Foreign Affairs Committee Chair, David McAllister (EPP, DE). "We face similar challenges: our common goals should be to maintain regional stability and promote regional cooperation", he added.

"My country stands in a very challenging region (...) but it is still a wonderful one", Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia said to MEPs before quoting the numerous ongoing conflicts in the region and tensed relations with neighbour countries. Saudi Arabia is committed to fight terrorism, the Minister said highlighting some of the measures the Kingdom has taken: "We had suspended more than 4000 Imams over the years for inciting and preaching extremism".

On conflicts in the region, the Minister underlined that "the only way to get out of the Syrian conflict is a political settlement and we support UNSE Staffan de Mistura". While recognising that the conflict in Yemen is of great concern for the EP, he stated that this is not a war his country wanted to continue. "We have said from day one that the only solution is the political one". "Getting Libya stable is another priority for Saudi Arabia. We are working on stabilising the G5 Sahel with the EU and the USA. If we cannot stabilise Libya, Daesh will extend to Sahel countries from where it will be impossible to move it", Minister Al-Jubeir added.

He described his country's approach towards the Iran nuclear deal as tougher than the EU one: "The deal is too weak. Openness regarding Iran will not have positive effects".

MEPs expressed their concern about human rights in Saudi Arabia and raised the case of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi, who was the 2015 laureate of the Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought. "Rule of law, gender equality, human rights... We are making progress in all these areas as we take you as model. It will take time but we are working on it", said Minister Al-Jubeir referring to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 programme of social and economic reforms.