



## Mapping the Saudi State, Chapter 2: The Ministry of Interior (Part 1)

### I. Introduction

The Saudi [Ministry of Interior](#) (MOI) oversees numerous agencies that work to maintain the kingdom's security and manage its internal affairs. Its scope includes:

- regular police
- heavily-armed special forces
- domestic and international intelligence
- border protection
- drug enforcement
- infrastructure protection units

Alongside these core security functions, the MOI manages a host of supportive services, including a civil defense force (primarily fire response), passport and immigration services, and a prison administration. Distinct agencies execute each of these services, and each agency employs thousands of Saudi citizens.

The extent of the MOI's mandate, and the multiplicity of its agencies, reflect both the administrative realities of a large state in the contemporary world and Saudi Arabia's particular security challenges. Regional instability, exacerbated by the rise of extremist networks within the Middle East, has encouraged the Saudi government to bolster its internal security capabilities. Terrorist attacks that shook the kingdom in the mid-2000s have led to a dramatic increase in allocated budgets and the expansion of intelligence and police forces.

This chapter is the first in a two-part series on the Ministry of Interior in Saudi Arabia. Part one, which follows below, provides an overview of the ministry, including its history, its basic structure, and brief background information on a set of agencies under its jurisdiction which have committed human rights violations. Part two of this series, to follow next month, will outline the manner in which the MOI has, through its General Security Services and Specialized Criminal Courts, constructed a parallel Saudi system of justice. This system of prisons, interrogation centers, and courts outside the control of the Ministry of Justice has streamlined the fight against extremism. At the same time, it has institutionalized the arbitrary arrest, torture, and long-term imprisonment of human rights activists and other political dissidents.

## II. History

### A. Early Development and the Effects of the oil boom

The various internal security forces which would eventually constitute the core of the MOI developed in a provisional manner. The early governing administration of King Abdulaziz first established an organized public security force in Mecca in 1925. The force “consisted of an infantry corps which maintained security outside of the towns and patrolled the roads with the aid of the local populace.” Over the next decade, King Abdulaziz’s emerging government exported this model to other urban centers such as Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dhahran.<sup>1</sup>

A police administration based in Mecca oversaw the initial development of police departments, but establishing a centralized authority proved difficult. In 1931, the Saudi government attempted to establish an interior ministry, which it then abolished in 1934.<sup>2</sup> Local and regional governors (also called emirs) largely controlled the police in their towns and provinces.<sup>3</sup>

King Abdulaziz’s government formally re-established the Ministry of Interior in 1951.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, a number of leftist and nationalist movements gained currency among certain sectors of both the middle class and peripheral populations.<sup>5</sup> An attempted coup from a group of army officers in 1955,<sup>6</sup> combined with the government’s inability to effectively suppress oppositional groups, pushed King Faisal to reorganize and strengthen the MOI after assuming the monarchy. In 1964, the new king established (with the assistance of American experts), the General Security Service (GSS, also known as the *Mabahith*) and oversaw the establishment of a security forces college.<sup>7</sup> By 1966, the MOI was managing four major internal security forces: the Public Security Force (police and gendarmerie), the Coast Guard and Frontier Force (border control), the *Mabahith*, and the Civil Defense Force (comprised primarily of fire response units).<sup>8</sup>

An abrupt jump in revenue from oil, coupled with expanded government control over the petroleum industry in Saudi Arabia, led to a spike in government spending during the 1970s. From 1971 to 1974, the MOI’s budget increased by 98.6 percent; 1976 saw an increase of 177.1 percent over its 1974 budgetary allocation.<sup>9</sup> This led to an increase in the MOI’s administrative functions and the creation of new, highly-specialized security forces. Following the 1979 seizure of Mecca’s Grand Mosque by insurgents, the MOI organized the Special Security Force, an elite, heavily armored counter-insurgency force which currently numbers over 10,000 men.<sup>10</sup> While annual oil revenues tumbled during a 1980s recession, falling from \$109 billion in 1981 to \$17.1 billion in 1987, no significant reductions were made to MOI’s budget during the economic downturn.<sup>11</sup>

### B. Development under Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz al-Saud

In 1975, King Khalid appointed Prince Naif al-Saud as Minister of Interior. Prince Naif oversaw the ministry until his death in 2012, becoming one of the government’s most influential officials. He appointed close relatives and allies within the multi-branch Saudi ruling family to key positions in the ministry.<sup>12</sup> He reorganized and expanded the *Mabahith*.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the 1992 Law of Provinces strengthened Prince Naif’s role in supervising provincial governments.<sup>14</sup>

### *1. Violation of Human Rights*

Under Prince Naif's direction, the MOI amplified efforts to police and imprison opponents of the government. Some of these efforts were undertaken to curtail the violent activities of domestic militant groups.<sup>15</sup> Others, however, violated basic human rights. Expanded security forces allowed the MOI to police the country's Eastern Province more aggressively. MOI forces suppressed nonviolent protests and political movements in Qatif, Dammam and other cities and towns of the Eastern Province; many of these protests sought to air the grievances of the nation's marginalized Shia population.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, security forces under the MOI's jurisdiction arbitrarily arrested and tortured detainees on a regular basis.<sup>17</sup> Prince Naif, however, denied that such practices occurred.<sup>18</sup> In 2000, religious scholar and proponent of reform Dr. Muhsin al-Awaji presented a report to Prince Naif which detailed the widespread use of torture in Saudi prisons. The minister denied the torture claims and responded that "such things could only be done by nonbelievers."<sup>19</sup>

In 2007, the Saudi government decreed, and the MOI put into practice, the "Anti-Cyber Crime Law." The law criminalizes the production and spread of materials online which damage "public order, religious values, [and] public morals."<sup>20</sup> The law's provisions were used to curtail expression and punish political activity. In 2012, authorities began prosecuting blogger and free speech advocate Raif Badawi under the anti-cybercrime law.<sup>21</sup>

In 2008, the Saudi government established the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) to try-terrorism related cases.<sup>22</sup> In the final years of Prince Naif's tenure, however, the MOI brought the cases of nonviolent political activists and human rights defenders before the court, prosecuting them as they would a violent extremist. In 2012, the SCC sentenced civil society activist Mohammed al-Bajadi to four years in prison and a further five-year travel ban upon release.<sup>23</sup>

### *2. Response to Terrorist Attacks*

Both the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 and in Saudi Arabia in 2003 and 2004 prompted notable changes in the MOI's structure and function.<sup>24</sup> Coordination with U.S. intelligence agencies increased (see Section V below), and more intensive steps were taken to shut down charities and prosecute individuals providing material support to extremist groups.<sup>25</sup> Prince Naif's son, Mohammed, became Assistant Minister for Security Affairs in 1999. He assumed control over many of the MOI's enhanced counterterrorism measures. In 2008, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace identified him as bearing responsibility for the kingdom's "counterterrorism special forces units" and administering a prison-based rehabilitation program for radical militants.<sup>26</sup>

### **C. Development under Prince Mohammed bin Naif al-Saud**

In November 2012, the late King Abdullah appointed Mohammed bin Naif Interior Minister, following his father's death and the brief interregnum of his uncle, Ahmed bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. Mohammed bin Naif has been "recognized by his international counterparts for his dedication to fighting domestic terrorism and violent extremism."<sup>27</sup> This dedication, however, exists alongside significant efforts to restrict Saudi Arabia's civil society and imprison its human rights defenders. According to Adam Coogle of Human

Rights Watch, Mohammed bin Naif “is the principle architect of this massive onslaught against dissidents and human rights activists.”<sup>28</sup> His influence within the Saudi government has increased significantly in recent years. In January 2015, King Salman appointed him Deputy Crown Prince. On 29 April 2015, King Salman removed Crown Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz and appointed Mohammed bin Naif in his stead.<sup>29</sup> In the midst of this series of promotions, Mohammed bin Naif has retained his position as Interior Minister.

During Mohammed bin Naif’s tenure, the MOI has continued to use counter-terrorism mechanisms, including specialized criminal courts, the anti-cybercrime law, and a new anti-terrorism law, to arrest and imprison human rights defenders and other nonviolent political dissidents.

### *1. The Specialized Criminal Court*

The MOI under Mohammed bin Naif has frequently transferred the legal proceedings of prominent human rights defenders and political reformers to the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC). In April 2014, the SCC sentenced activist Fadhil al-Manasif to 15 years in prison, a 15-year travel ban, and a fine of 100,000 Riyals.<sup>30</sup>

### *2. The Use of “Anti-Terror” and “Anti-Cybercrime” Laws*

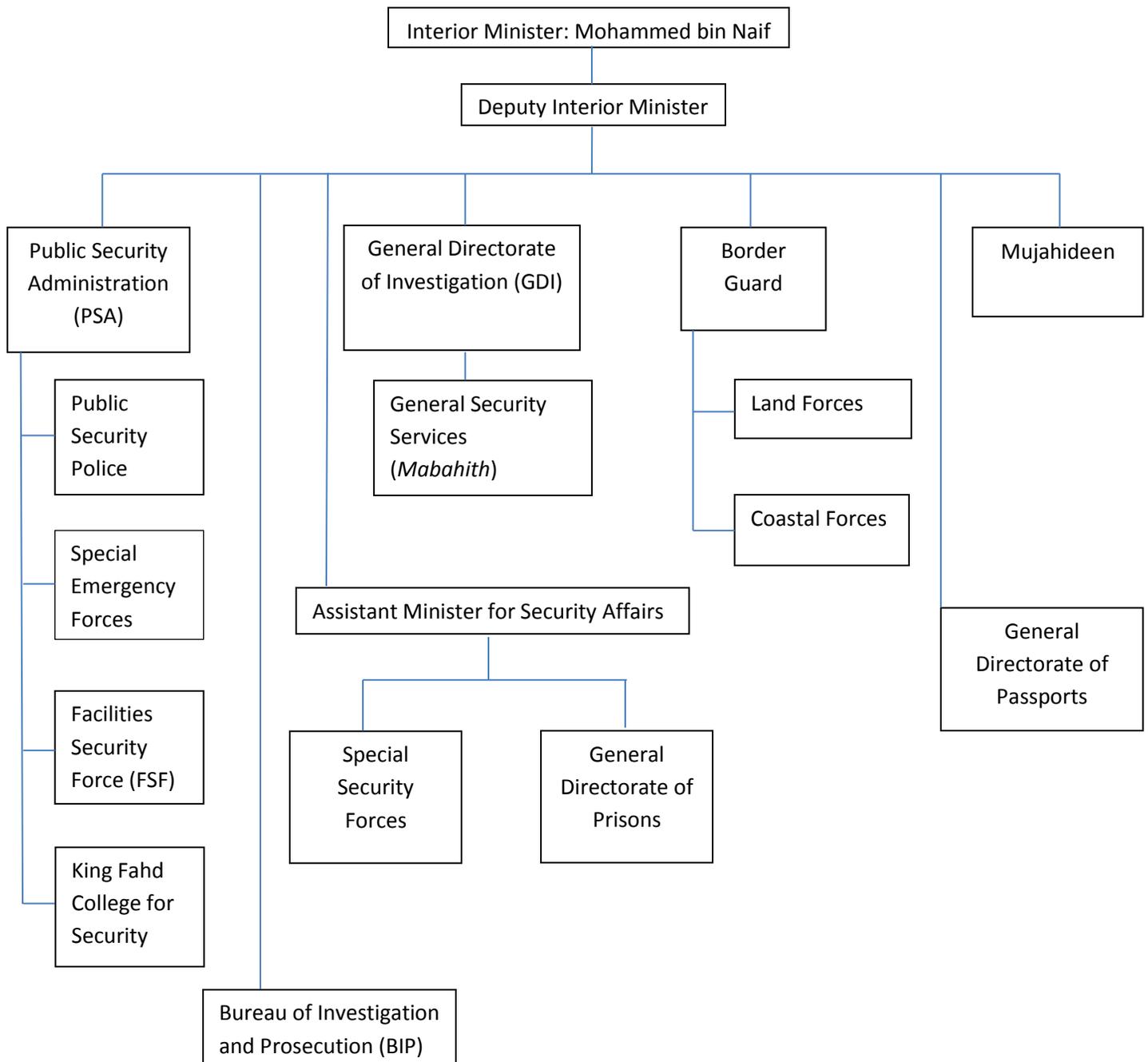
In 2014, King Abdullah decreed a new Penal Law for Crimes of Terrorism and Its Financing, whose provisions the MOI interprets and executes. The law further enmeshes legitimate counterterrorism efforts with the illegitimate silencing of nonviolent political dissidents,<sup>31</sup> criminalizing, among other things, speech or action which could risk “national unity” and harm “the reputation or status of the country.”<sup>32</sup> In July 2014, the SCC used the law to sentence human rights lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair to 15 years in prison, a further 15-year travel ban and a fine equivalent to U.S. \$53,000.<sup>33</sup>

The MOI also continues to invoke the provisions of the anti-cyber-crime law against activists. In October 2014, the SCC sentenced three attorneys to between five and eight years in prison for publishing tweets critical of the Ministry of Justice.<sup>34</sup>

As of April 2015, these laws were not under review, nor were the activities of the SCC being curtailed by MOI leadership. Following King Abdullah’s passing in January 2015, King Salman appointed Mohammed bin Naif as Deputy Crown Prince, third-in-line to the monarchy. In addition to his new duties, he retained his position as Interior Minister.

### III. Structure

The MOI's overall organization is both intricate and difficult to map.<sup>35</sup> Other than listing the titles of various divisions and subdivisions,<sup>36</sup> the MOI's website provides little information on how the ministry is structured, or how various agencies coordinate with each other. Data on the ministry's personnel is guarded closely. Specifics concerning the *Mabahith* are entirely classified. The chart below, along with its accompanying estimates, is based on material taken from multiple sources, Anthony Cordesman's *Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region* primary among them. It is not an exhaustive overview of all the ministry's functions, but rather an outline of those internal security forces most closely involved in maintaining day-to-day security.



#### **IV. Function**

Employees working for several of the agencies charted above have been repeatedly implicated in human rights violations. In this section, ADHRB further examines five of these organizations: the Public Security Administration (PSA), the General Security Services (GSS, or *Mabahith*), the Special Security Forces (SSF), the General Directorate of Prisons (GDP), and the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution (BIP). In some cases, personnel attached to these agencies commit violations by simply executing laws in need of reform. In others, they act outside the bounds of their legal mandate.

##### **A. The Public Security Administration -- “*Mudiriya al-Amn al-‘Amm*”**

The MOI officially describes the PSA as “the administrative machinery of government...charged with the preservation of public order and tranquility, the promotion of the public health, safety, and morals, and the prevention, detection, and punishment of crimes.”<sup>37</sup>

In 1976, King Khalid decreed the creation of the PSA as an agency within the MOI.<sup>38</sup> The PSA controls a force which, as of 2005, numbered some 135,000 personnel (recent budget increases suggest that these numbers have risen).<sup>39</sup> Structured as a paramilitary organization made up of the various provincial police units, these troops are divided into three main entities: the 95,000-strong standard police, the 30,000-strong Special Emergency Forces (SEF), and the 10,000-strong Facilities Security Force (FSF).<sup>40</sup> The standard police forces are further broken down into Public Security Police<sup>41</sup> and auxiliary forces such as traffic police and diplomatic security.<sup>42</sup> The SEF does not function as regular law enforcement. Rather, its personnel are the first responders for defensive counterterrorism operations. Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies writes that the SEF’s mobility has made it the primary force deployed “in case of an unexpected security threat.”<sup>43</sup> The FSF responds to threats against petroleum-related facilities and installations in Saudi Arabia.<sup>44</sup> In 2007, Reuters reported that the Saudi government was increasing this force to a total of 35,000 personnel.<sup>45</sup> The PSA ascribes military rank to its personnel.<sup>46</sup>

Authority over the PSA’s various police forces is unclear. In theory, governors have significant control over the day-to-day actions of the police forces in their provinces and governorates. The Director General for Public Security, however, ultimately superintends these forces.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, given the oversight which the MOI, and the Interior Minister in particular, exercises over provincial governance,<sup>48</sup> the actual decision-making power of these governors concerning the police is circumscribed.

##### **1. Women’s Rights**

Regular police frequently act to uphold codes which violate the civil and political rights of Saudi Arabia’s women. They are primarily responsible for enforcing the ban on women driving. Police who arrest women drivers typically detain them, force them to sign a pledge stating that they will not drive again, and release them to their male guardians.<sup>49</sup> Police frequently detain and interrogate women who participate in coordinated driving protests. Traffic police also levy fines against the owners of the vehicles.<sup>50</sup> Adherence to the guardianship system, which subordinates a woman’s movements and decision-making powers to a husband or father, has also caused police to mishandle cases of domestic

abuse. In May 2013, Jeddah police arrested Maryam Manalo after her husband filed a complaint of “absenteeism” against her for failing to return home for several months. Prior to her arrest, Manalo had fled her husband because he physically abused her.<sup>51</sup>

## *2. Religious Freedom*

The police also enforce laws which discriminate against minority religious groups, violating their freedoms of conscience and religion. Police frequently target immigrant practitioners of non-Muslim faiths. In December 2011, police arrested 35 Ethiopians participating in a Christian prayer service.<sup>52</sup> MOI officials deported the immigrants in 2012.<sup>53</sup> In July 2012, local police in the Eastern Province city of al-Khobar attempted to disrupt a Christian gathering in a private home. Following the attempt, provincial governor Saud bin Naif asked the group of mostly western observers to cease their private meetings.<sup>54</sup>

The violation of religious freedom also extends to Saudi Arabia’s Shia minority. In 2009, local police forces aided in the closure of nine Shia houses of worship in al-Khobar and al-Ahsa. Provincial governments allegedly utilized police to arrest several mosque owners and clerics and to threaten others with arrest. In an act of intimidation, police were posted outside mosques. Local governments eventually closed down the places of worship under the guise of “improper zoning and lack of appropriate permits.”<sup>55</sup>

## *3. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention*

Despite the 2001 Law of Criminal Procedure’s injunction against arbitrary arrest,<sup>56</sup> police frequently detain individuals without giving reason for the arrest or permitting them to access an attorney. On 11 May 2011, police arrested women’s rights activist Manal al-Sharif after she posted footage online of herself driving in the city of al-Khobar. Police released her within hours, but then re-arrested her the following morning.<sup>57</sup> They held her in custody until 31 May 2011, compelling her to sign a pledge stating that she would not continue her activism upon release.<sup>58</sup> Other detainees have experienced harsher treatment. On 15 February 2015, police in the Eastern Province named 21-year-old Ali Abdullah al-Utal as a criminal suspect after he and a group of friends had been spotted riding motorcycles near a protest. Although he voluntarily went to the police station to explain that he had no connections to the local protest movement, police arrested him without a warrant, prevented him from contacting an attorney, and transferred him to a *Mabahith* detention center in nearby Dammam.<sup>59</sup>

## *4. Excessive Force*

Police have used excessive force when arresting or engaging with suspects. In July 2012, police pursued the vehicle of Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, a Shia cleric and human rights defender working in the Eastern Province town of Awamiyah. Police opened fire on al-Nimr after cornering his vehicle; al-Nimr suffered four bullet wounds in his left leg.<sup>60</sup> The MOI alleged that al-Nimr exchanged fire with police, a claim disputed by his family and human rights groups.<sup>61</sup> In November 2013, police abetted vigilante attacks against Ethiopian immigrants in Riyadh’s Manfouha neighborhood. The police used metal truncheons to disperse a crowd of Ethiopians that had gathered in Manfouha after a group of Saudi men publicly attacked and killed several immigrants.<sup>62</sup>

### **B. The General Security Service – “*al-Mabahith al-‘Amma*”**

The General Security Service, frequently referred to as the *Mabahith*, is the Saudi domestic intelligence service. Most details regarding its structure and organization are classified, including the number of personnel that it employs. Anthony Cordesman, however, writes that it has the largest budget of any domestic intelligence service in the Middle East.<sup>63</sup> The *Mabahith* acts under the General Directorate of Investigation (GDI), which “is in charge of domestic intelligence gathering and analysis, counterintelligence operations, criminal investigations, and lately as a counterterrorism force.”<sup>64</sup> *Mabahith* forces are characterized by plainclothes special investigative and intelligence units.<sup>65</sup> Historically, they have answered directly to the Interior Minister.<sup>66</sup>

The *Mabahith* is the organization most consistently implicated in the perpetration of human rights violations, torture and forced disappearance prominent among them. The *Mabahith* oversees its own prisons and detention centers, exercising a considerable amount of autonomy within the MOI. **The forthcoming third chapter of *Mapping the Saudi State* will cover these violations in more detail.**

### **C. The Special Security Forces – “*Quwat al-Amn al-Khasah*”**

The SSF is a highly-trained, heavily-armed rapid-response force which has capabilities similar to SWAT units (special weapons assault teams) in the United States.<sup>67</sup> Its core personnel number approximately 10,000 men. A deployment-capable SSF unit is attached to every “major Saudi city and province.”<sup>68</sup> In addition, the MOI equips SSF detachments “with the latest light armored vehicles, automatic weapons, and nonlethal chemical weapons.”<sup>69</sup> As of 2009, the MOI’s Assistant Minister for Security Affairs controlled the operations of the SSF.<sup>70</sup>

Superficially, it seems as if the SSF and the Special Emergency Forces have overlapping mandates, especially considering that some SEF personnel also have SWAT capabilities.<sup>71</sup> One aspect which separates the two forces, however, is the circumstances of their deployment. The SSF is described as a specifically offensive counterterrorism and counterinsurgency force, whereas the SEF is rapidly deployed in defensive situations.<sup>72</sup> For example, the SSF played a major role in the years-long campaign to expel al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) from Saudi Arabia in the mid-2000s.<sup>73</sup> CNN Arabic also reported that SSF members served in an advisory capacity during the 2015 Saudi-led campaign in Yemen.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to combatting al-Qaeda, the MOI has utilized the Special Security Forces in assaults on dense urban areas, raids in which the basic human rights of both suspects and civilians are frequently violated. Though this information is often obscured, an ADHRB contact within the Saudi community has identified the SSF as the primary force directing armed incursions into the Eastern Province city of Qatif and its surrounding towns. These raids have occurred with increasing frequency since the events of the Arab Spring in 2011, heightening tensions within an area mostly populated by the nation’s Shia minority.<sup>75</sup> Repeatedly, allegations have emerged that security forces use live fire to quell protest movements in the area.<sup>76</sup>

SSF-led raids in this region have resulted in both extrajudicial killings and the use of excessive force. On December 20, 2014, between 100 and 150 SSF personnel staged a raid in Awamiyah that lasted from 6 A.M. through the middle of the afternoon. Following the operation, the MOI stated that it had ordered the raid in order to capture a single suspect. Security forces killed five Awamiyah residents. Two died after being taken into custody. Another, 17-year-old Thamer Hassan al-Rabi, was shot in the throat while driving his car.<sup>77</sup>

During the same raid, security forces also fired their weapons indiscriminately, resulting in significant damage to personal property. Local residents informed the European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights (ESOHR) that the use of live ammunition] damaged 50 residences and 76 cars, defaced 21 local stores, broke 16 windows, and punctured water tanks.<sup>78</sup>

As of this writing, the most recent raid occurred on April 5, 2015, when one officer and three locals were killed in the town of Awamiyah, north of Qatif. Residents reported that “40 armored vehicles” entered the city in the afternoon, carrying security forces which raided 15 homes. Security forces staged the raid in response to local calls for protest.<sup>79</sup>

#### **D. General Directorate of Prisons – “*al-Mudiriya al-‘Ammah lil-Sijoon*”**

The GDP oversees Saudi detention and rehabilitation centers that do not fall under *Mabahith* oversight. Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz al-Saud established the GDP as a separate branch within the MOI in November 2000.<sup>80</sup> As of 2005, Saudi prisons employed approximately 15,000 personnel.<sup>81</sup> The current director general of the GDP is Major General Ali bin Hussein al-Harthi.<sup>82</sup> Within the ministry, he answers to the Assistant Minister for Security Affairs.<sup>83</sup> According to the GDP’s website, the Saudi government guarantees health, social, and psychological care to inmates.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, the GDP offers a number of rehabilitative programs for prisoners, including educational courses and vocational training.<sup>85</sup>

##### *1. Statistical Background*

Apart from aggregate totals, the GDP releases little detailed information about the structure of prison facilities or the number and distribution of their inmates. The International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS), however, has published a brief statistical overview of the Saudi prison system on its website.<sup>86</sup> As of 2013, the total Saudi prison population rate was approximately 47,000 persons, or roughly 161 per every 100,000 of the national population. In 2013, the GDP announced that foreign nationals constituted 72 percent of the prison population.<sup>87</sup> The ICPS also reported that, as of 2009, this population was spread among 104 prisons and 12 reformatories. The ICPS noted a marked increase in the prison population during the 2000s. Whereas the prison population totaled approximately 23,720 in 2000, by 2009 this number had climbed to 44,600.<sup>88</sup> This increase tracks with the up-scaled counterterrorism efforts in which the Saudi government engaged after 2001.

##### *2. Overcrowding*

Overcrowding remains a problem in Saudi prisons.<sup>89</sup> In 2009, Syed Neaz Ahmad submitted two reports to *The Guardian* on his treatment in a series of Saudi detention centers during deportation proceedings. In Mecca, Ahmad “was thrown into a prison room barely large enough to accommodate 100 but some

500 persons had been locked in there.”<sup>90</sup> After being transferred to a Jeddah detention center, he joined 1,500 other people “in warehouse-like halls with no air conditioning, no fans and temperatures rising to 50C.”<sup>91</sup> Boys, one as young as nine years old, were imprisoned alongside adults.<sup>92</sup> In May 2013, GDP Director General Maj. Gen. Ali al-Harhi reported that central jails in Riyadh, Mecca and Jeddah had exceeded their capacity three times over.<sup>93</sup>

### *3. Use of Torture*

Reports of torture repeatedly emerge from prisons under the GDP’s jurisdiction. On July 27, 2011, officials at Dammam General Prison allegedly removed human rights activist Mekhleef al-Shammary from his cell and took him to a room with no video surveillance. They beat him and “poured anti-septic cleaning liquid down his throat,” leading to his hospitalization.<sup>94</sup> In October 2010, Qatari officials extradited Yemeni national Iwad al-Hayki to Saudi Arabia. Saudi authorities placed al-Hayki in al-Qassim prison. There, prison officials subjected him to torture. They beat him, placed him in cells with very low temperatures, and denied him needed medical attention.<sup>95</sup>

### **E. Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution – “Hay’at al-Tahqiq wa al-Id’aa al-‘Amm”**

The BIP is the public prosecution office attached to the MOI. Established by royal decree in 1989, the BIP is headquartered in Riyadh and is “composed of a chairman, one or more vice-chairmen, a sufficient number of heads of circuits and their deputies, and investigators and their assistants”.<sup>96</sup> The BIP has jurisdiction over “the general investigating of crimes, prosecuting before judicial bodies, appealing of judgments, supervising the execution of criminal sentences, monitoring and inspecting of detention centers, and any other powers conferred upon it by the law”.<sup>97</sup> MOI employees working for various agencies fall under the BIP’s jurisdiction when investigating a crime or interrogating and detaining a suspect.

Because of its subordination to the Ministry of the Interior, rather than the Ministry of Justice, the BIP makes the public prosecution an intrinsic part of the criminal investigation process. The structural interdependence of the BIP and the Public Security Administration is further facilitated by the few legal restrictions placed on the operations of either institution.

#### *1. Unreasonable Pre-Trial Detention Periods*

Prosecutors and other MOI officials are well within the parameters of the Law of Criminal Procedure to keep prisoners detained for up to six months without trial if they believe it will serve the investigation.<sup>98</sup> For 60 days of these six months, the suspect can be held incommunicado. As the BIP is independent of the Ministry of Justice, judges are mostly unable intervene in detention procedure. The Penal Law for Crimes of Terrorism and Its Financing in 2014 has clarified that judges overseeing terrorism-related cases can only extend detention, not limit it; by approving requests from the BIP to renew these six-month pre-trial periods, judges grant the prosecution the ability to detain suspects indefinitely.<sup>99</sup>

By following the law, BIP investigators and prosecutors are violating the right of the accused to a trial within a reasonable time period. Frequently, however, they exceed these expansive bounds. On 17 April 2014, BIP officials ordered the arrest of Abdulrahman al-Hamid, a founding member of the Saudi Civil

and Political Rights Association (ACPRA). They held him incommunicado for approximately one month, and as of April 2015 he remained in detention without charge at Buraydah prison in al-Qassim.<sup>100</sup>

### *2. Lack of Access to Legal Counsel*

Investigators working under the jurisdiction of the BIP also frequently violate the accused's right to access legal counsel, a right stipulated in Articles 4, 64, 119 and 140 of the Saudi Law of Criminal Procedure.<sup>101</sup> In May 2014, the Saudi National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) reported that police and prison officials frequently prevented detainees from contacting or meeting with attorneys.<sup>102</sup>

### *3. Use of Coerced Confessions*

Public prosecutors working under the BIP regularly submit charges against the accused which are based on confessions obtained under torture or other forms of coercion. In September 2014, the SCC tried seven men from the Eastern Province after prosecutors brought them to court based on information obtained from interrogations. Six of the defendants retracted their confessions before the court, stating that "they were coerced in conditions that in some cases amounted to torture, including beatings and prolonged solitary confinement." The court did not recognize the defendants' allegations. The judge sentenced two of the men to death, the other five to lengthy prison terms.<sup>103</sup>

## **V. United States Support**

The U.S. government maintains strong ties with a number of the ministry's agencies. After major extremist attacks struck both countries in the early and mid-2000s, the imperatives of the joint-counterterrorism effort strengthened that relationship.<sup>104</sup> U.S. coordination with the MOI has markedly increased over the last decade.

### *1. Relationship Between MOI and U.S. Department of State*

In 2008, then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and then-Interior Minister Naif al-Saud signed a technical cooperation agreement.<sup>105</sup> The agreement allowed both parties to establish "a U.S.-interagency critical infrastructure protection advisory mission" in Saudi Arabia. Two major components of this new mission are the Office of the Program Manager-Ministry of Interior (OPM-MOI), and the Training and Advisory Group for the MOI's FSF (FSF-TAG).<sup>106</sup> The OPM-MOI supplies U.S. personnel to assist "key industrial, energy, maritime, and cyber security offices" in an advisory capacity.<sup>107</sup> The FSF-TAG provides training to the 35,000-strong MOI force charged with protecting the kingdom's extensive oil infrastructure,<sup>108</sup> a mission which became particularly pressing to U.S. officials after radical militants staged an attack on the Abqaiq oil facility in February 2006.<sup>109</sup>

The Saudi government directly pays for the training and equipment made available by the technical agreement. The sales are expedited through the establishment of a special dollar disbursement account within the U.S. Treasury, an arrangement which allows the U.S. to immediately access Saudi funds upon the completion of deals struck under the agreement.<sup>110</sup> The agreement, renewed by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and current Interior Minister Mohammed bin Naif in 2013, is regularly utilized to bolster U.S.-MOI ties. In April 2014, the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced that Saudi Arabia had requested, and the Department of State had approved, a sale of \$80 million in

“advisory support salaries, housing, office equipment, maintenance, vehicles,” and other items for the continuation of the FSF-TAG program.<sup>111</sup>

## *2. Relationship Between MOI and U.S. Counterintelligence Agencies*

In December 2012, the NSA expanded its signals intelligence (SIGINT) partnership with Saudi Arabia to the MOI.<sup>112</sup> Prior to this official expansion, the NSA had shared SIGINT with the Saudi Ministry of Defense (MOD), only collaborating with the MOI as a third party “under the auspices of the CIA’s relationship with the MOI’s *Mabahith*.”<sup>113</sup>

## *3. Role of Mohammed bin Naif*

Since assuming control of the MOI in 2012, Mohammed bin Naif has become a regular<sup>114</sup> visitor<sup>115</sup> to the United States, consistently meeting with President Obama and top officials at the U.S. Departments of State, Defense and Homeland Security. His importance to U.S.-Saudi relations has only expanded since his appointment to the position of Deputy Crown Prince. F. Gregory Gause, a prominent scholar of the Middle East and regular commentator on U.S.-Saudi relations, has described Mohammed bin Naif as “America’s favorite Saudi official...[h]e has been a particularly constructive partner.”<sup>116</sup>

## **VI. Conclusion**

The Ministry of Interior oversees numerous agencies charged with upholding Saudi Arabia’s internal security. Personnel within these various agencies, however, have consistently violated the basic human rights and freedoms of both Saudi citizens and immigrant populations in the country. For the Saudi Ministry of Interior to bring its operations in line with human rights norms, the government will have to initiate a significant series of systemic reforms while maintaining the ministry’s important role in countering violent extremism.

*Mapping the Saudi State’s* review of the MOI’s practices will continue into the next month. Chapter 3 will focus on the human rights violations committed by the *Mabahith* and by the Specialized Criminal Court under the influence of the MOI. When taken together, these two bodies form a system of justice separate from the one overseen by the Ministry of Justice. They have also been most closely involved in arresting and imprisoning human rights defenders and nonviolent political dissidents in Saudi Arabia. ADHRB will end the following chapter with a detailed set of reforms that both Saudi Arabia and the United States can pursue to ensure that the MOI protects human rights.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> "Survey Report of the Public Security Force of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." Agency for International Development, Office of Public Safety. August 1966. Pg. 16.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., 17.
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