



ICRD Monthly Update
September 30, 2014

Saudi Educational Reform: A Turn for the Better

On September 11, ICRD briefed a contingent of Saudi educational experts in Riyadh on the findings of its 2012 State Department-sponsored study on “Educational Reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.” The study itself was **the most comprehensive examination that has been conducted to date of the discriminatory content to be found in Saudi textbooks and its associated global impact.** More specifically, it was a balanced attempt to recognize the impact of the reforms they have been making and to determine what yet remains to be done.



Although copies of the study were made available to the Saudis more than a year earlier through diplomatic channels, this was the first opportunity to discuss the findings in detail. The meeting went exceedingly well, and the timing was particularly fortuitous in light of **the Kingdom’s recently announced, far-reaching strategic plan for upgrading its educational system** and the \$22 billion that

has been allocated to implement it. In all probability, these changes reflect a new-found awareness of the growing need to relate with other countries on a collegial basis in today’s globalized marketplace (especially as the influence of its oil wealth diminishes over time).

The Saudis were keenly aware that textbook reform has to be coupled with improved teacher training and practices (as stressed in their strategic plan), and they noted, as our study confirmed, that each new edition of the textbooks is placing an increasingly greater emphasis on tolerance. In short, they were both forthcoming and sincere, which we found particularly encouraging since they are at the cutting edge of the positive change that is taking place in the Kingdom (and which **will have a profound influence in the broader Muslim world**).

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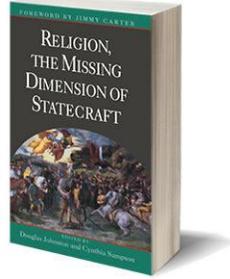
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Save the Date

On October 15th, Georgetown University will be celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* from 5:15 to 6:45pm in the third floor conference room of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (3307 M St NW, Washington, DC 20007). The event will celebrate the book's foresight, impact and continued legacy in the context of world events where religious identity and questions of stability are increasingly intertwined. In important respects, this is not only a tribute to the far-sighted efforts of the contributing scholars and practitioners, but to the difference ICRD is now making in various parts of the world. **Please attend if your schedule permits** (click [here](#) to RSVP). We hope to see you there.



With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Douglas Johnston'.

Douglas Johnston
President, ICRD

*image of clocktower from http://www.kapl-hajj.org/clock_.php

International Center for Religion & Diplomacy
1003 K Street, NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 331-9404

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