

# TRAVEL ADVISORY UPDATE: SAUDI ARABIA TRAVEL ADVISORY LEVEL 3

By U.S. MISSION SAUDI ARABIA

23 MINUTE READ



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There were no changes to the advisory level or risk indicators. Advisory summary was updated to reflect changes to U.S. Mission operations.

## TRAVEL ADVISORY – Saudi Arabia

Level 3: Reconsider Travel

T – Terrorism

O – Other

Reconsider travel to Saudi Arabia due to risk of Iranian drone and missile targeting of American interests, armed conflict, terrorism, and bans, and social laws regarding social media activity. Some areas have increased risk. Read the entire Travel Advisory.

### Do Not Travel to the Yemen border due to threat of Terrorism.

#### Advisory summary

On March 8, 2024, the Department of State ordered non-emergency U.S. government employees and U.S. government employee family members to leave Saudi Arabia due to safety risks.

This amends the prior on March 5, 2024, Department of State authorization for non-emergency U.S. government employees and U.S. government employee family members to leave Saudi Arabia due to safety risks.

U.S. citizens should complete the Crisis Intake Form to let the U.S. Embassy or consulate know they are requesting assistance. Do not submit this form more than once. The form is available at the following link: <https://mytravel.state.gov/crisis-intake>

#### Armed conflict

Following the onset of hostilities between the United States and Iran on February 28, there has been an ongoing threat of drone and missile attacks from Iran and significant disruptions to commercial flights.

The U.S. government has limited ability to offer emergency services to U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia due to the safety risks.

#### U.S. government employee travel restrictions near Yemen

- U.S. government employees working in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to travel within 20 miles of the Yemen border due to safety risks.
- U.S. government employees are not allowed to travel to Gulf for non-official travel due to safety risks.
- The U.S. government has limited ability to offer emergency services to U.S. citizens in the Yemen border region due to the safety risks.
- U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia are advised to take the same precautions.

#### Terrorism

There is risk of terrorist violence, including terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia. Visit the U.S. Department of State's [counterterrorism information](#) to learn more.

Terrorism is a concern in Saudi Arabia. Attacks can occur with little or no warning, especially around holidays. They can involve knives, firearms, and vehicles.

#### Potential targets include:

- Important political, cultural, or religious locations
- Places visited by U.S. citizens and other foreigners
- Tourist locations and large gatherings
- Transportation hubs
- Markets and shopping malls
- Entertainment venues
- Government facilities

Terrorists may use violence to respond to direct attacks against them or other military operations in the region.

#### Missile and drone attacks from Yemen and Iran

Iran and the Houthis in Yemen have launched missile and drone attacks into Saudi Arabia. Attacks have targeted cities, infrastructure, airports, military bases, diplomatic, and energy facilities throughout the country. The Houthis have previously conducted missile and drone attacks in Saudi Arabia.

Recent Houthi attacks have targeted vessels in the Red Sea. The Houthis have threatened to attack Saudi Arabia again.

Falling debris from intercepted drones and missiles also pose a risk. U.S. citizens living and working near energy infrastructure and military bases may be at increased risk, especially closer to the Yemen border.

#### Exercise increased caution due to exit bans

U.S. citizens have been prevented from leaving Saudi Arabia. Exit bans may be related to pending criminal and civil investigations and cases, including, but not limited to unpaid visa overstay fees, domestic family disputes, and other financial and labor disagreements.

- Exit bans prevent individuals from leaving the country. These can last for many years.
- In some cases, exit bans can continue even after a criminal sentence has been served or a private suit is settled.

#### Exercise increased caution due to local laws

- Saudi authorities may detain you if they consider your social media posts or other online activity to be critical, offensive, or disruptive to the public order.
- U.S. citizens have been arrested for past social media activity, including comments posted while outside of Saudi Arabia. This may include posting, reposting, or liking comments critical of the Saudi government or its leaders and policies. This also may apply to comments about public life or religion in Saudi Arabia.
- Local laws against cybercrime and terrorism may be used to prosecute cases related to social media use.
- Punishment for social media activity has included prison sentences of up to 15 years. Local authorities may not take into account when, where, or in what context posts are made.
- You are subject to local laws when traveling in Saudi Arabia. If you break laws in Saudi Arabia – even by mistake – you could be deported, fined, imprisoned, or subject to an exit ban. Some U.S. citizens have been detained for several months or even years without charges.

#### Aviation Safety

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) of a Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR). This is due to risks to civil aviation operating within or nearby the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman region, including Saudi Arabia. Consult the [Federal Aviation Administration](#) for the most up to date information on current FAA warnings.

#### Risks in specific areas

##### Level: 4 – Do not travel

##### The Yemen border region

Do Not Travel to the Yemen border due to threat of Terrorism.

Armed groups in Yemen have attacked Saudi border towns and other sites in Saudi Arabia with armed drones, missiles, and rockets. People near the border with Yemen are at increased risk.

- U.S. government employees working in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to travel within 20 miles of the Yemen border due to safety risks.
- Terrorist groups continue to plan possible attacks in Saudi Arabia, including Gulf.
- U.S. government employees working in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to travel to Gulf for non-essential travel due to safety risks. U.S. government employees working in Saudi Arabia need special authorization to travel to Gulf due to safety risks.
- The U.S. government has limited ability to offer emergency services to U.S. citizens in these areas due to safety risks.
- U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia are advised to take the same precautions.

##### For U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia:

- Enroll in the [State Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to get important updates and alerts from the U.S. embassy or consulate. Enrolling helps the U.S. embassy or consulate contact you or your emergency contact in an emergency.



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- Review our information on [Terrorism](#) and travel to [High Risk Areas](#).
- Have a plan to leave in an emergency that does not depend on U.S. government help. Review our information on [Crisis Response and Evacuations](#).
- Keep travel documents up to date and easy to access.
- Stay aware of your surroundings.
- Stay alert in large crowds or tourist spots.
- Avoid public displays of affection, particularly between same-sex couples.
- Visit Saudi Arabia's website for information about [public security regulations](#).
- Do not carry, produce, use, or distribute illegal drugs in Saudi Arabia.
- Review local laws and conditions before traveling, including our [Saudi Arabia country information on airports](#).
- Review our information for [Gay and Lesbian](#) travelers.
- Before you travel, delete any sensitive photos, comments, or post content that might be seen as controversial or inappropriate in Saudi Arabia. Do not post what, or like such content while in Saudi Arabia. Do this for your social media accounts, cameras, laptops, phones, and other accounts and devices.
- Visit our page regarding [Arrest or Detention Abroad](#) for more information on what happens when you or a loved one are arrested abroad.
- Review the [Counter Security Report](#) for Saudi Arabia.
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) page for the latest [travel health information](#) for Saudi Arabia.
- We highly recommend that you buy travel insurance before you travel. Check with your [travel insurance provider](#) about evacuation assistance, medical insurance, and trip cancellation coverage.
- Whether you're a first-time or frequent traveler, use the [International Travel Checklist](#).