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27 January 2003

SAU40789.E

Saudi Arabia: Status of a Palestinian who returns to Saudi Arabia after studying abroad for one year; requirements for return; situation of Palestinians in Saudi Arabia
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Current detailed information (2001-2002) on the situation of Palestinians in Saudi Arabia and of foreigners returning to Saudi Arabia after a period of time abroad, beyond that provided in Section 2.d of Country Reports 2001, SAU34199.E of 2 May 2000 and SAU12441 of 10 December 1992, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The non-governmental United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) refers only briefly to Palestinians in the context of refugees and asylum seekers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, indicating that at the end of 2001 "[t]hese included 123,000 Palestinians, most of whom had legal status, but were not formally recognized as refugees by the Saudi government" (USCR 2002). The USCR report also discusses the situation of Iraqi refugees and other foreign nationals in Saudi Arabia, adding that:

In practice, many foreigners who might have well-founded fears of persecution if returned to their home countries stay in Saudi Arabia as part of its large expatriate workforce, rather than as recognized refugees. Foreign workers must have Saudi sponsors. Employers, who routinely keep foreign employees' passports, control their movement within Saudi Arabia, as well as their ability to leave the country.

Estimates on the number of Palestinians residing in Saudi Arabia range from 123,000 to 290,000. In general, Palestinians residing outside the mandate area of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza) are considered *prima facie* refugees (*ibid.*).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Reference

United States Committee for Refugees (USCR), Washington, DC. 2002. *World Refugee Survey 2002*. "Country Report: Saudi Arabia." <http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/mideast/2002/saudi_arabia.cfm> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

Human Rights Watch World Report 2003. 2003

Indian Ocean Newsletter [London]. 2001-2002

IRB Databases

Jane's Intelligence Review. 2001-2002

NEXIS

World News Connection (WNC)

Internet sites and search engines, including:

Amnesty International

Human Rights Watch

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United States Committee for Refugees (USCR)

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