

Prince Philip and the Gulf: The story of an enduring friendship

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LONDON: The death on Friday of Britain's Prince Philip, the "strength and stay" of Queen Elizabeth II throughout the long years of her reign, is being mourned throughout the world, and nowhere more so than in the Gulf states, with which the royal couple had such an enduring and warm relationship.

The leaders of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman sent messages of condolence to the queen.

#BREAKING: [#SaudiArabia](#)'s King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman send their condolences to the [#UK](#)'s Queen Elizabeth II and Charles, Prince of Wales on the passing of [#PrincePhilip](#) <https://t.co/J9Dda51Zwl> [pic.twitter.com/ffSoUC8kbl](https://t.co/J9Dda51Zwl)

– Arab News (@arabnews) [April 9, 2021](#)

From the UAE, cables were sent by President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

In his condolence message to the queen, the British government and the people, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa lauded Philip's efforts to serve the UK and its friendly people. An Oman News Agency statement said "Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a cable of condolences to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern

Ireland and the President of the Commonwealth.”

Born on June 10, 1921, the Duke of Edinburgh’s death – he had recently spent a month in hospital – came just two months short of his 100th birthday. His was a remarkable century.

SIGNIFICANT DATES

- * **June 10, 1921** – Born on Greek island of Corfu.
- * **Dec 5, 1922** – Family flees to Paris when King Constantine I is overthrown.
- * **1939** – Joins the Royal Navy.
- * **1947** – Renounces Greek, Danish royal titles, becomes naturalized Briton.
- * **1947** – Marries Princess Elizabeth at Westminster Abbey, becomes Duke of Edinburgh.
- * **1952** – Wife Elizabeth becomes queen.
- * **1956** – Founds Duke of Edinburgh Award, a youth self-improvement scheme.
- * **1961** – Becomes first president of the World Wildlife Fund UK.
- * **2017** – Steps back from royal duties, age 96.
- * **April 9, 2021** – Dies at Windsor Castle, age 99.

Born in Corfu as Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark, in 1939 he joined the British Royal Navy and served with distinction during the Second World War, seeing action in the North Sea, Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, where he took part in the Battle of Crete.

He was mentioned in despatches for his service during the Battle of Cape Matapan, which also earned him the Greek War Cross, and on board the HMS Wallace he took part in the Allied invasion of Sicily.

On board the destroyer HMS Whelp with the British Pacific Fleet, he was present in Tokyo Bay to witness the formal surrender of the Japanese on Sept. 2, 1945, and the end of the Second World War.

As Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark, he had first met Princess Elizabeth, Britain’s future Queen, in 1934. At the outbreak of war, Philip, then 18, and the 13-year-old Princess began writing to each other. As he sailed the world with the Royal Navy, and she served with the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the women’s branch of the British Army, and braved the bombs of the Blitz, their letters raised each other’s spirits and they became firm friends.

INNUMBERS

- * 143 – Countries visited by Prince Philip in official capacity.
- * 22,191 – Solo engagements as longest-serving consort in UK history.

In July 1947, two years after the cessation of hostilities, they became engaged.

Before the engagement was announced, the prince renounced his Greek and Danish titles, adopted his maternal grandparents' name, Mountbatten, and became a naturalized British subject.

With his dashing good looks and outstanding military record, the queen's fiancé immediately won the hearts of the British public.

On the eve of the wedding – a glittering ceremony at Westminster Abbey in London on Nov. 20, 1947 that raised the spirits not only of the British, but also a war-weary British Empire – Philip was appointed Duke of Edinburgh by the princess's father, King George VI, and granted the title His Royal Highness.



King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, (front center) accompanied by Britain's Prince Philip, (Front R) reviews a Guard of Honor in Horse Guards, before a state carriage procession along the Mall, in London, 30 October 2007. (AFP/File Photo)

On Feb. 6, 1952, a few days after the prince and the princess had set out on their first tour of the Commonwealth, the couple received the news that

Elizabeth's father, the king, had died.

They flew straight home and from that moment on the man who had served Britain so valiantly throughout the Second World War had a new, vitally important role to play.

For the next 69 years, the great, great-grandchild of Queen Victoria would never be far from Queen Elizabeth's side, supporting her in everything she did, from entertaining visiting heads of state to making state visits around the world.



The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh stand next to the then-Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, after he arrived at Balmoral Castle for lunch during a visit to the UK. (AFP/File Photo)

A terrific conversationalist, with a quick wit, dry sense of humor and mischievous disregard for stuffy protocol, it was often Philip who put a human face on the potentially intimidating countenance of monarchy, lightening the mood and putting at ease all those daunted by the prospect of meeting the Queen.

Throughout those years both Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip attached a special importance to maintaining Britain's special relationship with the monarchies of the Gulf.

State visits by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip to Arab countries

- * **Kuwait:** Feb. 12-14, 1979.
- * **Bahrain:** Feb. 14-17, 1979.
- * **Saudi Arabia:** Feb 17-20, 1979.
- * **Qatar:** Feb. 21-24, 1979.
- * **UAE:** Feb. 24-27, 1979.
- * **Oman:** Feb. 28-March 2, 1979.
- * **Tunisia:** Oct. 21-23, 1980.
- * **Algeria:** Oct. 25-27, 1980.
- * **Morocco:** Oct. 27-30, 1980.
- * **Jordan:** March 26-30, 1984.
- * **UAE:** Nov. 24-25, 2010.
- * **Oman:** Nov. 25-28, 2010.

In one early solo visit to the region, in February 1965 Prince Philip flew to Riyadh as the guest of Saudi Arabia's King Faisal. Two years later, King Faisal renewed his acquaintance with the prince when he made a state visit to London.

For over 150 years Britain had had the closest ties, sealed by treaties signed in the 19th century, with what it termed the Trucial States, but on Dec. 1, 1971, those treaties were revoked.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (L) and her husband Prince Philip (R) stand next to the President of the UAE Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahayan during a Ceremonial Welcome in the town of Windsor on April 30, 2013. (AFP/File Photo)

Led by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, the Trucial States became the United Arab Emirates. However, the bonds between Britain and the Gulf states, and between the monarchies of Britain and the crowns of all the Gulf states, remained strong, thanks in no small part to the efforts of the royal couple.

Key Britain-Saudi royal visit dates

- * **May, 9-17, 1967:** King Faisal makes UK state visit.
- * **Feb. 17-20, 1979:** Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip visit Saudi Arabia.
- * **June, 9-12, 1981:** King Khalid makes UK state visit.
- * **March 24-27, 1987:** Saudi Arabia's King Fahd makes UK state visit.
- * **Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2007:** King Abdullah makes UK state visit.

In 1979 Prince Philip was by the queen's side when she visited the UAE, entertaining Sheikh Zayed on board the Royal Yacht Britannia, which had sailed to the Gulf for the occasion.

Thirty-one years later, there was a poignancy to the occasion when Queen

Elizabeth and Prince Philip returned to Abu Dhabi in 2010, to visit Sheikh Zayed's tomb and Grand Mosque in the company of his son, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahayan.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip (L) stand with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahayan upon their arrival to visit the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in the Emirati capital on November 24, 2010. (AFP/File Photo)

Some of the photographs in the album of Prince Philip's many meetings with the states and leaders of the Middle East are overshadowed by the events that followed.

A black-and-white photograph taken on Sept. 26, 1952, for example, shows Philip, holding the hand of his daughter, Princess Ann, walking in the grounds of Balmoral Castle in Scotland with the Queen and their guests, the young King Faisal II and Prince Abdullah, the regent of Iraq. Both men, along with members of their family and staff, were brutally murdered in July 1958 when Faisal was overthrown in a bloody coup.

In March 1961, the royal couple flew to Iran for a state visit to a country that 18 years later would undergo a shocking transformation. Photographs of the visit show Prince Philip and Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi grinning broadly alongside the queen and Farah Pahlavi at a state occasion. In 1979 the Iranian monarchy would be swept aside by an Islamic revolution that would send shockwaves around the region.

State visits by Middle East and North African leaders to the UK

- * **July 16-19, 1956:** Iraq's King Faisal II.
- * **May 5-8, 1959:** Iran's Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.
- * **July 19-28, 1966:** Jordan's King Hussein I and Princess Muna.
- * **May, 9-17, 1967:** Saudi Arabia's King Faisal.
- * **June, 9-12, 1981:** Saudi Arabia's King Khalid.
- * **March, 16-19, 1982:** Oman's Sultan Qaboos.
- * **April, 10-13, 1984:** Bahrain's Emir Sheikh Isa.
- * **Nov. 12-15, 1985:** Qatar's Emir Sheikh Khalifa.
- * **March 24-27, 1987:** Saudi Arabia's King Fahd.
- * **July 14-17, 1987:** Morocco's King Hassan II.
- * **July 18-21, 1989:** UAE's President Sheikh Zayed.
- * **July 23-26, 1991:** Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak and First Lady Suzanne Mubarak.
- * **May 23-26, 1995:** Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Jaber.
- * **Nov. 6-9, 2001:** Jordan's King Abdullah II and Queen Rania.
- * **Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2007:** Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah.
- * **Oct. 25-28, 2010:** Qatar's Emir Sheikh Hamad.
- * **Nov. 27-29, 2012:** Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah.
- * **April 30-May 1, 2013:** UAE's President Sheikh Khalifa.

But in the main, the photographic record of Prince Philip's long relationship with the region evokes only happy memories – such as of the honeymoon visit to Britain in 1955 of King Hussein of Jordan and his wife Queen Dina, the four-day state visit to Britain in 2001 of King Abdullah and Queen Rania of Jordan, and the state visit of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in 2007.

The happy, laughing faces in so many of the photographs taken of Prince Philip over the years, whether on state visits or during walkabouts, also captured something of the essence of the man and the part he played in maintaining the bonds between royal families, and helping to make the monarchy accessible.

Queen Elizabeth, in a speech to mark the couple's golden wedding anniversary in 1997, put it this way: "He has, quite simply, been my strength and stay

all these years, and I, and his whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim or we shall ever know."

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Saudi Arabia, Arab nations join world in mourning death of Britain's Prince Philip
Britain's Prince Phillip dead at 99

[German firms unveil lavish post-blast Beirut port plan](#)

Author:

AFP

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Fri, 2021-04-09 19:57

BEIRUT – A German delegation on Friday unveiled a spectacular multi-billion-dollar project to rebuild Beirut port and its surroundings but admitted it was contingent on far-reaching government reforms.

Swathes of the port and adjacent neighborhoods were destroyed when fire ignited poorly stored ammonium nitrate on August 4, causing one of the world's largest ever non-nuclear explosions and killing more than 200 people. The ambitious German project was met with skepticism by some observers who argued Lebanon's leaders were showing no sign of providing the most basic conditions for foreign investment.

The plan put forward by two German firms envisions moving most port activity away from the city center and re-urbanizing the most damaged areas.

Speaking at a press conference in Beirut, Colliers Germany managing director Hermann Schnell listed "affordable housing for families, green space and good infrastructure" among other features.

The project envisions beaches and a "central park" alongside restored architectural heritage, all wrapped in a plan that would generate 50,000 jobs and billions in profit.

The German pitch saw an "opportunity for a new city," mapped out in a presentation that featured what it said were successful examples of redeveloped ports in cities like Cape Town, Bilbao and Vienna.

Lars Greiner of Hamburg Port Consulting (HPC) said the concept would "develop the port precinct of Beirut into a world class, state-of-the-art port" that would be more automated, cost-efficient and ready for regional trade growth. The private initiative is the first large-scale, comprehensive plan after last year's blast and has the support of Germany, whose ambassador attended

the press conference.

Other international players are also working on alternative or complementary proposals.

French shipping giant CMA CGM, which leads container operations in Lebanon, submitted its own master plan in September.

"Such a huge project... can only be built if there is accountability and transparency," German ambassador Andreas Kindl said at the news conference. The project envisions the creation of a trust overseen by independent international appointees to manage funding from the European Investment Bank and other investors.

"I don't see these proposals... becoming reality anytime soon," economist and anti-government activist Jad Chaaban told AFP.

"Who today is prepared to invest one penny in a country whose collapse is in full swing, which has no government and defaulted on its debt?"

The German team admitted the corruption that has defined Lebanese politics for decades was an obstacle.

"What's on the table is incredible... The only thing that you really need to do is make sure that there is transparency, that's it," HPC managing director Suheil Mahayni told AFP.

"We don't dream, we have a clear vision... But if some pre-conditions are not fulfilled and don't allow full transparency, it's not going to work," he said.



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Germany to propose Beirut port reconstruction with 'strings attached' France and EU ponder sanctions for Lebanese politicians, diplomats say

'Act before it is too late,' Arab League envoy tells Lebanon

Author:

Fri, 2021-04-09 19:48

BEIRUT: Arab League Assistant Secretary-General Hossam Zaki has called for "patience, political will and more communication" to break Lebanon's political deadlock.

Speaking on the second day of his visit to the crisis-wracked country, Zaki said that "everyone is still insisting on their positions" and that urgent action is needed to find a political solution.

"The worst is yet to come, and action must be taken before it is too late," he warned.

Zaki's visit was preceded by Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry's arrival on Wednesday amid Arab efforts to help end the political impasse in Lebanon.

The Arab League official voiced his support for Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai's call for "a neutral Lebanon," a plea that sparked an internal dispute in the country.

Following his meeting with Al-Rai, Zaki said the patriarch's position "is in total harmony with the Arab League Council's decisions regarding Lebanon's self-distancing policy and keeping the country out of all regional conflicts."

During his meeting with Lebanese President Michel Aoun, Zaki asked about the fate of the Taif Agreement in light of political statements calling for the cancelation or amendment of the agreement for non-Lebanese interests.

Shoukry's agenda did not include meetings with the head of the Free Patriotic Movement Gebran Bassil or any Hezbollah officials, which prompted the excluded figures to describe the visit as "truncated."

All foreign initiatives to end the political deadlock in Lebanon have ended in failure.

In his latest speech, Aoun focused on the need for a forensic financial audit of the Lebanese central bank instead of focusing on the formation of the government.

The bank's central council said on Friday that it had submitted an updated list of the documents requested by auditors Alvarez & Marsal to Finance Minister Ghazi Wazni.

Wazni said later that he had delivered the list to the company.

A Finance Ministry source told Arab News: "We are still taking the first steps. The provided information included a list of the required documents. It might take two weeks to provide the documents, which should be done before the end of April."

On Wednesday, Aoun talked about "the biggest heist in Lebanon's history," referring to depositors' money in Lebanese banks and the financial collapse.

He also accused "political and non-political leaderships of providing cover for the central bank the Lebanese banks and the Finance Ministry."

Aoun called on the resigned government to "hold a special session to take the appropriate decision to protect people's bank deposits."

The parliament in November recommended a forensic audit of all state institutions, including the central bank. In December, the parliament agreed to lift the banking secrecy rules for one year.

Caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab has refused to reactivate his government to take the actions demanded by politicians.

Lebanon's banking association has rejected "the campaign waged against the Lebanese banks by politicians."

The association said in a statement: "The banks did not push the state to borrow all the money from the deposits at the central bank. Banks did not set the frameworks for spending on the energy sector.

"Banks did not issue the random employment decisions in the state. Banks were not behind the accumulated deficit in the balance of payments. Banks did not organize, manage, and benefit from the massive smuggling of subsidized goods at the expense of the poor and needy Lebanese citizens."

The association added that thanks to the Lebanese banks, "the state was able to provide the salaries of the public sector employees."

It added: "Banks paid the highest percentage of the tax collection annually in favor of the public Treasury. The banks have preserved Lebanon's presence and international reputation. Banks have been a catalyst for the economy in its real estate, commercial and industrial sectors, through housing, personal, commercial and industrial loans that often exceeded the capital of these same companies."



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Egypt will make 'all possible efforts' to help resolve crisis in Lebanon
Lebanon's President Aoun holds central bank responsible for crisis

[Egypt will mark move to New Administrative Capital with 'mass celebration'](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-04-08 23:52

CAIRO: The Egyptian government announced on Thursday that it will organize a "mass celebration" to mark its transition to the country's New Administrative Capital.

Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said the event will "express 'the

new republic' in a clear message" and that a number of sites are being considered as the venue for the celebration, including People's Square and Sari Al-Alam.

Madbouly was speaking after a meeting held on Wednesday at the Cabinet headquarters in the New Administrative Capital, which is located just outside Cairo, at which a number of officials from the company charged with organizing the celebration were present.

According to Engineering Authority officials, all the buildings in the New Administrative Capital have now been completed, although there is still some electromechanical work to be finished and some facade work to complete.

Egyptian Cabinet spokesman Nader Saad had said earlier that the move to the New Administrative Capital was about a year behind schedule because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but confirmed that the transition will happen this year, although a date has not yet been set.



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Egypt to trial New Administrative Capital next year
First government headquarters launched in Egypt's new administrative capital

Egypt to produce up to 80 million Sinovac vaccine doses annually

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Reuters

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Thu, 2021-04-08 19:23

CAIRO: Egypt has agreed with China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd. to manufacture its COVID-19 vaccine domestically, and could produce up to 80 million doses a year, the health ministry said on Thursday.

The agreement could provide a major boost to vaccination efforts in Egypt, which has a population of 100 million and has thus far received just 1.5 million doses.

Egypt's cabinet and presidency approved a joint manufacturing agreement to make the vaccines that will be distributed in Egypt and to other African countries, Zayed said.

One production facility can produce 20 million doses annually, while another could produce 60 million, the health ministry said in a statement.

Egypt has so far received 854,400 doses of the vaccine produced by AstraZeneca as well as another 650,000 of the Chinese vaccine developed by China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm). The number of Sinopharm doses received would soon rise to 1 million, Zayed said.

Egypt began vaccinating frontline medical staff against COVID-19 on Jan. 24 and expanded its roll-out on March 4 to include the elderly and people with chronic diseases.



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Egyptian puppet Abla Fahita poses for sportswear giant Adidas