

RIYADH AIRPORT CLOSURE DISRUPTS EVENTS, TRAVEL, AND DAILY LIFE



In Riyadh, the Saudi capital, the closure of King Khalid International Airport following days of large-scale Houthi (Ansar Allah) attacks has thrown international events organized in the city into chaos and disrupted the daily routine for ordinary citizens.

The “Davos of the Desert,” a major finance meeting, has been postponed to an undetermined date in 2027 after its opening was set to begin on October 26. This comes as international summits, including the Gulf-EU summit, Six Kings Slam exhibition tennis tournament, Riyadh Fashion Week and the Red Sea Film Festival in Jeddah, have either been cancelled or postponed.

Flights in and out of the Riyadh airport have been suspended since a Houthi (Ansar Allah) missile attack killed 13 people and left large portions of the airport building destroyed on October 10, the deadliest such attack yet.

“When people start firing missiles at you, or anywhere near where flights take off or land, you can’t keep flying in and out, period,” said Desmond Ross, a Dubai-based aviation expert, former pilot and air traffic controller. “It’s just too much of a risk.” The Saudis have not offered any official comment on a potential reopening.

Government offices have ordered work from home, a policy that has spread to the Kingdom Center, the 99-story skyscraper that anchors the city’s business district and is the regional headquarters of the International Monetary Fund, along with a host of other organizations.

These disruptions are a new setback to Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman’s plans to attract new investment and diversify the oil-dependent Saudi Arabian economy. “Nobody wants to come to a country that is having missiles land nearby, and certainly nobody wants to invest,” said Karen Elliott House, a Wall Street Journal writer who is working on a book about Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

After weeks of attacks, many Saudis are growing frustrated. A resident described how his recent attempt to fly to Taif had to be diverted twice with the first flight going to Jeddah before he could get on another plane bound for Al-Qassim, a city three hours from Riyadh. “So being in Jeddah, thank God, everything went fine and we could get a flight to Al-Qassim,” he said.

Airlines are scrambling to help the seven million residents of the Saudi capital get where they need to go. Many are promoting alternate airports in the kingdom, while some companies are chartering buses to get employees to Bahrain or Qatar airports where flights are available. “We actually don’t encourage people to go to Saudi Arabia, but if they do have to, they should consider taking the bus through Bahrain,” said a Dubai-based consultant whose company has allowed some employees to work at home.

With more companies allowing telecommuting and the cancellation of many flights, many expats who normally would return home for a long weekend are considering leaving the city. **Some Western embassies have even warned their citizens of the risks of travelling to the kingdom and others have advised against non-essential travel to Saudi Arabia.**

Such advisories have irritated many Saudis who see their governments abandoning them at a difficult time. The Saudi government is trying to reassure everyone that life goes on, nevertheless. "We are safe, with God's help," said Ahmad bin Sulayman al-Rajhi, minister of Human Resources and Social Development at a conference last week in Riyadh, as hundreds of people around him were evacuated to shelter during another air raid alert.

Date: 2026-10-26

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/riyadh-airport-closed-important-events-cancelled-news15682>