Iraq signs first security agreement with Saudi Arabia in 40 years

Description

Iraqi and Saudi officials signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 19 February to share sensitive intelligence and deepen security cooperation, marking the first time the two nations have signed a security pact since 1983.

The pact was signed by Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz and his Iraqi counterpart Abdul Amir al-Shammari during the latter's official visit to Riyadh.

The MoU entails "all forms of security cooperation, exchange of points of views, and undertaking joint security activities," Iraqi state media reported.

Iraq and Saudi Arabia share an 800-kilometer border.

The historic MoU comes at a time when Baghdad has started to normalize ties with the Gulf countries following decades of isolation due to the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Top anti-narcotic officials from both nations also attended the meeting on Sunday, as Baghdad and Riyadh routinely confiscate large amounts of illicit drugs transported through their shared border.

Last year alone, Saudi authorities confiscated over six million captagon pills entering the kingdom.

The agreement was signed on the same day that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said Baghdad-hosted normalization talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia are set to resume "soon."

Speaking on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Sunday, Sudani said his country wants to maintain "balanced relations" with Iran and US allies in the region.

He claimed that relations between Riyadh and Tehran seem "more positive compared to the past."

In an effort to improve their bilateral relations, the two sides began negotiations in the spring of 2021 and held five rounds of talks in Baghdad. However, Tehran suspended the negotiations after Riyadh executed 81 people under the pretext of being involved in "terrorism," the majority of which were Shia Muslims.

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