

## Saudi Ambassador visits Karbala, Iraq

Research and Translation Department



مركز المنبر للدراسات والتنمية  
ALMANBAR FOR STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT

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**In an unprecedented step...**

### **Saudi Ambassador visits Karbala, Iraq**

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The recent visit of Saudi Ambassador to Iraq, Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, to the shrine of Imam Hussain (PBUH) in Karbala on May 13, 2024, marks an important and unprecedented step in Saudi Arabia's diplomatic relations with Iraq. Observers consider this as another indication of openness in Riyadh's foreign policy and its move away from traditional ideological sentiment, transcending the discourse of the Salafist religious establishment and the nation's traditional approach to engagement with Arab and regional actors.

During the visit, Al-Shammari met with the Governor of Karbala, Nassif Al-Khattabi, and members of the Provincial Council. In his statements, he praised the urban growth that Karbala is currently witnessing<sup>1</sup>, stressing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's intent to develop all aspects of bilateral cooperation with Iraq.

The visit was warmly welcomed by Iraqi officials and spread a broad positive atmosphere in political circles. Social and religious circles also welcomed the visit, including officials of

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=xtoGsQ\\_9Sn4&t=31s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=xtoGsQ_9Sn4&t=31s)

the Iman Hussain shrine and representatives of the supreme religious authority<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, local media paid exceptional attention to the visit as a significant diplomatic step with important symbolic representation.

The visit comes at a time when relations between Baghdad and Riyadh are witnessing steady growth in multiple areas. Given the geographic location of Karbala Governorate and the presence of a border crossing with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the future could witness cooperation in the following areas:

1. Trade and Economic ties: Enhancing trade ties between Karbala Governorate and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as attracting Saudi investment, especially when many industrial and urban projects are under construction in Karbala. There are continuing efforts to develop many projects in the governorate through the “Karbala Creativity” alliance, where 751 urban and service projects have launched to date<sup>3</sup>.
2. Educational and cultural cooperation: The exchange of cultural and scientific expertise between educational institutions and universities in Karbala institutions and their Saudi equivalents.
3. Tourism: Promoting religious tourism and exchanging expertise in the areas of cultural heritage and tourism between Karbala and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
4. Security and military: Particularly cooperation in combating terrorism and collaboration to strengthen security and stability in the region.

In summary, it can be stated that there is a promising future for cooperation between Karbala Governorate and the Saudi provinces specifically, and between Iraq and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in general.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://shorturl.at/Gicsr>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ibdaakarabala.com/>

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