

Basmah bint Saud

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Basmah bint Saud (born 1 March 1964) is a Saudi businesswoman and a member of House of Saud. Since 2010, she has lived in Acton, London, England.^[1] She clearly advocates reform in Saudi Arabia.^[2]

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Early life

Basmah bint Saud was born on 1 March 1964.^[1] She is the 115th and youngest of King Saud's children.^{[3][4]} Her mother was a Syrian-born woman, Jamila Merhi,^[1] who was chosen for her future husband when she visited Mecca on the haj (pilgrimage).^[3]

Basmah was born during the last days of her father's reign. She saw him only twice when she was five.^[5] Her mother took her to the Middle East's then-most cosmopolitan city, the Lebanese capital of Beirut. When Lebanon's civil war broke out in 1975, the family fled for Britain.^{[1][3]}

Education

Basmah bint Saud



Basmah bint Saud at Chatham House in 2013

Born	1 March 1964
Issue	Saud
	Sara
	Samahir
	Soohod
	Ahmad
Full name	Basma bint Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
House	House of Saud
Father	King Saud
Religion	Islam

In Beirut, Basmah bint Saud attended a French school. In Britain, she attended a Hertfordshire girls' school and a College in London, before spending two years studying in Switzerland.^[3] In 2003, Basmah and her mother moved to Syria. In the same year, Basma studied medicine, psychology and English literature at Beirut Arab University.^[1]

Personal life

Princess Basmah was married to a member of the Al Sharif family in 1988.^[1] They divorced in 2007.^[1] She is a mother with five children, three of whom live with her in Acton.^[3] Her children, three daughters and two sons, are Saud, Sara, Samahir, Sohood and Ahmad.^[6]

Business

After Basmah bint Saud divorced her Saudi husband, she founded a chain of restaurants in Saudi Arabia and she is planning to expand these into Britain.^[3] In 2008, she also founded a media firm, Media Ecco, in addition to catering firms, which she is also planning to expand.^[1]

Views

Basmah bint Saud is a mild advocate of reform. She has been an active participant of different social institutions and human rights organizations. She began to express her views on Arab and international media, writing articles on the hard life conditions of Saudis, particularly of women.^[7] However, her criticisms do not directly address the royal family but the Saudi governors and other middle-level administrators.^{[3][7]} Writing for *Al Madina* newspaper in April 2010, Basmah bint Saud told that she could not find any Qur'anic or Islamic historical basis for a state institution to promote virtue and prevent vice, and she further argued that the arrests and beatings by religious policemen lead to an incorrect impression about Islam.^[8] She specifically supports reform in Saudi Islamic laws regarding bans on mixed gatherings of men and women, and to make optional for Muslim women to cover modestly or not.^[3]

Her journalism and blogging has drawn criticism, and she told *The Independent* that Saudi officials had begun censoring her articles.^[3] On the other hand, she insisted that her move from Jeddah to Acton was not due to pressure from the Saudi state.^[9] Basmah bint Saud has questioned the misuse of the Islamic fiqh in Saudi society, arguing that the religious establishment needs to be reformed in order that it plays a constructive role in modernising society and improving the situation of women in the kingdom.^[10]

In April 2012, Basmah told BBC that there are many changes she would like to see in Saudi Arabia - but that is not the time for women to be allowed to drive. And she called for changes concerning constitution, divorce laws, overhaul of the educational system, complete reform of social services and changes in the role of the mahram (the male guardian that all Saudi women are required to have as the state considers them legal minor their entire lives - usually a male relative).^[11]

Upon the paralyzing of a Saudi national as a punishment by the Kingdom, Princess Basmah criticised it, stating that it cannot be acceptable on humanitarian grounds.^[12]

Blackmailed

Princess Basma said that a gang blackmailed her to transfer £320,000 to a bank account in Egypt. The threat was a to publish a visual materials showing her smoking and blowing a kiss in front of a PC camera without a Veil on her head. Basma said that the material was stolen from her personal PC. However, she published the recording of a conversation between her and the blackmailer on her YouTube official website.^[13] She said in Saudi Arabia it is inappropriate that women appear without a hijab or smoking in public.^[14]

External links

- Official website (<http://basmahbintsaud.com/>)
- Interviewed on ANN TV 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5XGs3ecmN0>)

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