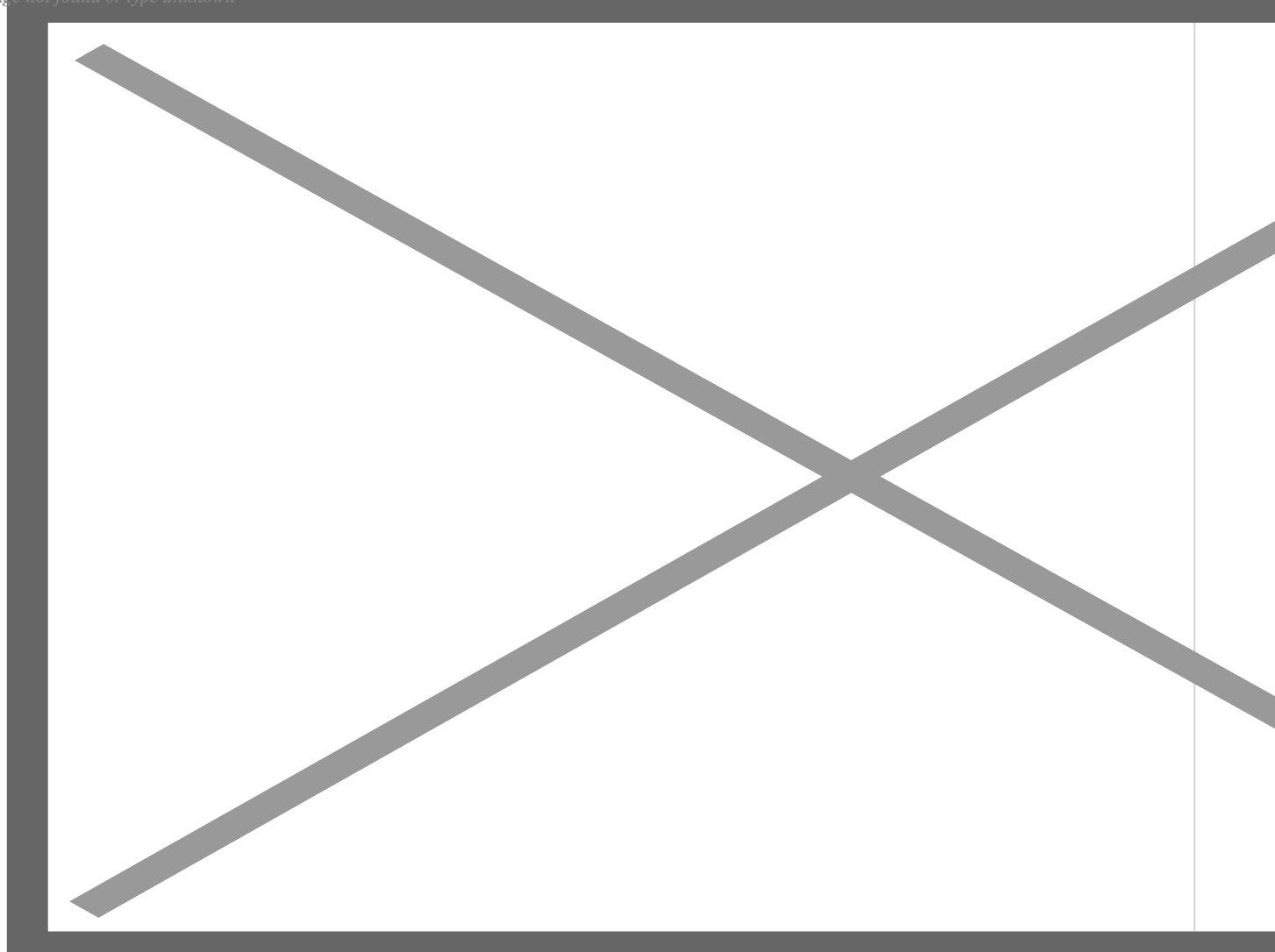


Saudi king invites Syria's Bashar al-Assad to attend Arab League summit

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Riyadh, May 11 (RHC)-- Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz has invited Syria's President Bashar al-Assad to attend an Arab League summit scheduled to be held in the Persian Gulf kingdom next week. Syrian media reported on Wednesday that the May 19th summit "will enhance joint Arab action to achieve the aspirations of the Arab peoples."

Saudi Ambassador to Jordan Nayef bin Bandar al-Sudairi delivered the invitation. This comes more than a decade after Syria's membership was suspended by the 22-member regional organization. The last Arab League summit Assad attended was in 2010 in Libya.

Arab government representatives in Cairo voted on Sunday to return Syria to the Arab League after a 12-year suspension. All 13 of the 22 member states that attended the session endorsed the decision.

The Arab League had suspended the membership of Syria, one of the founding members, in November 2011. Syria denounced the move as "illegal and a violation of the organization's charter."

Riyadh and Damascus agreed in March to resume diplomatic relations and re-open embassies after more than a decade. The Arab League, a 22-member intergovernmental organization of Arab states, on Sunday agreed to welcome Syria back into the fold with immediate effect after more than a decade.

In recent years, Syrian government forces, backed by Russia and Iran, have managed to win back control of virtually all regions from terrorist groups. Assad has already visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman this year and is expected to visit other Arab states as well in the near future.

Israel and certain Western states have gone to great lengths to isolate Syria. Yet, a growing number of regional countries, including the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, and Oman, have expressed readiness to resume diplomatic relations with Damascus.

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