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## The Kingdom

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# The Kingdom

## **Abstract**

This is a review of *The Kingdom* (2007).

The film, *The Kingdom*, is the latest anti-Arab anti-Muslim contribution from Hollywood. Directed and produced by Peter Berg and Michael Mann, this film is supposedly loosely based on a true story. The only thing that appears to be true is that deserts in Saudi Arabia and Arizona look quite similar. I attended the movie with eight visiting Saudi students who were confused throughout the entire movie, saying that they did not remember the incident happening in this manner. Why? Because nothing did happen in this manner. The film opens with hundreds of American men, women, and children being graphically gunned down at a softball game in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (in reality there was an attack at night and only nine Americans died, none of whom were children). As arms and legs fly all over the screen, an ambulance appears only to be booby-trapped, killing dozens more. Within hours the FBI is on the scene to solve the crime.

Berg portrays the American FBI team (Jamie Foxx, Jennifer Gardner, Jason Bateman, and Chris Cooper) as intelligent, strong, liberated and kind. The Saudis, on the other hand, are portrayed as simple, bumbling, extremely violent, Islamic terrorists. The young Saudi prince (Omar Berdouni) is so innocent and naïve that he cannot handle his own country's terrorist activities so, in typical fashion, the Americans swoop in to save the day. The FBI team members are portrayed as liberated, savvy, and politically correct. There is one African American (Jamie Foxx), and a "liberated woman," (Jennifer Garner) who is not only attractive and

sexy but can also fight like a man, all the while sucking on a lollypop. This image of an "empowered woman" emulates the worst possible quality of the emancipated western woman which equates as the freedom to kill others. The film also stars a kind Jewish fellow (Jason Bateman) who has visited Israel and a benign "all American guy" (Chris Cooper) who is the image of goodness. The Saudis are portrayed as ruthless religious zealots and terrorists willing to murder the innocent or as bumbling idiots that have no concept of forensics as they accidentally destroy the crime scene. Worse than that, these Arab Muslims take time out from their buffoonery to pray five times a day. This implies that the Americans are serious about solving the crime while the Muslims are worshipping Allah. Unfortunately this film is another attempt at equating all Arabs as Muslims and as terrorists similar to *True Lies* (1994), *Executive Decision* (1996), *Three Kings* (1999) and *Rules of Engagement* (2000). In his own words screenwriter Matthew Michael Carnahan states, "What would a murder investigation look like on Mars?" (*New York Times* review by Michael Cieply 6/19/2007), suggesting that not only are there no cities in Saudi Arabia but that Saudis themselves operate like alien Martians baffled by the civilized ways of the FBI.

The portrayal of the real bad guy, the evil Abu Hamza is a completely fictitious character, again loosely based on the life of Abu Hamza al-Masri currently imprisoned in England and is slanderous at best. Not surprisingly the only decent

and honest Arab in the film dies trying to help the Americans. In the end, the evil Abu Hamza whispers into his ten-year-old grandson's ear, "We're going to kill them all," preparing the audience for the coming of the next Osama Bin-Laden. But fear not dear moviegoers, the FBI beat them to it; they murdered all the bad guys! In a time when political and religious differences are enflamed, *The Kingdom* is oil on the fire. It depicts Arab Muslims as would-be terrorists, hell bent on destroying everything that Americans value. Although, in reality, the Saudi government does need to crack down on terrorist activity, this film gives no direction for that. The film is an insult to Saudi Arabian Muslims, as well as to Americans who are portrayed in the film as culturally and religiously inept as proven by their mannerisms and inappropriate dress, particularly the female FBI agent (Jennifer Garber) in tank tops and uncovered hair. Worse than that, these violent FBI agents fuel the fire for more anger by Muslims toward the United States as a result of the negative stereotyping of Saudi Muslims in this movie.