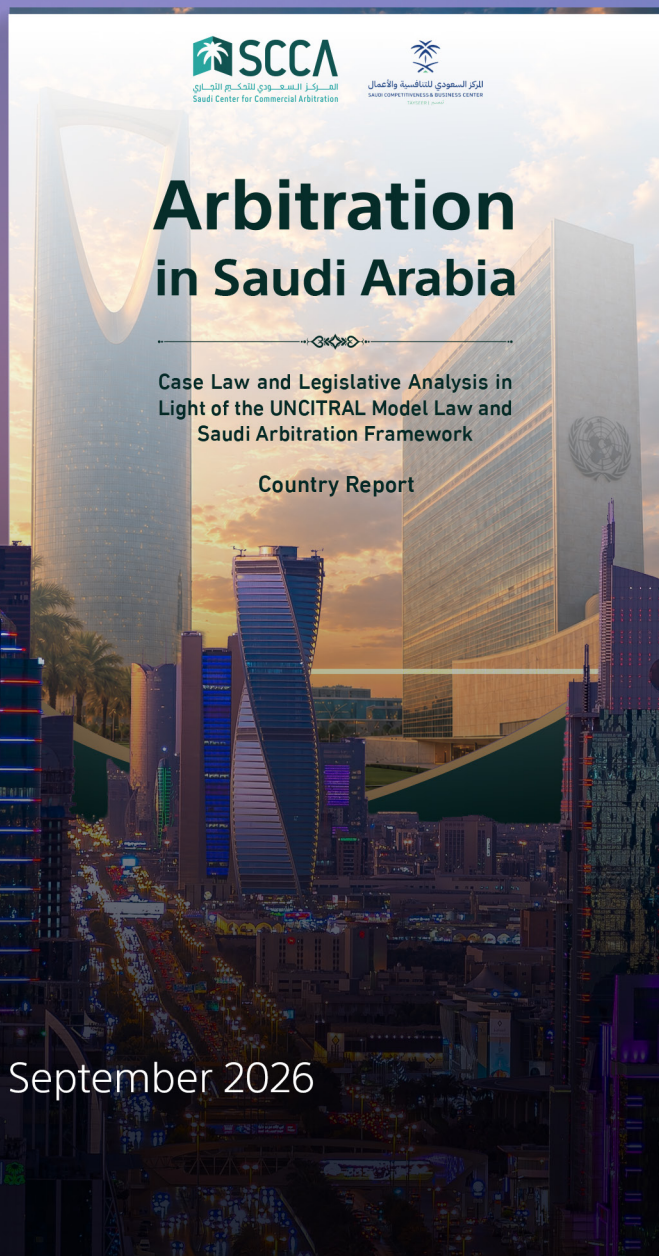


Arbitration in Saudi Arabia

Perspectives from the International
Arbitration Community



September 2026

SCCA published a comprehensive study on the status of the arbitration industry in Saudi Arabia, prepared:

In partnership with:



The study was commissioned in response to an official invitation from the UNCITRAL Secretariat for SCCA to prepare a country report on the state of the arbitration industry in Saudi Arabia. Prepared by SCCA on behalf of Saudi Arabia, the report forms part of the forthcoming edition of the UNCITRAL Digest of Case Law on the Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration (Model Law), a leading reference publication by UNCITRAL that compiles jurisprudence on the Model Law and promotes its harmonized interpretation and application. This will be the first updated edition of the Digest on the Model Law since 2012.

Legislative Analysis:

A Comparison between:

- ▶ Saudi Arbitration Law
- ▶ Draft Saudi Arbitration Law
- ▶ UNCITRAL Model Law

Judicial Analysis:

An analysis of:

967 arbitration-related court judgments issued by the Courts of Appeal Between 2023 and 2025.

Contributing to:

1

Enhancing transparency

2

Improving predictability regarding judicial interpretation of the Arbitration Law

3

Strengthening legal certainty

Read
the Report:



impact:

The study generated substantial interest across the local and international dispute resolution community. This was reflected in the extensive coverage and commentary from leading **international law firms** and **global legal media platforms**, as well as engagement from mainstream media outlets and practitioners across social media.

This highlights:

1

Growing International recognition of Saudi Arabia's development as a leading arbitration seat.

2

The increasing prominence of Saudi Arabia within the international arbitration community.



Key Findings of the Study

The annulment rate of arbitral awards in Saudi stands at 8%, among the lowest globally

Legislative and judicial recognition of the use of electronic means in arbitration proceedings

Removal of the requirement for prior cabinet approval of arbitration clauses in government contracts

Consistent practice by Saudi courts in interpreting the Saudi Arbitration Law

Alignment of Saudi Arabia's arbitration framework with international best practices the best international standards and practices

Saudi courts adopt a limited standard to the review of arbitral awards

Most disputes are capable of being resolved through arbitration

Strong respect for party autonomy, including in constituting the arbitral tribunal and selecting the arbitration procedures

Procedural flexibility and reduced formal requirements in arbitral proceedings

More relaxed requirements for the appointment of arbitral tribunals



Media Impact at Glance

Within one month of the stud's publication:

27

analytical reviews
by international
law firms

35

specialized media
features across
12 legal media
platforms

+90

media coverages
across media
outlets

+481

professional
coverages
across social
media platforms

+14

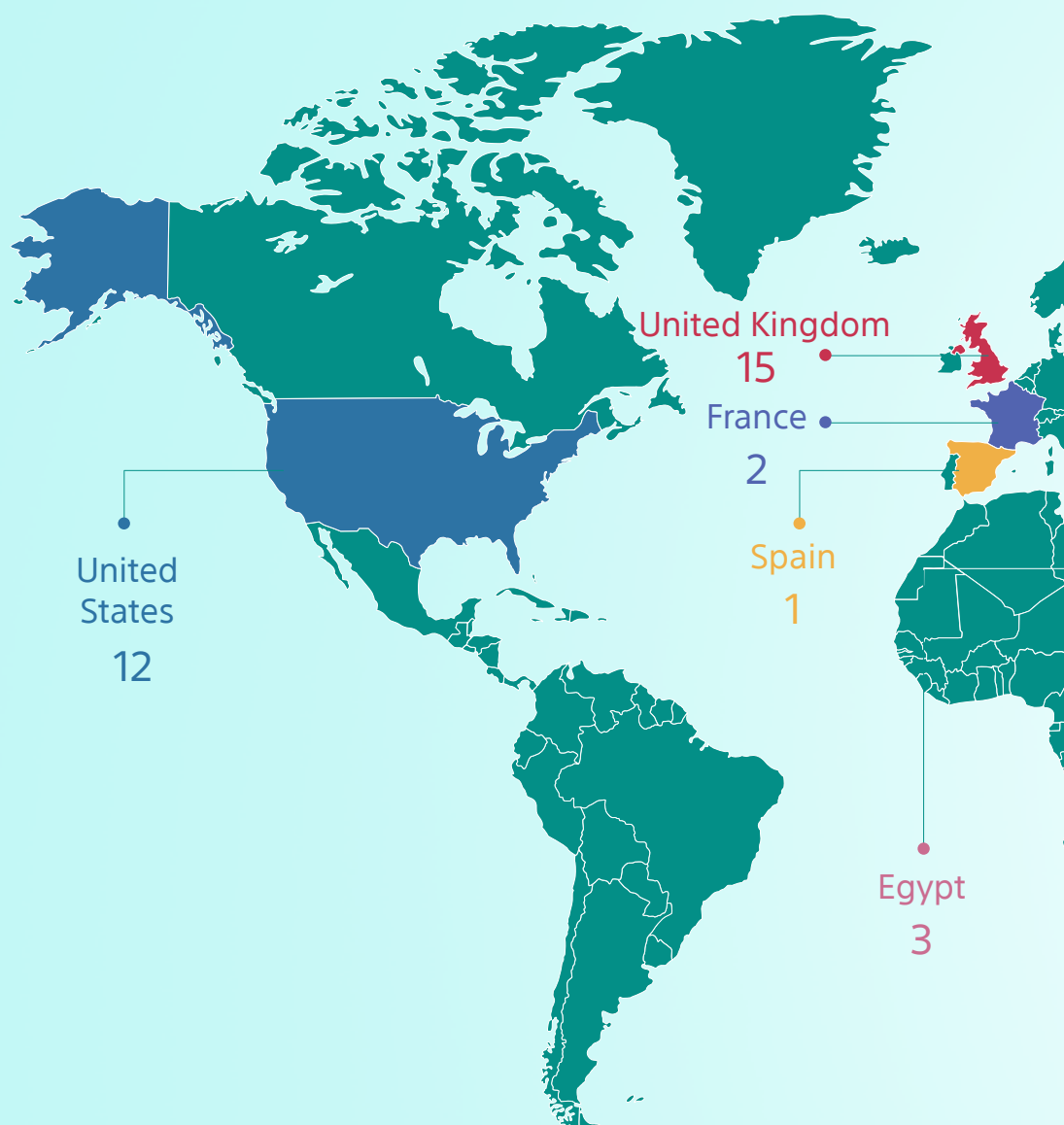
million
total reach



Specialized International Coverage across the Global Map



The study generated significant engagement among leading international law firms and prominent legal media platforms. Their coverage highlighted the growing maturity of Saudi Arabia's arbitration framework at both the legislative and practical levels, as well as the Kingdom's emergence as a promising international seat for the resolution of commercial and investment disputes.



United Kingdom

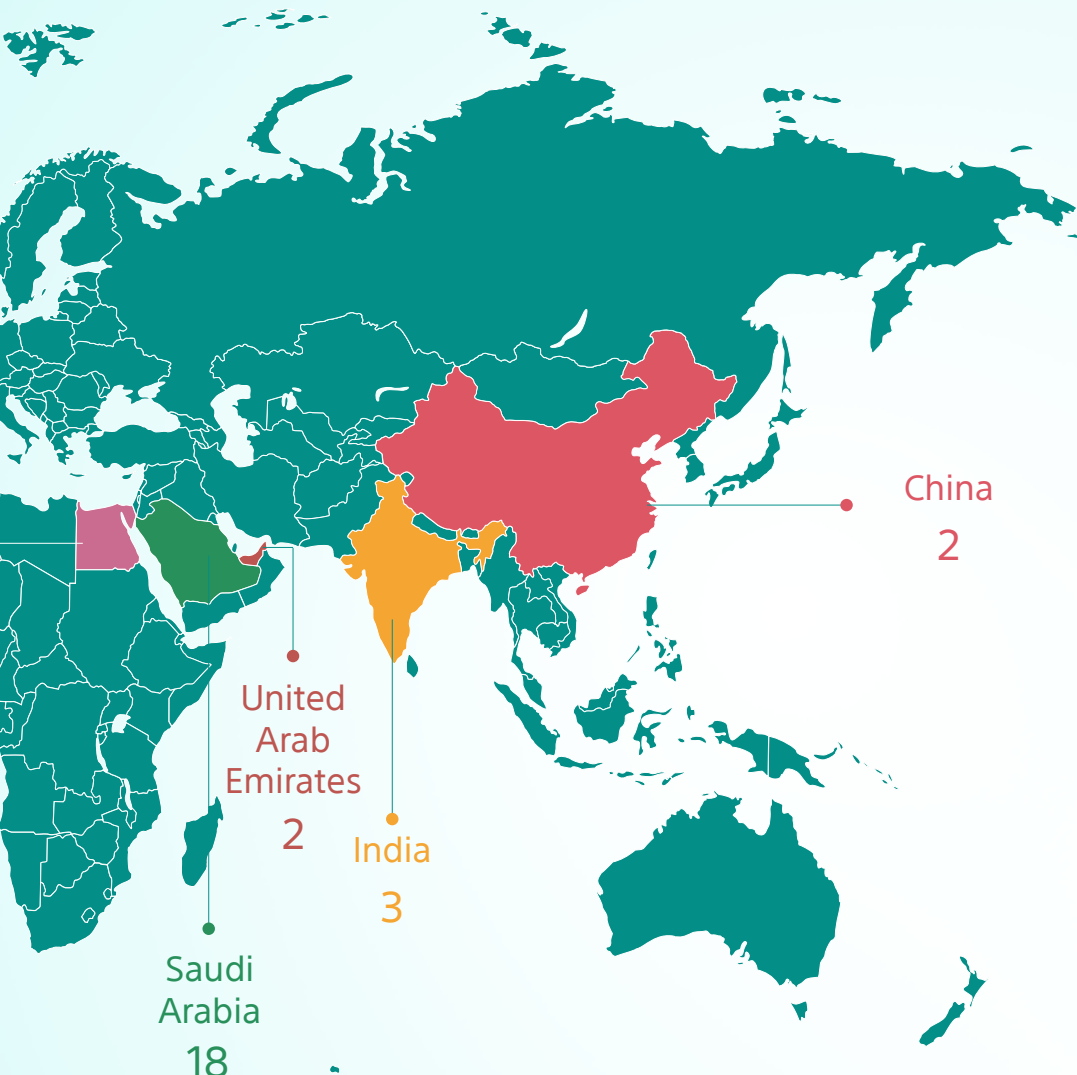
Bird & Bird BEALE & CO ASHURST PERKINS COLE
 dwf CLYDE & CO Charles Russell Speechlys
 FRESHFIELDS HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS KRAMER
 ontier HOGAN LOVELLS CADWALADER HFW
 GAR Global Arbitration Review Pinsent Masons
 LEXOLOGY mondaq Legal500 Intelligence

United States

King & Spalding Baker McKenzie Akin
 ReedSmith pillsbury MAYER BROWN
 WHITE & CASE SQUIRE PATTON BOGGS
 LexisNexis JDSUPRA GENERAL COUNSEL NEWS
 THOMSON REUTERS WESTLAW THOMSON REUTERS PRACTICAL LAW

Spain

ontier



Saudi Arbitration Landscape

From the Perspective of International Law Firms...



ReedSmith

The SCCA's country report confirms that Saudi Arabia's arbitration framework has come of age. The judiciary is sophisticated, restrained, and predictable. The legislative framework is evolving towards fuller harmonisation with international standards. And the institutional infrastructure – anchored by the SCCA – is well-placed to support the growing volume of domestic and international arbitration in the Kingdom.

Read the article:



MAYER
BROWN

The Saudi framework has evolved from drawing inspiration from the Model Law to achieving a more advanced level of harmonization and procedural alignment striking a balance between international standards, the requirements of domestic legislation, and the specific features of the national legal system.

Read the article:



HOGAN LOVELLS
CADWALADER

An arbitration framework that is perceived internationally as predictable, efficient and internationally aligned is ... of direct importance to the delivery of Saudi Arabia's infrastructure ambitions. The SCCA report appears to suggest that both the courts and the legislature are continuing to move in that direction.

Read the article:



King&
Spalding

The appellate court decisions set out in the Report continue to reinforce Saudi Arabia's standing as a credible and competitive seat for international arbitration, underpinned by modern legislation, an arbitration-friendly judiciary, and a clear legislative trajectory towards closer alignment with internationally recognized standards.

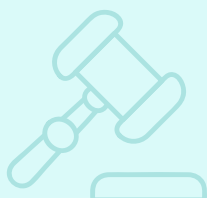
Read the article:



Baker
McKenzie.

Taken together, the report reinforces that Saudi Arabia aligns with all three criteria identified by the International Bar Association for a stable arbitral seat: membership of the New York Convention, an arbitration-supportive legal framework, and a judiciary with a demonstrated record of arbitration-friendly decisions.

Read the article:



Saudi Arbitration Landscape

From the Perspective of International Law Firms...



Charles
Russell
Speechlys

For international practitioners and businesses, the key message is clear: Saudi Arabia's arbitration environment is characterized by predictable judicial oversight, respect for party autonomy, and a legislative agenda committed to continued modernization.

Read the article:



CLYDE&CO

An important part of the report is its review of annulment applications before the Saudi courts... [The Report's] numbers are important because they show that Saudi courts do not treat annulment as a chance to re-open the case. The report explains that Saudi courts treat annulment grounds as exhaustive, and that [] Courts of [A]ppeal may not revisit the facts or re-examine the merits of the dispute.

Read the article:



WHITE & CASE

The report shows that Saudi courts uphold arbitral awards at an exceptionally high rate – and the data makes clear that this is not a recent development but an established feature of the arbitration landscape in the Kingdom... The practical significance of this is that parties arbitrating in, or with counterparties in, Saudi Arabia can do so with a high degree of confidence that awards will be upheld absent fundamental defects.

Read the article:




Pinsent Masons

Beyond the case law, the report's legislative comparison ... finds that the existing Saudi Arbitration Law largely reflects internationally recognized standards, with domestic adaptations, and the Draft Arbitration Law maintains that approach while aiming for greater legal certainty.

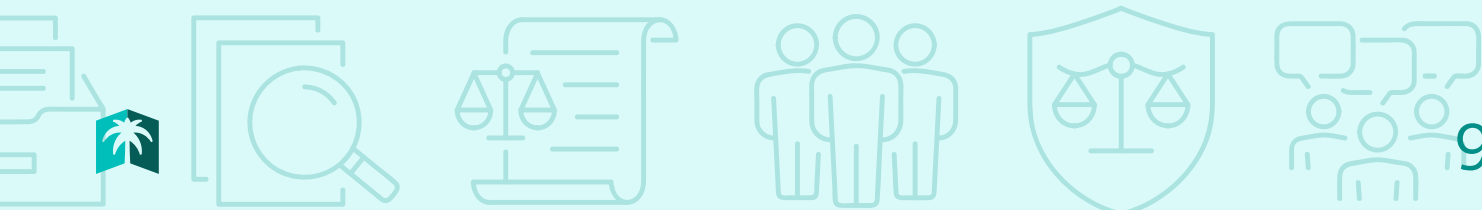
Read the article:



 HUI ZHONG LAW FIRM
汇仲律师事务所

Saudi Arabia's arbitration ecosystem is undergoing a significant evolution, moving from the nationally specific adoption of model laws toward deeper integration with the global arbitration ecosystem.

Read the article:



Saudi Arbitration Landscape

From the Perspective of International Law Firms...



HFW

Saudi Arabia's arbitration framework is no longer merely a regional alternative; it is a credible and increasingly sophisticated forum for the resolution of complex international disputes. The SCCA's study provides the clearest evidence to date.

Read the article:



ASHURST
PERKINS
COIE

The Report provides useful guidance on how Saudi courts are applying the Arbitration Law in practice, including their approach to jurisdiction, annulment, enforcement, public policy and Sharia... the Report reflects the Kingdom's continued efforts to strengthen Saudi Arabia's position as an arbitration-friendly jurisdiction while preserving key domestic safeguards.

Read the article:



pillsbury

For practitioners, the takeaway is practical: Saudi-seated arbitration should no longer be assessed by reference to historical perception or anecdote, but against data and case law and a legal framework that is increasingly aligned with international best practice while preserving the principles of Sharia and Saudi public policy. Riyadh is emerging as a fast-growing, modern arbitration hub offering greater certainty, predictability and confidence to international users.

Read the article:



Akin®

The Report records decisions in which KSA courts and tribunals treated electronic communications as valid service where they were sent to channels designated or confirmed by the parties...This is a commercially sensible approach which recognizes the varied nature of modern business communications.

Read the article:



 ontier

The [SCCA] dataset measures annulment by the Saudi courts, not enforcement of foreign awards abroad, but the overlap tells its own story. A court that declines to reopen the merits is keeping to the bargain the parties struck: the tribunal decides, and the court steps in only where the statute allows.

Read the article:



10



Saudi Arbitration Landscape

From the Perspective of International Law Firms...



AFFAKI

This is precisely why the report is valuable. It replaces the question whether Saudi courts are arbitration-friendly with a more sophisticated question: how do Saudi courts police the boundary between arbitral autonomy and mandatory legality? The answer, on the evidence assembled, is with notable restraint and identifiable grounds which, generally speaking, mirror international standards as set out in the Model Law.

Read the article:



SQUIRE
PATTON BOGGS

The Report provides a first of its kind inside look and overview of the Saudi arbitration framework and will serve to guide many practitioners on pertinent procedural matters particularly as compared to other UNCITRAL Model Law jurisdictions.

Read the article:



YASEEN K. KHAYYAT
LAW OFFICE

The study revealed broad judicial support for arbitration in Saudi Arabia and confirmed the consistency of Saudi judicial practices with the best international standards set out in the UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration. The findings affirm that the Kingdom has become an attractive and reliable environment for the resolution of commercial disputes, both domestically and internationally.

Read the article:



Is Saudi Arabia a Safe Seat? The Numbers Now Say Yes... [w]hat was once reassurance based largely on instinct can now be grounded in evidence. The data points to a more mature, reliable, and arbitration-friendly environment, giving parties greater confidence in choosing the Kingdom as a seat of arbitration. For clients with Saudi exposure, that shift is both meaningful and commercially significant.

Read the article:



Bird & Bird

Eight years of judgments show 91% of annulment applications rejected, with Sharia-based annulments at 2.3% of annulled awards...the practical case for a Saudi seat has never been stronger.

Read the article:



Saudi Arbitration Landscape

From the Perspective of International Law Firms...



The Report and the proposed legislative reforms suggest a maturing arbitration framework that combines respect for international arbitration standards with the requirements of Saudi law. For construction parties participating in the Kingdom's ambitious programme of infrastructure and development projects, that should provide increasing confidence that Saudi Arabia is not only a major construction market, but also an increasingly sophisticated and reliable forum for the resolution of construction disputes.

Read the article:



[T]he underlying data speaks for itself. The consistently high rate of unsuccessful annulment applications, together with the courts' recognition of fundamental arbitration principles, suggests a judiciary that is generally supportive of arbitration and reluctant to interfere with arbitral awards absent clear statutory grounds. Viewed alongside the proposed reforms contained in the Draft Arbitration Law, the report provides further evidence of KSA's continued evolution as a sophisticated and arbitration-friendly jurisdiction

Read the article:



Saudi Arabia is quietly repositioning itself as a serious international arbitration destination, and the legal framework is catching up fast.

Read the article:



The SCCA's comprehensive data demonstrates that Saudi Arabia's arbitration framework is transitioning into a deep integration with global standards. With predictable judicial enforcement, clearly defined statutory boundaries, and the anticipated enforcement of the Draft Arbitration Law, the Kingdom continues to solidify its position as a reliable, modern forum for resolving complex international commercial disputes.

Read the article:



The Report's overall message is a positive one: Saudi Arabia's arbitration framework is broadly aligned with international norms and is continuing to develop in that direction... The Report's broader findings indicate that Saudi courts generally confine themselves to the limited supervisory role contemplated by modern arbitration legislation and do not treat annulment proceedings as an opportunity to revisit the merits of an award.

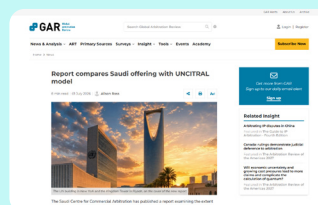
Read the article:



... and by International Legal Media Platforms



The 250-page country report, which was prepared at the invitation of UNCITRAL, highlights how the law is being interpreted and evolving in practice in one of the region's most active and rapidly developing arbitration jurisdictions, with key insights into the annulment rate of awards based on shariah and public policy grounds.



Read the article:



The Saudi Center for Commercial Arbitration (SCCA) has released a national report, drafted for the upcoming United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Digest of Case Law on the Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration, reviewing 967 Court of Appeal rulings from 2023–25 and contrasting the existing Saudi Arbitration Law and Draft Arbitration Law with the UNCITRAL Model Law.

Read the article:



Across a cumulative dataset of over 3,300 judgments from 2017–25, the overall annulment rate was 8.3%, with annulments based on Sharia or public policy accounting for only 2.3% of cases. The Draft Arbitration Law introduces notable reforms including express recognition of electronic service, virtual hearings, electronic award signatures, emergency arbitrators, removal of the Sharia or law degree requirement for arbitrators and elimination of the Cabinet approval requirement for arbitration clauses in government contracts.

Read the article:



The publication of the report coincides with Saudi Arabia's development as an arbitration hub. The SCCA has reported double digit growth in its caseload over the past five years, averaging 62%, and a 52% year-on-year increase at the end of 2025, reaching 182 cases. More than 210 cases were registered in the first half of 2026.

Read the article:



For businesses and investors, the findings signal a jurisdiction seeking to position itself as a competitive and credible seat for international arbitration.

Read the article:



... and by International Legal Media Platforms



The three most significant findings in the Report are (i) the Saudi judiciary's respect for the finality of arbitral awards; (ii) the relationship between arbitral awards and Sharia; and (iii) legislative harmonization with the Model Law.

Read the article:



This initiative forms part of SCCA's ongoing collaboration with leading international organizations dedicated to advancing dispute resolution and arbitration, with the aim of showcasing arbitration practice in the Kingdom and highlighting the progress made in developing a robust framework for the resolution of commercial disputes.

Read the article:



This Report represents an important scholarly and legal contribution to the Arabic library in the field of commercial arbitration, as it brings together theoretical analysis, judicial review, and comparative legislative assessment in a single document, providing a comprehensive understanding of the development of the arbitration framework in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Read the article:



Mainstream Media Coverage

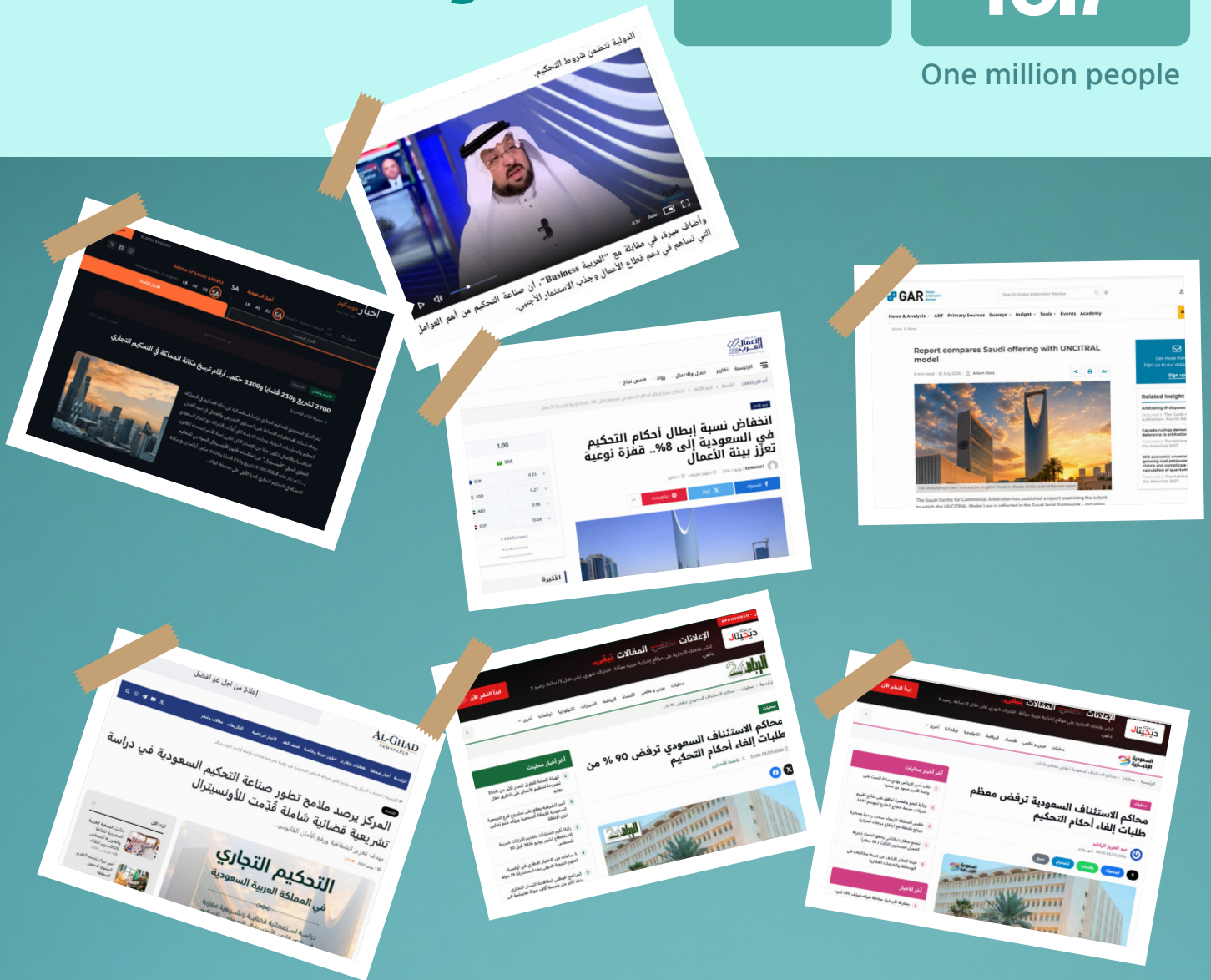
+90

Media Coverages

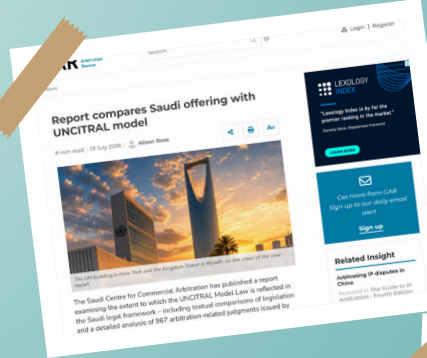
Reaching

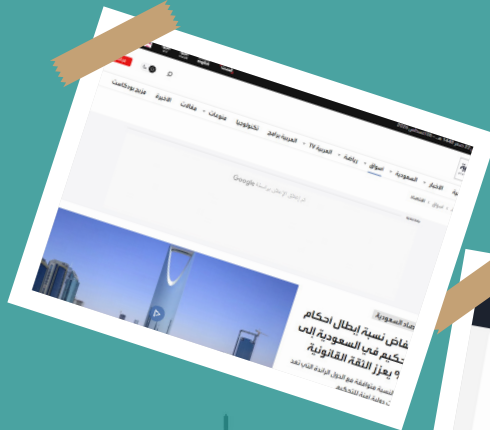
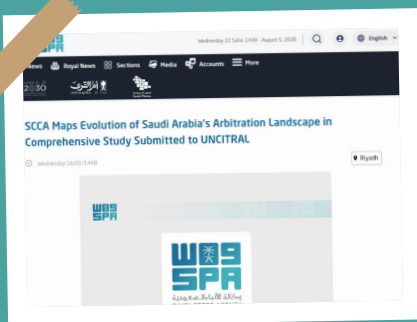
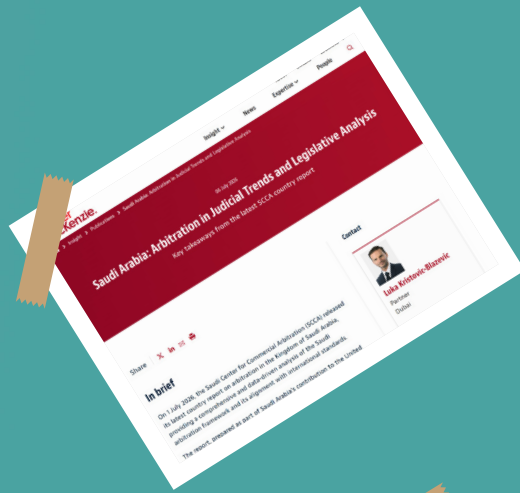
10.7

One million people

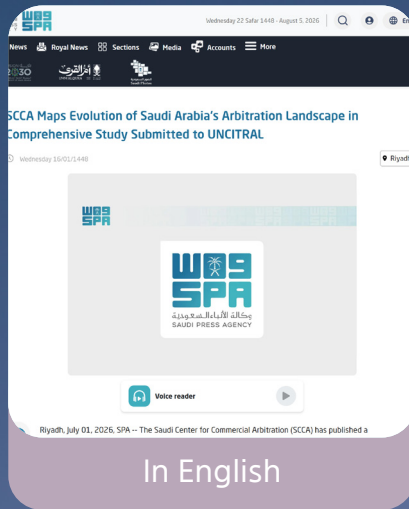


Mainstream Media Coverage

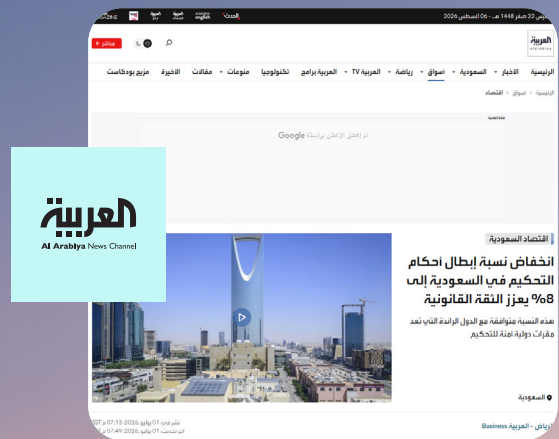




Publication in 3
Languages by the



Specialized Coverages by:



Key Media Outlets Covering the Study:



الوئام

الوطن
ALWATAN

العربية
Al Arabiya News Channel

وكالة الأنباء
السعودية
SAUDI PRESS
AGENCY

mondaq
Legal500 Intelligence

LEXOLOGY

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Global Arbitration Review

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Reuters™

Baker
McKenzie.

Pinsent Masons

JUS MUNDI

LexisNexis®

FRESHFIELDS

CLYDE&CO

WHITE & CASE

Bird & Bird

راديو
الشرق
Bloomberg



Social Media Coverage



+ 480 professional mentions

Across social media platforms from members of the local and international arbitration community commenting on the study and its findings



Reaching



+ 3,3 one million people

Impressions



+ 7.1 million times



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Country Report

small fraction of awards that were awarded to private citizens and public officials accounted for only 2.2% of the total.

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 283: 2689-2696.

our CEO, Dr. Dr. Hamed Morah Morah MA(Ed), LLM(ADR), Christian R A.H.

نظم ندوة بعنوان:
الحكيم في



Government Media Engagement with the Study



