

SEW Recommendations on Encoding the Saudi Riyal Currency Symbol

To: Unicode Technical Committee

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Date: March 10, 2025

The Script Encoding Working Group has received multiple proposals regarding the new currency symbol for Saudi riyal. The group will be recommending to the UTC that the Saudi riyal sign be encoded as a new character at U+20C1 in the Currency Symbols block, in agreement with the proposal from the Saudi Central Bank ([L2/25-075](#)). We recommend the character to be published in Unicode version 17.0, expected to be released in September 2025.

Unsuitability of U+FDFF RIAL SIGN

We note that we also discussed a proposal for changing the glyph of an existing character, U+FDFF RIAL SIGN, rather than encoding a new character. However, U+FDFF is intended for the Iranian rial and cannot be used to represent this new character for several reasons. Some are based on character identity, and some are based on the different ways the characters are expected to behave based on their character properties.

U+FDFF RIAL SIGN was encoded in Unicode 3.2 as a compatibility character for Iranian standards that defined such a character, although the character was never very popular in Iran. Its preferred glyph shape is a horizontally condensed form of the word rial (ریال) in Persian. Some recent fonts have innovated with the glyph shape, creating a ligature with it, but those newer shapes are not based on the original shape of the character. In contrast, the Saudi riyal sign has a very specific modern design.

Also, the existing RIAL SIGN character has a compatibility decomposition to the four-letter sequence *<reh, farsi yeh, alef, lam>*. The Saudi riyal currency symbol is an atomic symbol that should never decompose.

More importantly, the Iranian rial sign was only intended to be used in right-to-left environments, and as such, has a bidirectional class of *Arabic_Letter*. The new Saudi riyal sign is supposed to be used in both left-to-right and right-to-left environments, and will need a different bidirectional class. If the Iranian rial sign is used in left-to-right text, it can cause unintended reorderings of numbers appearing next to it, which would confuse users (and violate the [Saudi Riyal Symbol Guidelines](#)).

Unicode cannot change the identity or key character properties of U+FDFF to “re-use” it for Saudi riyal either: U+FDFF is a long established character which became part of the Unicode Standard in 2002, and any behavioral change to the character would destabilize existing texts that may use the character, causing them to display differently.