

Country	Kuwait
SIGI 2019 Category	N/A
SIGI Value 2019	N/A

Discrimination in the family		76%
	Legal framework on child marriage	75%
	Percentage of girls under 18 married	6%
	Legal framework on household responsibilities	75%
	Proportion of the population declaring that children will suffer if mothers are working outside home for a pay	65%
	Female to male ratio of time spent on unpaid care work	-
	Legal framework on inheritance	100%
	Legal framework on divorce	75%

Restricted physical integrity		N/A
	Legal framework on violence against women	75%
	Proportion of the female population justifying domestic violence	37%
	Prevalence of domestic violence against women (lifetime)	-
	Sex ratio at birth (natural =105)	105
	Legal framework on reproductive rights	75%
	Female population with unmet needs for family planning	16%

Restricted access to productive and financial resources		80%
	Legal framework on working rights	100%
	Proportion of the population declaring this is not acceptable for a woman in their family to work outside home for a pay	32%
	Share of managers (male)	86%
	Legal framework on access to non-land assets	100%
	Share of house owners (male)	-
	Legal framework on access to land assets	100%
	Share of agricultural land holders (male)	-
	Legal framework on access to financial services	50%
	Share of account holders (male)	61%

Restricted civil liberties		N/A
	Legal framework on civil rights	100%
	Legal framework on freedom of movement	50%
	Percentage of women in the total number of persons not feeling safe walking alone at night	-
	Legal framework on political participation	50%
	Share of the population that believes men are better political leaders than women	76%
	Percentage of male MP's	97%
	Legal framework on access to justice	75%
	Share of women declaring lack of confidence in the justice system	-

Note: Higher values indicate higher inequality. Percentages range from 0 to 100, while legal variables are categorised as 0%, 25%, 50%, 75% or 100%. See data source [here](#).

Source: OECD (2019), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, <https://oe.cd/ds/GIDDB2019>.

Kuwait

1. Discrimination in the family

Kuwait's Family and Personal Status Law (No. 51 of 1984) governs legal procedures such as marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. The law is based on the Maliki school of Sunni Islam (Human Rights Council, 2017: 6; UNICEF, 2011: 1). Almost 70% of Kuwait's Muslim population are Sunni, and the remaining are Shi'a (Visit-Kuwait, 2017).

Sharia governs family law for all Muslim residents, which includes two separate courts: Sunni and Shi'a (a third court exists for non-Muslims). The uncoded Ja'fari interpretation of personal status matters applies to Shi'a Muslims (HRW, 2014).

a) Overarching legal framework for marriage

Kuwaiti women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men (Family and Personal Status Law, art. 18); women must have a male guardian (*wali*) to confirm their wedding (art. 8); only men may be witnesses to a marriage (Family and Personal Status Law, art. 11). Muslim men can have up to four wives and the wife/wives do need to be informed of a subsequent marriage (Family and Personal Status Law, art. 21) (Human Rights Council, 2017: 7; HRW, 2016).

Fathers and male relatives are usually granted guardianship over a minor child (arts. 110 of the Civil Code and 209 of the Personal Status law). Women may only acquire legal guardianship through the authorization of a court a decision (CEDAW, 2011: 12).

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) particularly discouraged polygamy in Kuwait as it has serious consequences for the children and the mother (CEDAW, 2011; CCPR, 2016).

b) Child marriage

The legal of marriage 15 for women and 17 for men (art. 26 of the Personal Status law).

The Committee on the Children's Rights urges Kuwait raise the age of marriage to at least 17 years for girls (Humanium, 2013). Problems of early marriages in Kuwait raises the possibility of cutting women's education short and risks serious health consequences due to early pregnancy or marital rape (Humanium, 2013).

Official data from 2015 indicated there were no recorded cases of girls married under the age of 15, however, early marriages persist in tribal groups (CEDAW, 2011: 12) and arranged marriages are still common (Human Rights Council, 2017: 13).

c) Household responsibilities

Women may be considered head of household if they are divorced, widowed, or married to non-Kuwaitis (Human Rights Council, 2017: 12). A husband can forbid his wife from working outside of the

home if it negatively affects “family interests” (art. 89 of the Personal Status Law). This can be interpreted in many ways that can impair women’s independence (Human Rights Council, 2017: 7).

It appears that many Kuwaiti families have started to rely more on women’s financial support (Europarl, 2014: 22). However, the idea that women should be dedicated to the domestic sphere remains the predominant belief of society. Many discriminatory stereotypes overemphasize the roles of women as wives and mothers, including early stage school criteria conveying such images to school girls (CEDAW, 2011: 6). For example, household management is taught to girls in primary and secondary public schools, signifying the conservative image of women as housewives and mothers (Human Rights Council, 2017: 17).

d) Divorce

Under the Personal Status Act (1984), men can unilaterally initiate and finalise divorce (art. 97). Women can seek a divorce if they are deserted or subjected to violence (Freedom House, 2016). If a woman demands divorce on the grounds of harm (art. 126), the harm must be proven through the testimony of two men (or one man and two women) (art. 133).

If a woman asks for a *khul* divorce, it entails her bride price for: non-maintenance, husband’s absence, abandonment, husband’s imprisonment for three or more years, a defect affecting conjugal relations (i.e. impotence), difference of religion (only applies when the man converts), or non-compliance with a valid stipulation in the marriage contract (Europarl, 2014: 131).

Women do not have full parental authority after divorce. Legal guardianship is normally permitted to the father (art. 209), whereas mothers are only allowed physical custody of young children (art. 189). If a woman remarries she loses all custody rights of any children (art. 191); a non-Muslim woman may only have custody over the child until age seven (art. 192); a woman’s custody of a son is over once he enters puberty and custody for a daughter ends once she enters marriage (art. 194). Divorced Sunni mothers are allowed custody rights to girls and boys until the age of maturity (usually 15) or marriage (Human Rights Council, 2017: 7). A divorced Shiite mother has custody until the daughter is nine and the boy is two. In general, non-Muslim women and women divorced for infidelity lose all custody rights (Europarl, 2014: 131).

De jure discrimination towards women still exists, but some progress has been made in the de facto situation. According to UN Women (2015), “Kuwait has the highest total divorce rate among the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council,” and social stigmas attached to divorce and remarriage have decreased compared to past decades.

e) Inheritance

Inheritance is governed by the Personal Status Act (1984). In cases of family inheritance, a male receives twice a female’s share (art. 327). Sons and daughters do not receive equal inheritance shares (arts. 299 and 300). Sons are entitled to receive double his sister’s share (Human Rights Council, 2017: 7; Freedom House, 2005). Under the same laws, surviving female spouses do not enjoy equal inheritance rights as male ones.

Sunni Muslim women usually inherit a physical property whereas Shiite Muslim women generally inherit only the value of the property (UN Women, 2015; Europarl, 2014: 131). Sunni women must share their deceased husband's property with his male relatives (art. 299) (CEDAW, 2011: 11). A non-Muslim cannot inherit from a Muslim, therefore, a non-Muslim wife of a Kuwaiti man is not protected from disinheritance or property grabbing, unless a legal provision was previously made in an inheritance contract (Europarl, 2014: 141).

2. Restricted physical integrity

a) Violence against women

There is an absence of comprehensive legal protection against gender-based violence in Kuwait (Human Rights Council, 2017: 9; CECSR, 2013: 3-4). Under article (88) of the Personal Status Act (1984), a wife may not be coerced into obedience, but there is no law that explicitly prohibits domestic violence (UN Women, 2015). Marital rape and sexual harassment are not specifically stipulated in the Penal Code either (Human Rights Council, 2017:9). On the contrary, rape and sexual assault that occurs outside of the home receives attention from the courts, as punishment constitutes a prison sentence or the death penalty (Europarl, 2014: 132).

An abductor may escape punishment if he legally marries the girl abducted, given that the marriage is approved by her guardian (art. 182 of the Penal Code). A man who voluntarily murders his wife or another female relative for committing adultery ("honour" crimes) can escape with minimal punishment (art. 153 of the Penal Code) (Human Rights Council, 2017: 9). Adultery (arts. 195-196) and extramarital intercourse/relationships (arts. 189-190 and 193-194) are criminalised by prison sentences of 3 to 15 years (Human Rights Council, 2017: 9).

b) Domestic violence

Kuwait has partially addressed domestic violence (Europarl, 2014: 30), but the practice remains widespread and underreported (CCPR, 2016: 4). General provisions in the Criminal Code (1960) prohibit domestic violence but there are no laws criminalizing all forms of domestic and sexual violence against women (CEDAW, 2011: 6; HRW, 2014; Human Rights Council, 2017: 9). Article (186) of the Criminal Code (1960) states sexual offences committed by husbands against their wives are only considered unlawful if they fall within the category of "unnatural acts" (CEDAW, 2011: 6-7; FIDH, 2011). Therefore, protection of women from violence is inadequate due to the prevailing impunity of perpetrators.

In 2015, a law establishing family courts set up a centre to deal with domestic violence cases, but the centre focused on reconciliation rather than protection for domestic violence survivors (HRW, 2016). In the same year, a draft bill on domestic violence was rejected (Human Rights Council, 2017: 9). Society remains silent on the issue of domestic violence against women and cases are rarely reported to the police, even though health centres and counselling services regularly received cases of domestic violence (Human Rights Council, 2017: 20). A dispute resolution service is to be set up in each governorate. Under the Administrative Decision No. 2411 of 2008, the Ministry of Interior created a Community Police Department, which also offers psychological and social support for victims of crime.

c) Rape

Rape is addressed as a crime under the Criminal Code (1960). Article (186) criminalises rape and indecent assault, but marital rape is not explicitly criminalised (HRW, 2017). Legal age of consent does not exist because marriage is required before sexual intercourse (Age of Consent, 2017). From a legal standpoint, non-consent from the wife does not constitute rape (Human Line Org, 2017).

Aggravated forms of rape result in increased penalties and is punishable by death (arts. 186-187). Rape carries the death penalty when committed by a relation, guardian or servant. The same death penalty applies if statutory rape is committed against a minor (girl under the age of 16) or a woman who is unable to consent due to mental incapacitation.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010), rape in Kuwait occurs at a rate of 50 per 100 000 of the population- with women from Southeast Asia as the major victims (Europarl, 2014: 131). The medical standard for abortion and in cases of rape or incest are unclear (CEDAW, 2011: 10).

d) Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment stipulates a prison sentence of up to 10 years, or up to 15 years if the sexual harassment was committed with hate, threat or deception (articles 191 and 192 of the Penal Code). Stricter penalties, such as life imprisonment, are given to the harasser if they are related to the victim (e.g. family member, teacher, domestic worker) or if the victim is a minor, mentally unstable, or unable to know the nature of the act.

Sexual harassment in the workplace does not constitute a crime (CESCR. 2013: 6). The State issued a new Private Sector Labour Act, but it does not prohibit direct and indirect discrimination on the enumerated grounds in the ILO Convention (No. 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation) with respect to all aspects of employment, the prohibition of sexual harassment (CEDAW, 2011: 9).

Kuwait made strides to conform with international women's rights by creating a Women Police Task Force, which intervenes in cases of sexual harassment in public venues (CEDAW, 2011: 2). However, in CEDAW's (2011) concluding observations, the committee further encouraged the State party to include comprehensive provisions for effective access to legal redress for women victims.

e) Female genital mutilation

There is no indication that female genital mutilation is widely practiced in Kuwait (Freedom House, 2010: 20).

f) Abortion

The maximum number of weeks by which a woman can seek a legal abortion is 17 weeks and abortion is not available on demand (Women on Waves, 2017). Neither rape, incest, economic nor social grounds constitute grounds for abortion (FIDH, 2011). Termination of pregnancy is permitted if it endangers the life of the mother (art. 174-177 of the Penal Code). This includes preserving a woman's physical or mental health and in instances of foetal impairment (Europarl, 2014: 133). Otherwise

abortion is criminalised and can carry a sentence between 3 to 15 years' imprisonment (Human Rights Council, 2017: 9-10).

CEDAW (2011) urged the State party to create comprehensive medical standards that establish grounds for abortion in cases of rape and incest, and a law to protect women from forced sterilization and abortion (CEDAW, 2011: 11).

More

A legislative review committee was created at the Ministry of Justice to issue a joint body with The Minister for Social Affairs and Labour (in addition to some members of the Council of Ministers' Committee on Women's Affairs) to implement projects regarding the social empowerment of Kuwaiti women. The Committee on Women's Affairs was funded by The Council of Ministers budget to achieve various objectives. It was organized in collaboration with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the workshop was held in 2012.

CEDAW welcomed the submission of a draft Law against Trafficking in Persons, however, there was a lack of clarity about the envisaged definition of trafficking persons and expressed concern over the proof applied by courts and the Criminal Investigation Division for determining whether women are forced into prostitution against their will (CEDAW, 2011: 8).

Same-sex relations between men are punishable by up to seven years in prison (HRW, 2017). Only male homosexuality is considered illegal, there is no mention of lesbianism (Europarl, 2014: 32). Transgender people can be arrested under a 2007 penal code provision that prohibits "imitating the opposite sex in any way" (HRW, 2017).

3. Restricted access to productive and financial resources

a) Secure access to land and non-land assets

Women and men may equally own and control land and assets. Amended Law No. 2 of 2011 entitles widows and divorced women for loans to purchase their own property (Human Rights Council, 2017: 6). However, article (15) of the amended Act prioritizes Kuwaiti women married to non-citizens who are naturalized, in or before 1989.

Women face de facto discrimination as male consent is still required and biased cultural practices interfere with women's rights to control or retain their property (Human Rights Council, 2017: 8). For example, women are continually treated as dependents of men under the Social Security Law (No. 22 of 1987) and the Housing Assistance Law (No. 47 of 1993) (Europarl, 2014: 133).

b) Secure access to formal financial resources

Women and men have the same rights to open a bank account at an formal financial institution. Women are authorised to sign business and financial contracts without male consent, and the number of women starting their own businesses has moderately increased (Europarl, 2014: 55).

New articles (28 bis, 28 bis (a), 28 bis (b), 28 bis (c) and 33 bis) allow the Credit and Savings Bank to provide interest-free loans for divorced and widowed women who have children. They may also be granted low-cost rental accommodation in place of the loan if so requested.

Loss of the breadwinner grants widows additional support under The Public Assistance Act. No.22 of 1978. Widowed and divorced women who are unable to meet their own needs are provided with financial assistance if warranted, by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The Amiri decree No. 23 of 2013 stipulates entitlement to public assistance of widows, women who have been irrevocably divorced, and wives of prisoners.

Although the Government provides generous social allowances and subsidies, it is usually paid to men. According to officials, women are excluded from the benefits because men are considered the head of households and therefore only men are expected to support the family financially (Human Rights Council, 2017: 9). Women receive early retirement benefits after 20 years of service, however this incentive hinders women from obtaining leadership positions (Europarl, 2014: 23).

c) Workplace rights

Kuwait ratified 19 International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. Article (42) of the Constitution (1962), “prohibits the imposition of forced labour on anyone *except* in circumstances determined by law to be of national necessity...” Discrimination is also prohibited in the Constitution (1962) (art. 43). Workplace rights are governed by the Labour Code (Act No. 6 of 2010).

The Civil Service Act and the Civil Service Regulations stipulates the rights and obligations of public sector workers. The conditions for recruitment are claimed to be the same, in addition to salaries, allowances, and other entitlements. By law, women and men should receive equal pay for work of equal value (art. 26). Despite progress, significant pay gaps persist (Human Rights Council, 2017: 7; CESCR, 2013: 4; Europarl, 2014: 22).

Although the country boasts a high female labour force participation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, women are concentrated mainly in the service sector (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014). Cultural stereotypes reinforce discriminatory legal provisions. For example, women cannot work between 10 pm and 7 am unless they work at a health institution (art. 22). Moreover, female labourers are prohibited from work that is considered harmful to their morals or exploits their femininity in a manner inconsistent with public decency, including employment which provides services exclusively for men (art. 23).

The length of paid maternity leave is 70 days provided that the delivery occurs within this period (art. 24) (FAO, 2002: 99). International standards insist on 98 days (ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000) (Human Rights Council, 2017: 18). After this period, women labourers may request additional unpaid leave up to 4 months to take care of her child (art. 24). Employers are prohibited from dismissing women on leave (art. 24). The Civil Service Committee Decree (1/1993), article 1 section (b) discriminates between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women. Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti female employees married to Kuwaitis are given a leave of absence with half the salary for four months after their maternity leave, whereas non-Kuwaiti female employees married to non-Kuwaitis do not have this option. Women are granted two hours to breastfeed and employers must provide childcare

facilities for infants if there are more than 50 or more employed women (art. 25). Although in practice this rarely is enacted or enforced (Human Line Org, 20017). The law mandates neither paid parental leave nor paternity leave (Europarl, 2014).

The State strived for economic empowerment of women through the National Development Plan 2010-2013 and promotion of the role of women. In the plan, the State endeavoured to increase women in the workforce and in education, for example, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour implemented a project for the economic empowerment of women (National Development Plan 2010-2013). The State has also established a hotline to report labour complaints, human trafficking and forced labour (Ministerial Decision No. 141/A/2010).

There is a limited presence of women represented in the private sector because women receive more privileges (salary, allowances and leave) in the public sector. With oil revenue being distributed in the form of generous subsidies and family benefits, there is low incentive for women to compete with males in the workplace, especially in the private sector (Women's Rights in the Middle East & Shalaby, 2015: 5). Working in the public sector is seen to be more suitable for women as it is associated with shorter hours, more safety, and generous in terms of maternity and childcare services (Europarl, 2014: 23).

Women's roles are still largely attached to the family and household as they are often restricted from work in general if the work is perceived by the husband to interfere with marital relations or the woman's ability to raise her children (Europarl, 2014: 133). CESCR noted with concern at the absence of sturdy policies to improve employment for women and the horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the labour market (arts. 3 and 6 of the Labour Code) (CESCR, 2013: 4).

Education and globalisation has empowered women to pursue diverse careers and increased their economic participation, but women's mobility is still quite restricted and senior positions are primarily held by men (Europarl, 2014: 22). So even though the proportion of women in higher education has risen, it does not correspond with their share of decision making positions or labour participation (Europarl, 2014: 28).

4. Restricted civil liberties

a) Citizenship rights

Kuwait acceded to CEDAW but made reservations to article 9 (2) on citizenship rights (Human Rights Council, 2017: 5). According to the Nationality Act (1959), women and men have equal rights to retain their nationality (arts. 9 and 10) (art. 27 of the Kuwait Constitution).

Article (2) explicitly states only Kuwaiti fathers can automatically pass their Kuwaiti citizenship to their children and foreign spouses. Under extreme circumstances may Kuwaiti women pass on their nationality to their children, such as: unknown kinship (art. 3) divorce from, or the death of the father (art. 4) (UNICEF, 2011: 1; Kuwait Society for Human Rights, 2015: 3). The final decision to grant the child citizenship rests with the Minister of the Interior (Human Rights Council, 2017: 8; Kuwait Society for Human Rights, 2015: 3; CEDAW, 2011: 9).

Kuwaiti women cannot pass nationality to their foreign spouses (art. 8). This renders Kuwaiti women's foreign spouses and children denial of rights to inheritance, occupation of certain public jobs, equal pay, and admission into the military and the Ministry of Interior (Kuwait Society for Human Rights, 2015: 3). Foreign women married to Kuwaiti men are granted residency instantly and may apply for citizenship after 15 years of marriage (HRW, 2017).

Since 2009, a constitutional court decision ruling against the passport law of 1962, allowed married women to have the right to obtain passports and travel without their husband's permission (Human Rights Council, 2017: 6; Freedom House, 2016).

CEDAW (2011) called on Kuwait to change the Nationality Act of 1959 to ensure women and men equal opportunity regarding the acquisition, change and retention of nationality, and for women to pass on their nationality to their children (HRW, 2017).

The Committee also expressed concern over reports that the issuance and renewal of identity cards for the Bidoun – “illegal residents” is subject to the requirement that they sign proclamations renouncing any claim to Kuwaiti nationality (CEDAW, 2011: 9). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2017), the Bidoun community is estimated to be a population of about 100,000 in Kuwait. They face discrimination in obtaining citizenship and are virtually stateless. Kuwait women married to Bidoun men cannot pass on nationality to their Bidoun spouse or children (HRW, 2017).

b) Voting

The 2005 Election Law (No. 35 of 1962) granted Kuwaiti women the right to vote (Equality Now, 2017; Freedom House, 2016). This was enacted due to women's rights activists mounting large-scale demonstrations in 2005 in support of women's voting rights. After just two months following these protests the parliament reformed the electoral law to grant women the right to vote (UN Women, 2015).

The Kuwait Federation of Women's Association and the Women's Cultural and Social Society are associated with the Government and represent Kuwaiti women. These women's rights organisations are granted the right to advocate change in regard to the political disadvantages and exclusions women face (UN Women, 2015).

c) Political voice

Kuwait ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), but made reservations to the treaty (Equality Now, 2017). Kuwait reportedly established committees in the legislatures that address women's issues on the temporary or permanent basis (human rights, social affairs and children's protections, but there remains a lack of gender analysis skills (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014: 6-8).

Strong party systems do not exist in Kuwait. The lack of organized political parties representing the interests of the Kuwaiti electorate has greatly contributed to limiting women's opportunities to compete in elections, even after being granted their full political rights in 2005 (Women's Rights in the Middle East Program & Shabaly, 2015: 17). Neither temporary special measures were implemented to deal with gender equality issues, nor were quotas implemented regarding representation of women

in municipal councils, the National Assembly, or higher level positions of the administration (CEDAW, 2011: 5-6).

Kuwaiti women have the right to run for office in local and parliamentary elections (Legislative Act. No. 67 of 2005) (Equality Now, 2017). Women can serve as judges after a required six years of services as prosecutors (Human Rights Council, 2017: 16). The Supreme Council of the Judiciary Decision No. 14 of 2013 brought in 22 women as prosecutors. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs now allows women to be appointed as diplomats; whereas prior to 2014, women who completed diplomatic training could only be “political researchers” (Human Rights Council, 2017: 16). Kuwait demonstrates progress in the sphere of women’s access to female ambassadors compared to other countries in the MENA region (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014: 15).

The Parliament and the Parliamentary Committee dedicated to gender equality/women’s affairs are the institutions responsible for gender equality oversight. The legislative committees on gender equality are temporary, and the co-ordination mechanisms used to implement gender equality are cross governmental committees (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014: 7).

Women still face numerous cultural barriers, which can be seen in the low level of representation and participation in the Parliament, government, and public and political life (CEDAW, 2011: 8). There are very few women in the legislative and executive bodies (Freedom House, 2016; CCPR, 2016: 3; Women's Rights in the Middle East Program & Shalaby, 2015: 3).

Tribalism from the Bedouin populations plus Islamic politics brought a set of conservative norms and traditional values that contributed to the marginalization of limiting women’s roles in the public domain (Women's Rights in the Middle East Program & Shalaby, 2015: 5). Additionally, institutional and structural barriers and exclusion from a male-dominated network make it difficult for women to advance in the political sphere (Human Rights Council, 2017: 15).

d) Access to justice

All residents (including non-Kuwaitis) have access to courts, and since 2014 anyone can file a discrimination complaint. However, the Personal Status law (Act. No 51 of 1984) and the Criminal Code (Act No. 16 of 1960) affect women differently according to their religion (Human Rights Council, 2017: 6).

Filing a complaint to the constitutional court cost KD 5,000 (more than \$15, 000) which prevents equal access for women, since Kuwaiti women rely financially on their husbands or male family members (Human Rights Council, 2017: 11).

In general, women’s testimony is given lesser weight than men’s (HRW, 2014; UNICEF, 2011: 1), although according to some judicial authorities this principle is not implemented (Human Rights Council, 2017: 11). There also remains a lack of clarity about the burden of proof women must provide in court with respect to injury in domestic violence cases (CEDAW, 2011: 7).

The establishment of a family court (2013) in each of the country’s governorates has been implemented to resolve family disputes, particularly involving women. Legal assistance and

interpretation is allegedly offered to everyone; however, lawyers are only provided to the accused. All hearings of personal status cases are expedited, and judges have full discretion (Human Rights Council, 2017: 11).

There is a legal complaint mechanism which collects data on specific crimes investigated and prosecuted before the courts, but there is no concrete data on the number and outcome of complaints on discrimination, including domestic violence reported by women. Although there are mechanisms on women's equality, such as the Women's Affairs and the National Assembly's Committee on Women's Affairs, there is a lack of clarity about the impact of the activities of the national machinery on gender equality, its mandate, and the human and financial resources allocated to individual mechanisms (CEDAW, 2011: 5).

The first group of women prosecutors were recently appointed and are in training to become judges, which should ensure a more gender-sensitive legislative body (Human Rights Council, 2017: 11). The Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies provides judges and prosecutors with training on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, however it is unclear how this has impacted court decisions (Human Rights Council, 2017: 10).

Women's affairs offices in several ministries have been set up, including: The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Youth. However, in 2015 a specific committee on women's rights was rejected because women's issues were perceived as "too narrow" (Human Rights Council, 2017: 11). The inter-ministerial women's committee affiliated with the Cabinet branch of the Government does not meet international standards set out by CEDAW (Human Rights Council, 2017: 12).

Kuwait's development plan for the period 2015/16-2019/20, provides for, inter alia, elimination of discrimination against women, in a manner consistent with sharia, through updates in legislation. This includes protection from violence in the family and community, and support for women's socioeconomic development (Human Rights Council, 2017: 12).

More

Adoption of Act. No 67 in 2015 established a national human rights institution (Diwan Huquq al-Insan) (Human Rights Council, 2017: 11). The Constitution (1962) stipulates all people are equal regardless of distinction to sex, origin, language or religion (art. 29). This provides for legal framework to help combat discrimination against women (Human Rights Council, 2017: 5).

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs started an initiative to raise public awareness on issues affecting women's rights during Friday prayer sermons (Human Rights Council, 2017: 14).

Two elected women to serve in the parliament appeared in the National Assembly without the hijab, and the constitutional court upheld this freedom stating the provision in sharia law could be interpreted in many ways due to the provision's unspecific nature (Human Rights Council, 2017: 6).

In Kuwait, positive results have been achieved by women's rights organisations. However, these organisations mainly consist of women from the elite class. Furthermore, the setting up and operation

of women's rights organisations is closely regulated by the government and subjected to severe restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (Europarl, 2014: 41).

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