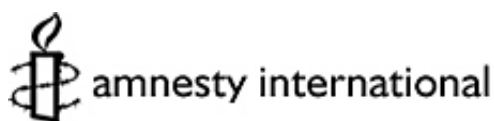


Title	Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Kuwait
Publisher	Amnesty International
Country	Kuwait
Publication Date	24 May 2012
Cite as	Amnesty International, <i>Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Kuwait</i> , 24 May 2012, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4fbe392d32.html [accessed 1 December 2012]
Disclaimer	This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.



Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Kuwait

Head of state: al-Shaikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah

Head of government: al-Shaikh Jaber al-Mubarak al-Hamad al-Sabah (replaced al-Shaikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah in November)

Death penalty: retentionist

Population: 2.8 million

Life expectancy: 74.6 years

Under-5 mortality: 9.9 per 1,000

Adult literacy: 93.9 per cent

Freedom of expression was curtailed. Critics of the government, including those using social media, were at risk of arrest, and security forces beat some demonstrators. One man died in police custody apparently after being tortured. Women continued to face discrimination in law and in practice. Thousands of Bidun continued to be denied Kuwaiti nationality and so were denied access to health care, education and employment on the same basis as citizens. At least 17 people were sentenced to death; no executions were reported.

Background

There were a number of protests, some apparently inspired by events elsewhere in the region. Partly in response, it appeared, the government disbursed grants in February reportedly worth around US\$4,000 and food rations to Kuwaiti citizens. In June, hundreds of mostly young Kuwaitis demonstrated, calling for a change of government and an end to corruption. A wave of strikes began in September by workers demanding better pay and benefits. In November, in response to escalating demands by protesters who occupied parliament and by members of the opposition, the Prime Minister resigned. Kuwait was elected to the UN Human Rights Council in May. Kuwait's record was considered by the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) in May and by the CEDAW Committee in October.

Freedom of expression and assembly

Government critics were liable to arrest. Demonstrations were generally allowed, although at least one was forcibly dispersed. Riot police occasionally beat demonstrators.

- In January, the Supreme Court overturned the prison sentence imposed on journalist Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem in November 2010 after he was convicted of defamation

in a case filed against him by the Prime Minister. He faced further allegations of defamation.

- Online activist Nasser Abul was arrested on 7 June and charged with breaching "state security", "damaging the country's interests" and "severing political relationship with brotherly countries" because of messages he posted on Twitter. On 24 September, he was convicted of writing derogatory remarks about Sunni Muslims and sentenced to three months' imprisonment, but immediately released due to the time he had already been detained. He was found not guilty of insulting the ruling families of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.
- On 16 November, riot police beat protesters outside the Prime Minister's residence before they occupied parliament, demanding an end to corruption and the resignation of the Prime Minister.

Torture and other ill-treatment

One man died in custody apparently after being tortured by police.

- Mohammad Ghazzai al-Maimuni al-Mutairi died after police arrested him in January for possessing alcohol. Initially, the authorities said he resisted arrest and died from a heart ailment but then launched an investigation after an opposition MP produced medical evidence indicating that he had been bound and severely beaten before he died. Some 19 police officers were charged in connection with his death; their trial was continuing.

The CAT urged the government to amend the law to make torture a crime punishable by severe penalties.

Discrimination – the Bidun

Throughout the year, hundreds of Bidun, long-term residents of Kuwait, demonstrated to protest against their continuing statelessness and to demand Kuwaiti nationality, which would allow them to access free education, free health care and employment opportunities on the same basis as Kuwaiti citizens. More than 100,000 Bidun continued to be denied nationality. The security forces used force to disperse demonstrations and arrested protesters. The government said it would address some Bidun grievances but stated that only 34,000 Bidun were eligible for citizenship.

Migrant workers

Migrant domestic workers, many from countries in south and south-east Asia, were still not protected by Kuwait's labour laws. Many faced exploitation and abuse by employers. Those who left their jobs without their employer's permission, even when fleeing abuse, were liable to arrest, detention, prosecution under immigration laws for "absconding", and deportation.

- In October, an unnamed Indonesian domestic worker died after she hanged herself in a police cell after being arrested for fleeing her place of work and charged with "absconding".

The CAT urged the government to urgently enact labour legislation to cover domestic work and ensure that migrant domestic workers, particularly women, are protected against exploitation and abuse.

Women's rights

Women continued to face discrimination in law and in practice. In October, the CEDAW Committee urged the government to criminalize domestic and sexual violence, introduce tougher penalties for perpetrators of so-called honour crimes, and introduce legislation to promote gender equality.

Death penalty

At least 14 men and three women were sentenced to death after being convicted of murder or drug-trafficking. Most were foreign nationals. At least one death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. No executions were reported.

The CAT urged the government to restrict the application of the death penalty to "most serious" crimes and treat death row prisoners humanely.

Copyright notice: © Copyright Amnesty International
