

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION REPORT

KUWAIT

18 FEBRUARY 2008

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Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information Report (COI Report) has been produced by COI Service, Border and Immigration Agency (BIA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The main body of the report includes information available up to 31 December 2007. The 'Latest News' section contains further brief information on events and reports accessed from 1 January to 15 February 2008.
- ii The Report is compiled wholly from material produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources and does not contain any BIA opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to the original source material, which is made available to those working in the asylum/human rights determination process.
- iii The Report aims to provide a brief summary of the source material identified, focusing on the main issues raised in asylum and human rights applications. It is not intended to be a detailed or comprehensive survey. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.
- iv The structure and format of the COI Report reflects the way it is used by BIA decision makers and appeals presenting officers, who require quick electronic access to information on specific issues and use the contents page to go directly to the subject required. Key issues are usually covered in some depth within a dedicated section, but may also be referred to briefly in several other sections. Some repetition is therefore inherent in the structure of the Report.
- v The information included in this COI Report is limited to that which can be identified from source documents. While every effort is made to cover all relevant aspects of a particular topic, it is not always possible to obtain the information concerned. For this reason, it is important to note that information included in the Report should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated. For example, if it is stated that a particular law has been passed, this should not be taken to imply that it has been effectively implemented unless stated.
- vi As noted above, the Report is a collation of material produced by a number of reliable information sources. In compiling the Report, no attempt has been made to resolve discrepancies between information provided in different source documents. For example, different source documents often contain different versions of names and spellings of individuals, places and political parties, etc. COI Reports do not aim to bring consistency of spelling, but to reflect faithfully the spellings used in the original source documents. Similarly, figures given in different source documents sometimes vary and these are simply quoted as per the original text. The term 'sic' has been used in this document only to denote incorrect spellings or typographical errors in quoted text; its use is not intended to imply any comment on the content of the material.
- vii The Report is based substantially upon source documents issued during the previous two years. However, some older source documents may have been

included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents. All sources contain information considered relevant at the time this Report was issued.

- viii This COI Report and the accompanying source material are public documents. All COI Reports are published on the RDS section of the Home Office website and the great majority of the source material for the Report is readily available in the public domain. Where the source documents identified in the Report are available in electronic form, the relevant web link has been included, together with the date that the link was accessed. Copies of less accessible source documents, such as those provided by government offices or subscription services, are available from the COI Service upon request.
- ix COI Reports are published regularly on the top 20 asylum intake countries. COI Key Documents are produced on lower asylum intake countries according to operational need. BIA officials also have constant access to an information request service for specific enquiries.
- x In producing this COI Report, COI Service has sought to provide an accurate, balanced summary of the available source material. Any comments regarding this Report or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to the BIA as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

Border and Immigration Agency
Apollo House
36 Wellesley Road
Croydon CR9 3RR
United Kingdom

Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

- xi The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the BIA's country of origin information material. The APCI welcomes all feedback on the BIA's COI Reports, Key Documents and other country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at www.apci.org.uk
- xii In the course of its work, the APCI reviews the content of selected BIA COI documents and makes recommendations specific to those documents and of a more general nature. The APCI may or may not have reviewed this particular document. At the following link is a list of the COI Reports and other documents which have, to date, been reviewed by the APCI: www.apci.org.uk/reviewed-documents.html
- xiii Please note: It is not the function of the APCI to endorse any BIA material or procedures. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any

endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

Advisory Panel on Country Information:

Email: apci@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.apci.org.uk

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Latest News

EVENTS IN KUWAIT, FROM 1 JANUARY 2008 TO 15 FEBRUARY 2008

- 12 February** The Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS) held its 2nd Kuwait Transparency Society Forum, which focused on the Government's need to be more transparent in its public transactions.
 "Minister of Justice and Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Jamal Al-Shehab thanked KTS for their efforts in preparing the forum which he said could lead to more effective services and which helps fight corruption in the government."
 Kuwait Times – Enough time to address Kuwait corruption issue, 13 February 2008
http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=MTMwOTM4NjMxMg
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)
- 11 February** "Minister of Interior Sheikh Jaber Al-Khaled announced that the naturalization list would be ready by the end of March [2008]. Sheikh Jaber Al-Khaled said interior officials were currently setting the conditions for granting Kuwaiti citizenship in accordance to Kuwaiti laws and regulations."
 Kuwait Times – Naturalization list soon, 11 February 2008
http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=NDE0ODk5NTA2
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)
- 10 February** A recent proposal to end forced segregation at Universities has highlighted the divided nature of Kuwaiti opinion, which ranges "...from die hard conservative pro-segregationists to liberal-minded segregation critics."
 "MP Ali Al-Rashed, one of the three MPs who submitted the proposal to eliminate forced segregation at the university level, received a death threat via a telephone call last week claiming the law was contrary to local Islamic tradition."
 Kuwait Times – Kuwaitis divided over segregation, 10 February 2008
http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=MjAwNDMxMTI3
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)
- 6 February** "Minister of Communications and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdullah Al-Muhailbi recently announced that the Cabinet would soon be proposing a new law wherein the committee would monitor and regulate websites and blogs. Kuwait recently passed a new publication law which narrowed freedom of the press.
 "The local blogging community engages in political discussions, social networking, and posting commentaries on a broad range of subject matter. They have remained untouched by state laws governing free speech until last summer's arrest of two journalists, one of whose website posted a third party's comments which insulted HH the Amir, a violation of Kuwaiti law."
 Kuwait Times – Kuwait to monitor websites, blogs, 6 February 2008
http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=Mjg5MDgwMzQx
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)
- 30 January** "The Public Authority for Fatwa and Legislation has asked the Ministry of Interior to stop accepting bedoons and expatriates that are

applying to the police force. The authority noted that all procedures of accepting bedoons and expatriates into the police force should be stopped until this issue was reviewed properly. The authority pointed out that in view of the increasing number of Kuwaitis now applying to join the police force, bedoons and expats might be excluded from all security forces."

Kuwait Times – Bedoon recruitment halted, 30 January 2008
http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=NzY3ODQ0MDk0
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)

22 January "Kuwait's only female cabinet minister, Nouria Sbeih, has survived a no-confidence vote in parliament. The education minister was accused of ignoring a sex segregation law at universities and presiding over a drop in educational standards."

BBC News – Kuwaiti Woman Minister Survives, 22 January 2008
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7202682.stm
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)

22 January "The Ministry of Interior granted Kuwaiti citizenship to 543 candidates on the nationalization list and suspended granting citizenship to 13 candidates on the list. The committee in charge of reviewing the documents of the candidates said the 13 candidates had civil cases and had to pay fines to governmental authorities."

Kuwait Times – Nationalization of 13 candidates delayed, 22 January 2008
http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=OTcwMTA2OTQy
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)

8 January "Minister of Justice Jamal Al-Shehab plans to establish a human rights bureau at the Ministry of Justice. The bureau will aim at supporting human rights in Kuwait and improve the overseas reputation of Kuwait. The bureau will also review international agreements regarding human rights and discuss the possibility of adding Kuwait to such agreements. The human rights bureau will prepare reports about human rights issues in Kuwait and will send these reports to the International Human Rights Organization."

Kuwait Times – Human rights bureau, 8 January 2008
http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=MTA0Mzc5MTYyOQ
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)

3 January "Officials recently announced that a new list of applicants entitled to be granted the Kuwaiti nationality would be released soon. Applicants in the list, to be granted Kuwaiti citizenship, would include all those stateless persons holding high educational degrees as well as all those bedoons who are registered in the 1965 statistics provided that they were free of any security breaches."

Kuwait Times – Interior to release citizenship list, 3 January 2008
http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=NjYxODMwODMx
 (Accessed 17 February 2008)

REPORTS ON KUWAIT PUBLISHED OR ACCESSED SINCE DECEMBER 2007**Reporters sans frontières**

Annual report 2008

http://www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rapport_en-3.pdf

(Accessed 17 February 2008)

Background information

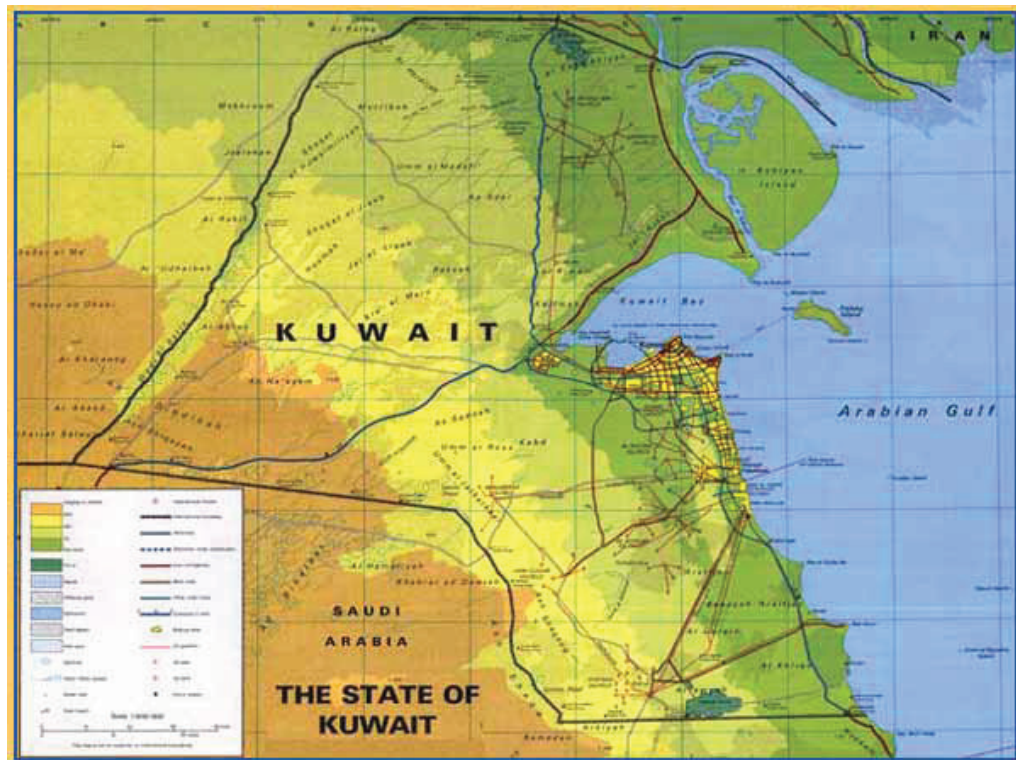
GEOGRAPHY

- 1.01 The State of Kuwait lies at the north-west of the Persian (Arabian) Gulf, with a border on the north-west to Iraq and to the south Saudi Arabia. The State comprises a mainland region and nine small islands. (Europa Online, retrieved 11 June 2007) [2] (Country Profile) The capital is Kuwait City, within 500-square kilometres of which 90 per cent of the population resided. (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (People) (Europa Online, retrieved 11 June 2007) [2] (Country Profile) Kuwait covers an area of 17,820 sq. km. (or 6,880 sq. miles), much of which is arid desert. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile, reviewed 5 March 2007) [3a] (Geography)
- 1.02 The US Department of State's (USSD) Background Note of June 2007 reported that the country's population was comprised of 35 per cent Kuwaiti citizens (approximately 1 million), while other Arabs comprised 22 per cent, non-Arab (primarily Asian) 39 per cent and stateless Arabs (Biduns) four per cent. (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (People) Further:
- “Of the country's total population of 3.1 million; approximately 80% are Muslims, including nearly all of its 1.203 million citizens. While the national census does not distinguish between Sunni and Shi'a adherents, approximately 70-75% of citizens, including the ruling family, belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. The remaining Kuwaiti citizens, with the exception of about 100-200 Christians and a few Baha'is, are Shi'a. The expatriate Christian population is estimated to be more than 400,000 residents. There are also communities of Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs.” (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (People)
- 1.03 The official language is Arabic which is spoken by the majority of Kuwaiti nationals and by many of the country's non-Kuwaiti residents. (Europa Online, retrieved 11 June 2007) [2] (Country Profile)

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MAP

1.04 Map produced by Kuwait-Info.com. [30]



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ECONOMY

- 2.01 “Kuwait has a small, relatively open economy dominated by the oil industry and government sector. Approximately 90% of the Kuwaiti citizen labour force works in the public sector, and 90% of private sector workers are non-Kuwaitis. Kuwait’s proven crude oil reserves of about 101.5 billion barrels — 9% of world reserves — account for nearly 60% of GDP, 95% of export revenues, and 80-90% of government income.” (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (Economy)
- 2.02 The World Bank’s Kuwait Data Profile of April 2007 indicated a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at 2005 of \$80.8 billion and a GDP annual growth in the same year of 8.5 per cent. The World Bank also listed a Gross National Income (GNI) of \$77.7 billion for 2005 with a GNI per capita of \$30,630. [4] The annual percentage figure for inflation in 2006 was 3. (CIA World Factbook, 4 October 2007) [12] (Economy)
- 2.03 The Kuwaiti currency is the dinar and the exchange rate was 0.55 dinars to the British pound and 0.27 dinars to the US dollar as of 31 December 2007. (Oanada.com, accessed 24 January 2008) [38a, 38b] The country’s major industries were oil, food processing, textiles, furniture and fertilisers with its major trading partners being USA, UK, Japan and Germany. (FCO Country Profile, reviewed 5 March 2007) [3a] (Basic Economic Facts) In terms of agriculture, with the exception of fish, most food was imported. (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (Agriculture)
- 2.04 The CIA World Factbook in October 2007 listed the unemployment rate for 2004 as 2.2 per cent. [12] (Economy) “A national minimum wage was in effect for public sector employees. Citizens were guaranteed at least \$690 (200 dinars) per month, while the noncitizens’ wage was \$310 (90 dinars). The public sector minimum wage provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. There was no legal minimum wage in the private sector.” (USSD Human Rights (HR) report 2006) [1b] (Section 6e) The wages of unskilled private sector workers did not always provide a decent standard of living, with housemaids often making less than \$138 (40 dinars) a month. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 6e)
- 2.05 The FCO Country Profile described Kuwait as a “generous aid donor”. [3a] (Economy) The USSD Background Note of June 2007 reported that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), an autonomous state institution, contributed millions of dollars in grants:
- “At the 2003 Madrid Conference, the Government of Kuwait pledged \$1.5 billion in assistance to Iraq. KFAED is responsible for disbursing and overseeing as much as \$560 million of that assistance through grants. In 2005, KFAED contributed \$50 million to Pakistan earthquake relief, contributed \$50 million for Hurricane Katrina relief, and made significant contributions to tsunami relief efforts. Kuwaiti *[sic]* has also supported the establishment of the International Compact for Iraq.” [1a] (Trade, Finance, and Aid)

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HISTORY

3.01 Europa online, retrieved on 11 June 2007, records:

"Kuwait became part of Turkey's Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. During the later years of Ottoman rule Kuwait became a semi-autonomous Arab monarchy, with local administration controlled by a Sheikh of the Sabah family, which is still the ruling dynasty. In 1899, fearing an extension of Turkish control, the ruler of Kuwait made a treaty with the United Kingdom, accepting British protection while surrendering control over external relations. ...

"Sheikh Ahmad (ruler since 1921) was succeeded in 1950 by his cousin, Sheikh Abdullah as-Salim as-Sabah, who inaugurated a programme of public works and educational development, funded by petroleum revenues, which transformed Kuwait's infrastructure and introduced a comprehensive system of welfare services.

"Kuwait became fully independent on 19 June 1961, when the United Kingdom and Kuwait agreed to terminate the 1899 treaty. The ruler took the title of Amir and assumed full executive power." [2] (**Recent History**)

3.02 It continues:

"As Kuwait's petroleum sector expanded during the 1960s, the country became increasingly wealthy. The Government effected an extensive redistribution of income, through public expenditure and a land compensation scheme, but there was some popular discontent concerning corruption and official manipulation of the media and the Majlis. ...

"The collapse of Kuwait's unofficial stock exchange, the Souk al-Manakh, in September 1982 caused a prolonged financial crisis, ... The Majlis subsequently opposed several government measures, including proposed price increases for public services, educational reforms and legislation to restrict the press, and questioned the competence of certain ministers. In July 1986 the Council of Ministers submitted its resignation to the Amir, who then dissolved the Majlis and suspended some articles of the Constitution, declaring his intention to rule by decree. The Crown Prince was immediately reappointed Prime Minister. An Amiri decree accorded the Council of Ministers greater powers of censorship, including the right to suspend publication of newspapers for up to two years.

"In late 1989 the Amir refused to accept a petition, signed by more than 20,000 Kuwaiti citizens, seeking the restoration of the Majlis. In January 1990 police dispersed two pro-democracy demonstrations, although later in the month the Government agreed to relax press censorship. In June [1990] 62% of eligible voters participated in a general election for 50 members of a 'provisional' National Council; a further 25 members were appointed by the Amir. The election was boycotted by pro-democracy activists, who continued to demand the full restoration of the Majlis." [2] (**Recent History**)

3.03 In August 1990, after a series of disputes over oil, money and boundaries, Iraq attacked and invaded its smaller neighbour Kuwait. The invasion received immediate international condemnation and in January 1991, after the failure of

international diplomatic efforts and sanctions, a 28-member military coalition under US command (and UN-sanctioned) began a ground assault that resulted in the liberation of Kuwait by the end of February 1991. Since that time Kuwait has had to recover from the economic, environmental and psychological damage caused by the occupation. In 2003 it was the launch pad for the invasion of Iraq. (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (History) (Europa Online, retrieved 11 June 2007) [2] (Recent History) (FCO Country Profile, reviewed 5 March 2007) [3a] (History)

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.01 In March 2007, the Government of Kuwait submitted its resignation to the country's Amir (alternatively spelt *Emir*). This move came ahead of a vote of no confidence in the health minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah al-Sabah, a member of the ruling royal family, who had faced accusations of mismanagement and incompetence. The Government, in office for only eight months, had reportedly failed to obtain sufficient support in the vote. (BBC, 4 March 2007) [5e]
- 4.02 Kuwait's new education minister, Nouria al-Sbeih, was greeted by protests as she took the oath of office, as she refused to wear a headscarf in parliament. Many Kuwaiti women wear the veil but Islamic dress is not mandatory. Ms Sbeih was the second female cabinet member after health minister Massouma al-Mubarak. The new 16-member cabinet was formed in March 2007. (BBC, 2 April 2007) [5f]
- 4.03 In June 2006 parliamentary elections were held which, for the first time, allowed women both to vote and stand as candidates. Women made up 28 of the 252 candidates, as well as 57 per cent of the electorate, standing for the 50 seat parliament. Under the rules written in 2005 men and women had to vote separately. State media reported a turnout of 78 per cent in some voting centres but, despite two female candidates having topped 1,000 votes, both women failed to win any seats. (BBC, 29 June 2006) [5c]
- 4.04 Kuwaiti reformists campaigning on an anti-corruption platform – some of them Islamists – gained four seats in the election and took their total number of seats in parliament to 33. The opposition candidates had promised to table a bill to reduce the number of voting districts from 25 to five, instead of the 10 backed by the cabinet. It was argued that the existence of a large number of small constituencies in which the 340,000 strong electorate could vote promoted corruption and vote-buying. A dispute over this issue had led to opposition MPs boycotting parliament. The Amir, Sheikh Sabar al-Ahmed al-Sabah had dissolved parliament and called early elections. (BBC, 30 June 2006) [5d]
- 4.05 In September 2007, the *Kuwait Times* reported that the Kuwaiti authorities had announced that only 5,000 – a fraction of the 85,000 applicants for naturalisation – would be granted:
- “... the 5,000 would be from those already registered in the Illegal Residents Central Committee lists and that they would be granted citizenship in groups starting by 2,000 this year while the remaining groups would be *[sic]* receive Kuwaiti citizenship over the coming years.
- “The sources further explained that the 5,000 bedoons had been examined and it was found that no security restrictions were on any of them and that most of them already had Kuwaiti relatives or even brothers and sisters. ...
- “Commenting on the remaining 80,000, the [same official] source stressed that they would not be granted citizenship and that special measures would be taken to ensure their legal existence in Kuwait to end the issue once and for all.” [49a]

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CONSTITUTION

- 5.01 A constitution for Kuwait was promulgated as law number 1 on 11 November 1962. [32] The document opened with the declaration that Kuwait was “an independent sovereign Arab state” and its people were “a part of the Arab Nation”. Islam was “the religion of the state”, and the Shari’a (Islamic law) was “a main source of legislation”. The constitution defined Kuwait as a “hereditary Amirate, the succession to which shall be in the descendants of the late Mubarak Al Sabah”. Although granting the Amir substantial power, the Constitution also provided for political participation by the citizens. The system of government was defined in Article 6 as “democratic, under which sovereignty resides in the people, the source of all powers”. Articles 79 to 122 established the National Assembly and set out the rules governing its formation, rights and duties. (US Library of Congress, January 1993) [6] (Constitution)

“Individual rights protected by the constitution are extensive and include personal liberty and equality before the law, freedom to hold beliefs and express opinions, and freedom of the press. The residences of citizens are inviolable, the torture and the deportation of Kuwaiti citizens are prohibited, and the accused are assumed innocent until proven guilty. Also guaranteed is the freedom to form associations and trade unions. The constitution guarantees the independence of the judiciary and designates the Supreme Council of the Judiciary as its highest body and guarantor of judicial independence.” (US Library of Congress, January 1993) [6] (Constitution)

- 5.02 The Constitution grants citizens a number of social rights which form the basis for Kuwait’s extensive welfare system. The State is constitutionally obliged to care for the young and to aid the old, the ill and the disabled. It is obliged to provide public education and to attend to public health. Duties of citizens include national defence, the observance of public order, respect for public morals and the payment of taxes. These rights and obligations, however, applied only to Kuwaiti citizens. The remainder of the population had few political and civic rights and have only restricted access to the benefits of the state welfare system. (US Library of Congress, January 1993) [6] (Constitution)

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POLITICAL SYSTEM

- 6.01 Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate ruled by princes (*Amirs*) drawn from the Al Sabah family since the middle of the eighteenth century C.E. (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (**Government and Political Conditions**)

“Under the 1962 Constitution, executive power is vested in the Amir, the Head of State (who is chosen by and from members of the ruling family), and is exercised through the Council of Ministers. The Amir appoints the Prime Minister and, on the latter’s recommendation, other ministers. Legislative power is vested in the unicameral Majlis al-Umma (National Assembly), with 50 elected members who serve for four years (subject to dissolution), along with some 15 government ministers who sit as *ex officio* members. In May 2005 legislation was approved allowing women to vote in legislative and municipal elections for the first time. The country is divided administratively into six governorates.” (Europa Online, retrieved 11 June 2007) [2] (**Government**)

- 6.02 Europa World Online outlined that candidates for election to the Assembly had to possess the franchise, be over 30 years of age and literate. The Assembly would convene for at least eight months in any year and new elections would be held within two months of the last dissolution of the outgoing legislature. [2] (**Government**)

“Although the constitution affords the assembly considerable power, the body is limited by two major restrictions: the small size of the electorate as defined by law, which restricts suffrage to most adult male nationals whose ancestors were present in Kuwait in 1920; and the power of the amir [*sic*] to dissolve the assembly virtually at will. Nonetheless, the assembly plays a prominent role in raising issues of public importance, reviewing and challenging government policies and programs, and responding to constituent concerns. It helps give Kuwait a much more open and public political life than that in other gulf states.” (US Library of Congress, January 1993) [6] (**Legislature**)

- 6.03 The USSD HR report 2006 records that, although the Constitution proclaims the system of government to be democratic, “sovereignty resides in the people, the source of all powers” and the citizens of Kuwait do not have the right to change their government. [1b] (**Section 3**)

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Human Rights

INTRODUCTION

- 7.01 The 2006 US State Department Report on Human Rights Practices (USSD HR report 2006) records:

“During the year [2006] the main human rights abuses included: no right to change the government or to form political parties; unlawful deprivation of life; maltreatment in prisons, including abuse of detainees; incomplete independence of the judiciary; restricted freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion; limits on freedom of movement for certain groups of people; corruption; and trafficking in persons. Serious human rights problems also included the difficult conditions faced by expatriate workers in the domestic and unskilled service sectors, the unresolved status of stateless Arab residents (bidoon), and the unequal rights of women.

“..., women voted and ran for office for the first time in the country's history. The government also passed a new press and publications law that may enhance freedom of speech.” [1b] (p1)

- 7.02 Reports on human rights in Kuwait published during 2006 and 2007 mostly concerned themselves with highlighting improvements in the political rights of women, the government's continuing efforts in the 'War on terror', the lifting of some restrictions on press freedom, and the ongoing plight of the Bidoons and foreign workers. (AI Annual Report 2007) [8b] (HRW, November 2007) [9b] (FH, Freedom in the World 2007) [10a] (RSF Annual Report 2007) [16a] (RI, 25 July 2007 & October 2007) [18a] [18b] (MRG State of the World's Minorities 2007) [44]

- 7.03 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile, last reviewed by the FCO on 5 March 2007, remarks:

“Kuwait has ratified all six core UN human rights conventions. Press freedom is guaranteed by the constitution although a degree of self-censorship is exercised. There is a high level of freedom of expression and tolerance of Christianity. The Prime Minister has declared his intention to push for a solution to the long-standing problem of stateless residents of Kuwait (the Bidoon). Kuwait retains the death penalty.” [3a] (Human Rights)

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SECURITY SITUATION

- 8.01 The Executive Summary of the Defence and Security Report on Kuwait, produced by Bharat Book Bureau, reports:

“Kuwait has a small number of indirect security threats, but benefits from the external security endowed upon it by the US. In the past, its geo-strategic location made it precarious to threats, from an Iraqi invasion in 1991 and the possibility of an Iraqi missile strike on Kuwait prior to the US-led coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003. Kuwait faces a limited internal threat from al-Qaeda-linked militants operating on Kuwaiti soil. As with many of the region’s ruling regimes, there is a degree of protest from within disaffected sections of the population. The emirate will remain concerned with the ongoing instabilities in post-war Iraq and the possibility of Kuwaiti jihadis returning from Iraq.”
[36] (Executive Summary)

- 8.02 The USSD Country Reports on Terrorism 2006 noted that “...the risk of a terrorist attack in Kuwait remained high because of the Government of Kuwait’s continued reluctance to confront domestic extremists and Kuwaiti supporters of terrorism active in Iraq and Afghanistan, and regional tensions, particularly sectarian violence in Iraq.” [1e] (Kuwait)

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SECURITY FORCES

- 9.01 An August 2004 working paper produced for the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) by Professor Ghanim Al-Najjar of the Department of Political Science, Kuwait University states "The security apparatus in Kuwait is divided into three main institutions, namely the Army, the Police, and the National Guard. The division of labour amongst the three institutions is clear. While the army is responsible for external defence duties (since offensive war is prohibited by the Constitution), the police are responsible for internal security, and the National Guard is responsible for providing emergency and supporting duties." [19] (p1)

POLICE

- 9.02 The Ministry of Interior (Mol) has overall responsibility for public security and law and order. (US Library of Congress, January 1993) [6] (**Police and the Criminal Justice System**) The Minister of Interior is assisted by seven Assistant Under-Secretaries, six of whom were police officers; almost 90 per cent of the top management of the Mol was made up of police officers. (DCAF, August 2004) [19] (**I. Description of the Kuwaiti Security Apparatus**) Under the Ministry, the national police has primary responsibility for maintaining public order, preventing and investigating crimes, and the enforcement of laws not related to national security. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (**Section 1d**) The US Library of Congress handbook adds:

"The principal police divisions are criminal investigation, traffic, emergency police, nationality and passports, immigration, prisons, civil defense, and trials and courts martial. The criminal investigation division is responsible for ordinary criminal cases; Kuwait State Security investigates security-related offenses. Both are involved in investigations of terrorism and those suspected of collaboration with Iraq." [6] (**Police and the Criminal Justice System**)

Arbitrary arrest and detention

- 9.03 The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions. In general police officers must obtain an arrest warrant from state prosecutors or a judge before making an arrest, although in misdemeanor cases or if the police are in hot pursuit the arresting officer may issue them. There were credible reports of police arresting and detaining foreigners without a warrant, based on accusation by a third party." (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (**Section 1d**)
- 9.04 During the year there were credible reports of police arresting and detaining foreigners without a warrant, based on accusation by a third party. There were also reports that some police stations did not take the requests of complainants seriously, especially foreigners, and obstructed their access to the justice system. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (**Section 1d**) The USSD HR report 2006 records "Arbitrarily lengthy detention before trial was a problem, and approximately 10 percent of the prison population consisted of pre-trial detainees." [1b] (**Section 1d**)

Torture

- 9.05 The law prohibited torture but some police reportedly abused detainees. Such abuse was more likely to be inflicted on noncitizens than citizens, particularly non-Gulf Arabs and Asians. The government claimed that it investigated all allegations of abuse and punished some of the offenders. However, in the bulk of cases the government did not make either the results of its investigations or punishments it imposed public. [1b] (Section 1c)
- 9.06 “Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of alleged torture during interrogation during the year.” (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 1c) The USSD Human Rights report 2006 noted that there were allegations of mistreatment during or after arrest in previous years. [1b] (Section 1c)

Extra-judicial killings

- 9.07 The USSD HR report 2006 reported that there were reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. Two Asian men died while in police custody; the Ministry of Interior (MOI) had ordered an investigation into one of the incidents. [1b] (Section 1a)

Avenues of complaint

- 9.08 The USSD HR report 2006 notes that “Defendants have the right to present evidence in court that they were mistreated during interrogation; however, the courts frequently dismissed abuse complaints because defendants were unable to provide physical evidence of abuse. Members of the security forces routinely concealed their identities during interrogation, complicating confirmation of abuse.” [1b] (Section 1c)
- 9.09 The report also states, “In cases of alleged police abuse, the district chief investigator examines abuse allegations and refers worthy cases to the courts for trial. There were no reported government efforts during the year to reform the police or security forces.” [1b] (Section 1d)

ARMED FORCES

- 9.10 As of November 2006, Kuwait’s armed forces numbered 15,500, which comprised a land army of 11,000 (including up to 3,700 foreign personnel), an air force of an estimated 2,500 and a navy of around 2,000; and there were reserve forces of 23,700. Paramilitary forces comprised a 6,600-strong national guard and a 500-strong coastguard. (Europa Online, retrieved 11 June 2007) [2] (Defence) “Since liberation [following the Iraqi invasion of 1990], Kuwait, with the help of the United States and other allies, has made significant efforts to increase the size and modernity of its armed forces. These efforts are succeeding.” (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (Defense)
- 9.11 A US force numbering approximately 19,700 (comprising army, air force, navy and marine corps personnel), a small British army force and, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (the US-led mission in Afghanistan which began in late 2001) a German force of 50 were all stationed in Kuwait in August 2005. (Europa Online, retrieved 11 June 2007) [2] (Defence)

NATIONAL GUARD

- 9.12 “The National Guard is an independent institution of the Armed Forces, which reports directly to the Supreme Council of Defence, which is headed by a senior sheikh ...” (DCAF, 2004) [19] (p1) The US Library of Congress Country Study of January 1993 reports that “The National Guard-a semi-autonomous body-had guard duties on the border and at oil fields, utilities, and other strategic locations. The guard acted as a reserve for the regular forces and reinforced the metropolitan forces as needed.” [6] (**Police and the Criminal Justice System**) The June 2007 USSD Background Note stated that the National Guard maintained internal security and referred to it as being separately organised from the army. [1a] (**Defense**) DCAF’s August 2004 paper reports:

“According to law number 2/1967, the National Guard reports directly to the Supreme Council of Defence, which means that it has a higher degree of independence than either the army or the police.

“The most notable difference with the National Guard is that it is an exclusively Kuwaiti force compared to the Army and the Police where other nationalities are allowed to serve either as soldiers or officers. Another difference is that National Guard personnel, regardless of their ranks, are allowed to take part in the political process.” [19] (p10)

KUWAIT STATE SECURITY

- 9.13 The USSD HR report of 2006 notes, “The Kuwait State Security oversees intelligence and national security-related matters.” [1b] (**Section 1d**) The DCAF paper of August 2004 notes that “The name of the Intelligence Services was later changed to become the State Security Department, which reports directly to the Minister of the Interior.” [19] (p10)

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MILITARY SERVICE

- 10.01 War Resisters International (WRI) released a comprehensive report on military service laws and practice throughout the world in 1998 which noted that, unlike other Persian Gulf states, Kuwait had a conscription system that obliged men aged between 18 and 30 years of age to serve for two years, although deferments were granted for educational and domestic reasons, and university graduates served for only a year. (CIA World Factbook) [12] (Military) (WRI, 1998) [14] In practice, exemptions were liberally granted and most young Kuwaitis were able to avoid military duty. (WRI, 1998) [14]
- 10.02 “Call-up takes place at the age of 18. According to the government most conscripts in the armed forces are aged 22 to 28.” (WRI, 1998) [14] The law required male citizens serving in the military to obtain government approval to marry foreign nationals. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 1f) Reserve service was required up to the age of 40 involving a month’s training per year. (CIA World Factbook) [12] (Military) (WRI, 1998) [14]
- “Traditionally, as in many Persian Gulf States, the Kuwaiti armed forces consist to a large extent of foreign volunteers. Before the 1991 Gulf War, only 20 to 30 percent of troops were Kuwaiti citizens. After the 1991 Iraqi invasion many non-Kuwaiti citizens - notably Palestinians and Bedouins - were expelled from the armed forces for alleged collaboration with Iraq.” (WRI, 1998) [14]
- 10.03 Draft evasion and desertion is not an issue, according to WRI’s 1998 report: though military service is unpopular, the authorities’ liberal approach to exemption meant that military service may be evaded both easily and legally. The right to conscientious objection is not legally recognised and there were no provisions for substitute service. (WRI, 1998) [14]

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JUDICIARY

- 11.01 The legal system of Kuwait is an amalgam of British common law, French civil law, Egyptian law and Islamic legal principles. (UNDP POGAR, undated) [7a]

ORGANISATION

- 11.02 The official language of the court is Arabic, although other languages are not prohibited. Court proceedings are public, unless keeping the peace requires them closed, and some Court decisions are made public in the official Gazette. The judiciary is administered by the Judicial Council, which consists of the President and Deputy of the Court of Cassation, the President and Deputy of the Court of Appeal, the Attorney General, the President of the Al-Kulliyya Court, and the Deputy of the Ministry of Justice. (UNDP POGAR, undated) [7a]
- 11.03 The judiciary is structured on three levels. At the base are the Courts of the First Instance. These courts handle civil, commercial, personal status and penal matters separately. Judgments in cases involving misdemeanours punishable by less than three years' imprisonment or fines less than 250 Kuwaiti dinars could not be appealed against to a higher court; commercial and civil judgments involving fines less than 1,000 dinars were final. The Courts of Appeal, which sat in panels of three judges, served as both intermediate and final courts of appeal. (UNDP POGAR, undated) [7a]
- 11.04 The Court of Cassation, added to the system in 1990, is at the apex of the Kuwaiti judiciary and serves as the final court of appeal. It is divided into Commercial, Civil and Criminal Boards, and though the court's judgments are not legally binding, they are normally respected. (UNDP POGAR, undated) [7a]
- 11.05 The Constitutional Court, established in 1973, has exclusive jurisdiction to interpret the constitutionality of legislation and is empowered to review electoral disputes. (UNDP POGAR, undated) [7a]

"State security courts existed from 1975 until they were abolished in 1995. These courts were criticized inside the country because their judges were appointed by the minister of justice (though they were professional judges) and they did not provide for a right of appeal. While a challenge to their existence was rejected by the Constitutional Court in 1976, the Kuwaiti parliament revoked the legislation establishing them in 1995."
(UNDP, Arab Judicial Structures, undated) [7b]

Independence / fair trial

- 11.06 The USSD HR report 2006 notes:

"The law provides for an independent judiciary and the right to fair trial and states that 'judges shall not be subject to any authority;' however, the emir appoints all judges, and the renewal of judicial appointments is subject to government appointment. Judges who are citizens have lifetime appointments; however, many of the judges were non citizens who held one- to three-year renewable contracts. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) may remove judges for

cause but rarely does so. Foreign residents involved in legal disputes with citizens frequently claimed that the courts showed bias in favor of citizens. ...

“Defendants, who enjoy a presumption of innocence, have the right to confront their accusers and appeal verdicts. Defendants in felony cases are required by law to be represented in court by legal counsel, which the courts provide in criminal cases. The bar association is obligated upon court request to appoint an attorney without charge for indigent defendants in civil, commercial, and criminal cases. Virtually all indigent criminal defendants asked for and received free counsel, totaling approximately 15 referrals per day. Very few indigent civil and commercial plaintiffs requested this service. The law affords these protections to all citizens. Once the case went to trial, defendants and their attorneys had access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases.” [1b] (Section 1e)

OTHER COURTS

11.07 The USSD HR report 2006 relates the following:

“Sunni and Shi'a Shari'a (Islamic law) courts have jurisdiction over family law cases for Muslims. Secular courts allow anyone to testify and consider male and female testimony equally; however, in the family courts the testimony of a man is equal to that of two women. The constitutional court has the authority to issue binding rulings concerning the constitutionality of laws and regulations. The court, whose members are senior judges from the civil judiciary, also rules in election disputes. The martial court convenes in the event the emir declares martial law. The law does not specifically provide for a military court or provide any guidelines for how such a court would operate. The military operates tribunals that can impose punishments for offenses within the military.” [1b] (Section 1e)

CIVIL PROCEDURES AND REMEDIES

11.08 The same report records:

“The law provides for an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters; however, enforcement of rulings has been a significant problem. Individuals can bring suits against other individuals for a wide array of offenses. Administrative punishments in civil matters are available, such as bans on sponsoring foreign workers if the government has evidence that a sponsor has violated the law. However, there were widespread, reliable reports that it was extremely difficult for those who have been awarded monetary compensation in courts to collect their awards.” [1b] (Section 1e)

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ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS

12.01 The USSD HR report 2006 records that

“According to the penal code, suspected criminals may be held at a police station for up to four days without charge, during which time security officers may prevent lawyers and family members from visiting them. In such cases lawyers are permitted to attend legal proceedings but are not allowed to have direct contact with their clients. If charges are filed, prosecutors may remand a suspect to detention for an additional 21 days. Prosecutors also may obtain court orders for further detention pending trial. There is a functioning bail system for defendants awaiting trial. Detainees were allowed prompt access to a lawyer of their choice after the initial four-day waiting period.” [1b] (Section 1d)

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PRISON CONDITIONS

- 13.01 The USSD HR report 2006 states “Prison conditions were varied, and some were poor. In its April 2005 report, the National Assembly's Human Rights Defense Committee (HRDC) reported severe overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate containment of infectious diseases, and lack of sufficient medical staff as common problems in the old prison complex.” [1b] (Section 1c) The USSD HR report 2006 also mentioned, “A new men's prison building reduced previously severe overcrowding conditions. The new facility met all international standards for prisons.” (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 1c) The USSD HR report 2006 further added:

“There were reports that authorities mistreated prisoners and failed to prevent inmate-on-inmate violence. During the year foreigners at the deportation facility in Shuwaikh were incarcerated between 10 days and two months, on average, awaiting deportation. Some were held there for much longer periods, often due to delays in the court system or bureaucracy.

“The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs (MAIA) offered job skills and societal values training to inmates, and the Social Reform Society, an Islamist nongovernmental organization (NGO), provided drug rehabilitation programs for incarcerated Muslim addicts. Other NGOs, such as the Social Work Society, and religious leaders were allowed to run programs and visit prisoners.” [1b] (Section 1c)

- 13.02 The Government allowed visits by independent human rights observers. Prior to 2006, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had standard access to inmates in certain categories, such as: Iraqi prisoners of war, Bidun (Arabic for “without” meaning “without citizenship”), citizens of states without diplomatic relations with the country, and a returned citizen detainee from Guantanamo. However, due to internal problems, the ICRC did not undertake prisoner monitoring during 2006. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 1c) The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that, in 2005:

“Visits were made to foreign detainees, mainly Iraqis and stateless persons without diplomatic representation in Kuwait and detained in connection with the 1990–91 conflict, held at the Kuwaiti central prison for men, the central prison for women and the deportation centre. Visits were also carried out to Kuwaiti nationals detained in Kuwait after their transfer and repatriation from Guantanamo Bay.” [42a] (p332)

- 13.03 The organisation reported that it continued its visits to such detainees in 2006 and also records that “Dialogue was initiated with the government of Kuwait aimed at widening the scope of ICRC visits to include security detainees of various nationalities.” [42b] (p349)

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DEATH PENALTY

- 14.01 Amnesty International (AI) reported in January 2006 that death sentences were known to have been carried out and imposed during 2006. Ten people had been executed for trafficking in drugs since the offence became punishable by death in 1995; and a total of 71 people, three of them women, had been executed over the four decades since the first use of the death penalty. The majority had been convicted murderers or drug traffickers. [8a]

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POLITICAL AFFILIATION

15.01 Political parties were banned but de facto political groupings formed to support candidates for the National Assembly, and the candidates were usually organised along ideological lines. (USSD Background Note, June 2007) [1a] (Government and Political Conditions) (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2b) (FH, Freedom in the World 2007) [10a] (Political Rights and Civil Liberties) (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2007) [15]

15.02 Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2007 report states "In 2005, a group of Kuwaiti Islamists announced the formation of the Umma Party, but like other political groupings, it was not granted a permit by the government. After the Umma Party announced its formation, the government imposed a travel ban on 15 of its top members and interrogated several of the party's leaders." (FH, Freedom in the World 2007) [10a] (Political Rights and Civil Liberties) Amnesty International's Annual Report 2007 records that, "In May [2006], the 15 founders of the Ummah Party were acquitted of breaching laws on the press and public gatherings. One individual was fined for 'circulating publications without prior authorization'." [8b]

15.03 The quasi-political groups consisted of Bedouins, merchants, moderate Sunni and Shi'a activists, secular liberals and nationalists. (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2007) [15]

"The legal status of these political groupings is yet to be determined. The constitution does not pronounce on their legal position. Although it does not explicitly approve the right to form political parties, article 45 gives organizations the 'right to address the authorities' and some take it as a proof of the legitimacy of forming political parties. The uncertain legal status of these political groups limits their effective functioning." (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2007) [15]

15.04 The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace paper of July 2007 records that the known political groupings in Kuwait included the following:

Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM).	This was affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood movement. It was a Sunni Islamist movement calling for the implementation of Shari'a law.
Islamic Popular Grouping.	This was a Sunni Islamist grouping.
Umma Party (Hizb al Umma).	This was a Sunni Islamist salafi movement established in 2005, it was the only political group that called itself a party and its founders were charged with plotting to overthrow the government.
Islamic National Alliance.	This was the main faction for Shi'a Muslims.
Kuwaiti Democratic Forum.	This was a group of Arab nationalists and pan Arabists, many of them deputies in recent parliaments, who pursued a secularist agenda and had often been critical of cabinet ministers.
National Democratic Alliance.	This was a group of secular progressives with liberal tendencies.
Justice and Development Movement.	

National Democratic
Forum.

Tribal Confederations

[15] (p14)

- 15.05 The Constitution and law allowed for freedom of assembly but this was restricted in practice, especially by the law of public assembly issued in 1979 by Amiri decree while parliament was suspended. This law stipulated that Kuwaiti citizens had to obtain a permit from the authorities before they held any public gathering of more than 20 people. (USSD HR report 2006) **[1b] (Section 2b)** (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2007) **[15]** However, "On May 1 [2006], the Court of Cassation struck down the public gatherings law as unconstitutional in reviewing a case in which two lawyers held a meeting to criticize the government. Gathering organizers still must inform the ministry of their plans, but they no longer need permission." (USSD HR report 2006) **[1b] (Section 2b)**
- 15.06 Subsequently, Kuwaitis who wanted to hold or organise public meetings or rallies needed only to inform the authorities of their intentions rather than wait for its approval or a prior permit. (USSD HR report 2006) **[1b] (Section 2b)** (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2007) **[15]** Thus, the USSD HR report 2006 noted:

"There were orderly public demonstrations during the year [2006], and the police either did not intervene or acted appropriately to contain the demonstrations. In July and August, several demonstrations protested Israel's actions in Lebanon. The police maintained order and responded appropriately, including during one incident when protesters crossed police barriers. Throughout the year numerous peaceful demonstrations took place in front of the National Assembly and in other prominent places to support reducing the number of electoral districts. There were no serious violent incidents or cases of inappropriate intervention by the police during these events." **[1b] (Section 2b)**

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FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA

- 16.01 The Constitution provided for freedom of speech and the press “in accordance with the conditions and the circumstances defined by the law”. In practice, the Government restricted these rights, whilst journalists and publishers practised self-censorship. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a) RSF’s Worldwide Press Freedom Index for 2007, which calculated and measured press freedom around the world, placed Kuwait 63rd in a list rising to 169 countries of concern (the higher the listing denoting a less free press). [16b]
- 16.02 The Parliament approved a new press law in March 2006 that ended the government monopoly of issuing operating licences for the media and stipulated that only a judge could order a journalist’s imprisonment. However, decriminalisation of press offences, announced as the key innovation, was watered down by many exceptions, such as undermining Islamic law and offending God, the Prophet and his aides. These offences were to be dealt with under criminal law which still allowed imprisonment for such crimes. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a) (RSF Annual Report 2007) [16a] (p144)
- 16.03 Further restrictions on journalistic activity were added in nebulous language open to many interpretations, and journalists were still liable to go to prison for actions considered to be “against national interests”. The new law did allow political daily papers to be launched, an activity severely curtailed under the old 1963 press law that limited the press to five dailies. Media outlets could also file a complaint with an administrative court if the authorities refused to grant them an operating licence. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a) (RSF Annual Report 2007) [16a] (p144)
- 16.04 Kuwait had five Arabic newspapers and two or three English language daily papers. The state maintained a significant presence in the broadcast media, with four television stations and nine radio stations. There were also a number of private outlets including the satellite television station Al-Rai. In 2002 the Government shut down the local office of Qatar-based satellite television station Al-Jazeera over objections to the station’s editorial positions which were deemed anti-Kuwaiti. However, Al-Jazeera was subsequently allowed to resume local operations in May 2005. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a) (FH, Freedom in the World 2007) [10a] (Political Rights and Civil Liberties)
- 16.05 Other foreign media outlets worked relatively freely in Kuwait. In some cases during the June 2006 parliamentary elections, the Government sought to shut down satellite stations for airing allegedly biased content but many foreign journalists were able to cover the elections without interference. (FH, Freedom in the World 2007) [10a] (Political Rights and Civil Liberties)
- 16.06 Journalists were jailed during 2006 for articles denouncing a corrupt judge and for quoting direct criticism of the Amir. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a) (RSF Annual Report 2007) [16a] (p144) (CPJ, 22 August 2007) [41a] Another journalist – in addition to the editor of the daily newspaper *Al Seyassah* – was arrested in November 2006. They were held and questioned for a day after the paper ran an article describing Saddam Hussein as the lawful president of Iraq. They were charged with “inciting unrest” but freed after the communications minister withdrew his complaint. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b]

(Section 2a) (RSF Annual Report 2007) [16a] (p144) (CPJ, Attacks on the Press 2006) [41b]

- 16.07 Kuwaitis had access to the internet but the Government instructed internet service providers to block certain sites for political or moral reasons. The total number of internet users was estimated at 700,000. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a) (FH, Freedom in the World 2007) [10a] (Political Rights and Civil Liberties) The USSD HR report 2006 records that:

“Since 2005 the Ministry of Communications (MOC) has blocked Web sites that the government considered to ‘incite terrorism and instability.’ The government required Internet service providers to block some political sites and Web pages deemed immoral. Internet cafe owners were obligated to obtain the names and civil identification numbers of customers and to submit the information to the MOC upon request. During the year the government blocked several Web sites. For example, it closed down a citizen's website that had criticized the emir.” (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a)

- 16.08 Academic freedom was generally respected although some scholars exercised self-censorship. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a) (FH, Freedom in the World 2007) [10a] (Political Rights and Civil Liberties) Kuwait had a tradition of permitting relatively open and free private discussions, often conducted in traditional gatherings and usually including only men, called *diwaynyas*. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2b) (FH, Freedom in the World 2007) [10a] (Political Rights and Civil Liberties)

“The Ministry of Information reserved the right to approve or reject public events. It rejected events if it deems the political or moral character of the event inappropriate. The ministry reported that it rejected many applications for events, but did not release the names of these events. Some hotels and performance halls displayed increased hesitance to host musical functions because of what they perceived as a rise in the power of cultural conservatives. The Ministry of Education (MOE) canceled all graduation parties and high school dances because it deemed a singer's performance at one such party inappropriate.” (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2a)

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HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS

17.01 Kuwait had two types of human rights institutions: a parliamentary committee and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). A parliamentary committee called the “Committee for the Protection of Human Rights” worked on removing provisions that contradicted human rights from legislation; monitored the performance of government agencies in terms of their adherence to human rights principles; received complaints and comments on practices that violated human rights. In the area of NGOs, there were some that defended women’s rights, such as ‘The Kuwaiti Union of Women’s Associations’ and the “Women’s Cultural and Social Society”. There was also “The Kuwaiti Society for Advancement of Arab Children.” (UNDP POGAR, undated) [7a]

17.02 The USSD HR report 2006 records:

“The law permits the existence of NGOs; however, the government continued to deny licenses to some NGOs. NGOs may not engage in overtly political activity, and are prohibited from encouraging sectarianism. They must also demonstrate that their existence is in the public interest. The only local independent NGOs dedicated specifically to human rights were the Kuwait Human Rights Society (KHRS) and the Kuwaiti Society for Fundamental Human Rights (KSFHR). The KHRS, which operated since the early 1990s and received its official license in 2004, produced an annual report on human rights in the country in the past, sporadically published a magazine, and met with senior government officials. The KSFHR came into existence in 2005. It aims to approach human rights from an Islamic perspective. Its leaders have spoken out on human rights issues such as the treatment of foreign workers and the bidoon, but it had not published anything other than a booklet describing the organization and had not conducted any activities. Other local licensed NGOs devoted to specific groups of people--such as women, children, foreign workers, prisoners, persons with disabilities--are permitted to work without government interference. Also, an unknown number of local unlicensed human rights groups operated without government restriction during the year [2006].” [1b] (Section 4)

17.03 Further, “The government permits international human rights organizations to visit the country and establish offices, although none operated in the country. ... The government permitted visits by international governmental organizations, but none visited during the year except the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Regional Director for Arab States. The ILO operated a local office in the country. In July the Arab Labor Organization visited the country and criticized the government for insufficient protection of child workers, noting concerns about working hours, safety, and remuneration.” (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 4)

17.04 The UN Human Rights Council report on human rights defenders of January 2006 records:

“According to information received, on 31 January 2005, Mr. Al-Munawer [lawyer and member of the Al-Karama Association for Defending Human Rights (KADHR)] was allegedly arrested at Kuwait city airport as he returned from Cairo, where he had reportedly been meeting with several Egyptian human rights defenders. On 2 February 2005, Mr. Al-Munawer was allegedly

charged and provisionally detained for having reportedly had telephone contacts with his client Khaled Douisri, another Kuwaiti human rights defender who was recently forced to flee the country after an attempt on his life. Concerns were expressed that his arrest may be an attempt to curb his activities in defense of human rights. These concerns were heightened by the fact that Mr. Al-Munawer has, in the past, reportedly been the target of restrictive actions in connection to his role in exposing cases of human rights violations. ...

“The Government stated that Mr. Al-Munawer’s case was still under investigation and that he was charged with membership of a proscribed organization which seeks to destroy the basic apparatus of the State by unlawful means.” [40a] (p128-129)

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CORRUPTION

18.01 The USSD HR report 2006 states that

“There was widespread perception of corruption in the executive, legislative, and, to a lesser extent, judicial branches. Combating corruption was the main theme of the June [2006] parliamentary elections.

“MOSAL [Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor], which issues permits necessary for many business projects such as importing foreign workers, forbade candidates from getting permits, fearing that they would be used as favors to be distributed in exchange for votes. On July 17 [2006], the National Assembly reduced the number of electoral districts because the large number of small districts led to widespread complaints that MPs were able to buy enough votes to stay in parliament and that their positions in parliament allowed them access to lucrative financial opportunities.” [1b] (Section 3)

18.02 In January 2006, Parliament’s Legal and Legislative Committee unanimously approved a draft law requiring top government officials and MPs to disclose their wealth before assuming office and after leaving their posts as part of a measure to combat corruption. (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2007) [15] “In March [2006] the government granted a license to the Kuwait Transparency Society, an NGO [non-governmental organisation] focused on combating corruption. In February, a coalition of 11 local NGOs formed the Transparency and Reform Alliance, which promised to fight corruption.” (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 3)

18.03 Several parliamentary investigations, especially concerning arms procurement and military contracts, had led to dissolution of the legislature during the year to prevent further public discussion. Since 94 per cent of the Kuwaiti work force was employed by the government and public sector, critical Kuwaiti economists suggested that any streamlining of government for the sake of combating corruption was likely to be limited. (UNDP POGAR, undated) [7a]

18.04 In Transparency International’s (TI) 2006 Corruption Perception Index Kuwait ranked fifth among Arab countries and 60th out of 179 countries worldwide. Kuwait scored 4.3 on a scale running from 0 (high corruption) to 10 (no corruption). [17b]

“‘We call for immediate practical and effective measures to eliminate corruption at the administrative and political levels,’ the Kuwait chapter of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) said [in response to TI’s World Corruption Index]. GOPAC, launched two years ago, also called in a statement for approving a law for access to information and for ratifying the UN anti-corruption convention.

“‘Corruption (in Kuwait) threatens the stability of society, fair distribution of resources and human rights, and obstructs economic and social development,’ it said. GOPAC, which groups serving and former MPs, blamed both the government and the elected parliament for Kuwait’s slide on the corruption index.” (Agence France Press, 10 October 2007) [48]

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FREEDOM OF RELIGION

- 19.01 The Constitution provided for freedom of religion but, in practice, the Government placed some limits on this right. The constitution provided also that the state protect the freedom to practice religion in accordance with established customs subject to such not conflicting with public policy or morals. The Constitution declared that Islam was the state religion and that Shari'a (Islamic law) was a main source of legislation. (USSD International Religious Freedom (IRF) report 2006) [1c] (p1)

"By law a non-Muslim man must convert to Islam when he marries a Muslim woman. The law forbids marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men (see section 1.f.). A non-Muslim woman is not required by law to convert to Islam to marry a Muslim man. In practice, however, many non-Muslim women faced tremendous economic and societal pressure to convert. Failure to convert may mean that, should the couple later divorce, the Muslim father would be granted custody of any children. Failure to convert may also result in a wife not being eligible to inherit her husband's property or to be naturalized." (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2c)

- 19.02 An estimated 70 per cent of the citizen population was Sunni Muslim with most of the remaining 30 per cent being Shi'a Muslims. (USSD IRF report 2006) [1c] (Section I) The Government exercised direct control over Sunni Muslims, particularly by appointing Sunni imams and monitoring their Friday sermons and financing the building of Sunni mosques. The Government did not exert such control over Shi'a mosques and the Shi'a community had to fund their own mosques. (USSD IRF report 2006) [1c] (Section II)
- 19.03 Four Christian sub-groups were widely understood to receive full recognition by the Government and were allowed to operate compounds officially designated as churches: Anglican, Coptic Orthodox, National Evangelical (Protestant), and Roman Catholic. Some found the quotas placed on the number of clergy and staff permitted in the country to be adequate, and others found them insufficient to serve their respective communities. Significant problems were also faced in trying to build new facilities. Members of religious groups not sanctioned in the Qur'an, such as Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs, could not build official places of worship as these religious groups lacked legal status, but such were permitted to worship privately in their homes without government interference. (USSD IRF report 2006) [1c] (Section II)
- 19.04 The Government prohibited missionaries from proselytising among Muslims; they may serve non-Muslim congregations, however. (USSD IRF report 2006) [1c] (Section I) The Government did not allow the establishment of non-Islamic publishing companies or training institutions for clergy but some churches published materials for their own congregations' use. (USSD IRF report 2006) [1c] (Section II)
- 19.05 The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief stated, in her report of March 2006 that – according to information she had received – the amendments to the election law adopted on 16 May 2005, which gave women passive and active election rights, contained a clause stating that women voting and running for political office must adhere "to the dictates of Islamic

Sharia". However, the Government's reply to the UN Special Rapporteur states that "The clause: 'Women who stand for office and vote must comply with the precepts of the Islamic sharia', as contained in article 1 of Act No. 17 of 2005, amending article 1 of the Parliamentary Elections Act No. 35 of 1962, is consistent with the Constitution of Kuwait, which provides that the religion of the State is Islam and the Islamic sharia is the principal source of domestic legislation and laws." [40c] (p55) The Government's reply went on to say:

"In addition, the provisions of article 1 of the aforementioned Act are redundant, since they confirm the actual state of affairs, whereby Kuwaiti women comply with the precepts of the Islamic sharia, which do not negate freedom of religion or deny rights, but are simply there to ensure that women are respected and that they respect themselves. This clause is there to help women and not to harm them." [40c] (p55)

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ETHNIC GROUPS

BIDUNS (ALSO BIDOONS, BEDOUINS, BEDUINS)

20.01 A July 2007 Refugees International (RI) Bulletin records

“The Arabic word, ‘bidun,’ meaning ‘without’ and short for ‘*bidun jinsiya*’ (without citizenship), is used to denote longtime residents of Kuwait who are stateless. The estimated number of bidun in Kuwait ranges from 90,000 to 130,000, less than half the number who resided in the country prior to Iraq’s invasion in 1990. Those who remain are subject to systematic discrimination and their future is uncertain.

“Many bidun are descendants of Bedouin tribes such as the Shammar and cAneza that roamed freely across the borders of present day Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq. Either because their ancestors failed to understand the importance of citizenship or, given their centuries-old nomadic way of life, demurred at the idea of belonging to any one country, or because they were living outside the city walls, in the desert or ‘*badiya*,’ and often illiterate, they could not furnish adequate proof that they were settled in the country and were consequently classified as stateless.” [18a] (p1)

20.02 According to a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report of 2000, broadly speaking Biduns fall into the following groups of people:

“individuals descended from nomadic groups whose ancestral lands were within the borders of present day Kuwait but who were unable to claim automatic citizenship under the Nationality Law because they could not prove continuous settled presence in Kuwait from 1920, as that law required;

“individuals who could have registered as citizens under the Nationality Law and earlier citizenship regulations but neglected to do so;

“individuals who attempted to claim citizenship under the Nationality Law and earlier citizenship regulations and whose applications were accepted for consideration but never acted upon by the Kuwaiti authorities;

“individuals who migrated to Kuwait from nearby countries to work and over time lost effective links to and effective nationality in their country of origin, as well as children of such migrants who failed to establish nationality in their parents’ country of origin;

“children of bidun parents, including notably the children of Kuwaiti mothers and Bidun fathers.” [9a] (Section IV – Background)

20.03 Although formally described by the Kuwaiti authorities as ‘*bidun jinsiya*’, stateless residents – a large percentage of whom were government workers and members of the police and armed forces – they were originally given the same health, education and social rights as Kuwaiti citizens, and were exempted from the residence permit requirements of other non-Kuwaiti residents. (FCO, 6 November 2007) [3b] (p1) (HRW, October 2000) [9a] (Section IV – Background) (RI, 25 July 2007 & October 2007) [18a] (p1) [18b] (p2)

- 20.04 However, "The position and status of the bidun were steadily eroded after 1960." (FCO, 6 November 2007) [3b] (p2) And – at least partly in response to the internal instability of the mid-1980s (see also FCO, 6 November 2007) [3b] (p2) – "... the government introduced a number of draconian measures that stripped them of their identity." (RI, October 2007) [18b] (p2) Human Rights Watch's October 2000 report records:

"In 1985 the government began applying provisions of Alien Residence Law 17/1959 to the Bidun and issued a series of regulations stripping the Bidun of almost all their previous rights and benefits. In 1986 the government severely restricted Bidun's eligibility for travel documents. It also fired government employees not employed by the army or the police who could not produce valid passports, whether issued by Kuwait or another country, and instructed private employers to do the same. In 1987 the government began refusing to issue Bidun new or renewal driver's licenses or register their cars, and began ending public education for Bidun children and instructing private schools to require valid residency permits. In 1988 the ban on public education was extended to the university, and Kuwaiti clubs and associations were instructed to dismiss their Bidun members. Also beginning in 1988, statistical data on Bidun in the government's Annual Statistical Abstract was transferred from the Kuwaiti category to alien population categories." [9a] (Background)

- 20.05 A number of sources agreed that a significant worsening of restrictions occurred following Kuwait's liberation from Iraq following the Gulf War of 1990-91. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5) (FCO, 6 November 2007) [3b] (p2) (HRW, October 2000) [9a] (Section IV – Background) (RI, 25 July 2007 & October 2007) [18a] (p1) [18b] (p2) The FCO paper of November 2007 notes that:

"During the Gulf War, many bidoon of Iraqi origin had enlisted, or been forced to enlist, in the Iraqi army. This damaged the reputation of all bidoon and left the Kuwait government and people suspicious of them. The number of bidoon before the Gulf War has been more than 200,000: around half of these are believed to have left after liberation. Some were tried by the State Security Court in 1991 and were convicted and imprisoned." (FCO, 6 November 2007) [3b] (p2)

- 20.06 Minority Rights Group's (MRG) 'State of the World's Minorities' 2007 notes that "Despite some improvements in 2005, notably the provision of health care to the children of Bidouns, this minority still faces discrimination in employment, freedom of movement and education." [44] (p115) Refugees International's report of October 2007 sums up the current situation of the Bidun in Kuwait:

"At present the bidun live in a bureaucratic gray area. They are not allowed to register officially the birth of a child, a marriage, or a death. They are not permitted to own property or register vehicles. Education and healthcare offered free of charge to citizens is denied them. One young woman described the plight of the bidun straightforwardly, 'We are people who don't exist.'

"Bidun face systematic discrimination and ill treatment at every turn, and their future is uncertain at best. Unable to afford tuition, they can not pursue a higher education. Barred from employment in the public sector, they are constrained to accept work that is poorly paid and intermittent. Many are

reluctant to marry, because they can not support a family and fear that their children would face the same hardships.” [18b] (p2)

- 20.07 Whilst FCO's November 2007 paper listed the following types of discrimination against the Bidun:

“Travel: not able to obtain Kuwaiti passport, ...

“Not able to obtain Kuwaiti identity card [see also [Status and documentation](#)]

“No vote

“Not able to register births, marriages or deaths

“Driving licences: available to bidoon since early 2007, but only for 3 or 12 months (Kuwaitis have 10 years), and must be endorsed ‘Illegal Resident’

“No access to state secondary education; 100 places now open to bidoon at Kuwait University

“Health: access to state hospitals equivalent to foreign nationals (monthly fee of KD 5, about £9)

“Barred from recruitment for employment in public sector, although those previously employed can continue

“Liable to arrest or detention on grounds of being stateless or illegal residents

“Children will have same status, even if their mother is a Kuwaiti citizen [see also [Citizenship and nationality](#)]

“Access to law: bidoon can sue in the Kuwaiti courts, as can foreigners. If accused of a crime, they can have access to legal aid, but may find it difficult to have a lawyer allocated to them – in this respect being better off than foreigners and worse off than Kuwaitis.” [3b] (p6)

- 20.08 Refugees International's Bulletin of July 2007 records that:

“Feelings of distress, frustration, resentment, disappointment and anger among the bidun are palpable. An older generation of bidun, who once served or still do in the military and police force, are reluctant to protest their plight too strenuously. Their children however are more impatient. Unable to afford the cost of tuition, they are prevented from accessing higher education. Barred from employment in the public sector, they have to accept work that is poorly paid and intermittent. Many are reluctant to marry, because they can not support a family and fear that their children would face the same hardships. The suicide rate among bidun is reportedly high. ...

“The bidun themselves and sympathetic citizens have formed a Popular Committee for Support of the Bidun. There is general agreement in Kuwait that the humanitarian consequences of statelessness should be addressed immediately, leaving the contentious issue of citizenship rights to a later date. At the same time, however, many Kuwaitis acknowledge that the problems associated with statelessness will escalate. There is concern that young

disenfranchised bidun may resort to crime, turn to alcohol and drugs, and subscribe to extremist ideologies.” (Refugees International, 25 July 2007) [18a] (p2)

Citizenship and nationality

20.09 On the subject of citizenship, Refugees International’s bulletin of July 2007 reports:

“The country’s 1959 Nationality Law defined Kuwaiti nationals as persons who were settled in Kuwait prior to 1920 and who maintained their normal residence there until the date of the publication of the law. Approximately one third of the population was recognized as bone fide citizens, the founding families of the country. Another third was naturalized and granted partial citizenship rights. The remaining third was classified as “bidun jinsiya.” The law has been amended 14 times since and with almost every amendment, it has become more restrictive. For example, the 1959 law (Article 3) granted citizenship to children of a Kuwaiti mother when at least one of four circumstances existed: the father was unknown, paternity could not be proven, the father’s nationality was unknown, or he was stateless. When amended in 1980, the mention of unknown nationality and statelessness was omitted.” [18a]

20.10 Therefore, as citizenship in Kuwait was passed on to children through their fathers not their mothers, the offspring of a Kuwaiti woman and a Bidun man were also Bidun whereas the child of a divorced Kuwaiti woman or widow was able to acquire citizenship. This resulted in divorce becoming an attractive option as parents could then guarantee the future of their children as Kuwaiti citizens. (Refugees International, 25 July 2007) [18a] The USSD HR report 2006 further notes that, “When a bidoon resident applied for citizenship, the government generally considered any security or criminal violations committed by his or her family members as a barrier to that resident getting citizenship.” [1b] (Section 1f)

20.11 Nevertheless it was reported that, in early 2007, the Kuwaiti parliament had approved a law granting citizenship to 2,000 bidun whose names were due to be announced in October 2007, though no such announcement had been made at time of writing (November 2007). (FCO, 6 November 2007) [3b] (p4) (RI, 25 July 2007 & October 2007) [18a] (p2) [18b] (p3)

Status and documentation

20.12 The FCO’s November 2007 paper records that:

“An Executive Committee for Illegal Residents (ECIR) was established in 1993 to regularise the bidun’s status. It categorised them into two groups: those who were registered in the 1965 census and those who were not. Those who registered with the ECIR by 1996 received temporary residency rights. After 1996 the Government encouraged the bidun who were not eligible for nationality (because they could not demonstrate strong ties to Kuwait or because they were believed by the authorities to possess other nationalities) and who failed to register that year, to register themselves as non-nationals and to seek residency. The government set a deadline of June 2000 for bidun to come forward with evidence of their true nationalities, so as to be

documented. Around 5,000 did so in the twelve months up to this deadline.”
[3b] (p2-3)

“There was a distinction between documented and undocumented bidun. In basic terms, documented bidun had legal rights and undocumented bidun did not.” [3b] (p3)

Documented Bidun:

“[Only those] registered by the June 2000 deadline could begin the process under which they could be documented as citizens (having proof of their presence, or their parent’s/grandparent’s presence, in Kuwait in 1965).

“Although many do not have the same rights as Kuwaiti citizens (such as free education and health care), they are treated similarly to registered foreign migrant workers.

“They are entitled to medical treatment on payment of the mandatory health insurance fee of KD5 (£9) per month; and had access to private education (additionally 16,000 bidun children, from Kuwaiti mothers, or with fathers in the Kuwait armed forces, received free education).

“Children of bidun fathers and Kuwaiti mothers no longer inherited Kuwaiti nationality, though this was not unique to them: the same rule applied to children of Kuwait mothers and other non-Kuwaiti fathers.

“In terms of employment, bidun were no longer recruited into the public sector. However, those who were employed earlier remained in position.

“Although the police and armed forces were purged of bidun following the Gulf War and key trainers and instructors in the army lost their jobs, there were still bidun in the ranks – around 6,000 or 25 per cent.

“Both the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defence and the police no longer recruited bidun, but the police still had some 1,700 registered bidun working for them.” (FCO, 6 November 2007) [3b] (p3)

Undocumented Bidun:

“bidun not registered by June 2000 or had not either disclosed their ‘true nationality’, or provided proof of their right to citizenship, would be subject to deportation.

“In practice, this did not happen, although the Government had brought charges against several bidun who allegedly obtained false documents in an attempt to prove their claim to Kuwaiti nationality.

“The Government stated that the majority of undocumented bidun were concealing their true nationality, and that they or their forebears had entered Kuwait illegally. The Government had encouraged them to come forward with nationality evidence, whereupon they would be issued with residency permits like any other foreigner residing in Kuwait.

“The problem for some second or third generation bidun was that their forebears may not have had any citizenship documents or may have destroyed them.

“These people were faced with the choice of acquiring the nationality of a third country and legalising their residency in Kuwait, or of living in the country without rights as an illegal alien. (FCO, 6 November 2007) [3b] (p3-4)

Travel documents / Article 17 documents

20.13 The FCO's November 2007 paper reports

“Travel documents were not issued routinely to bidoon, so many have no means of leaving Kuwait. However, some bidoon were given temporary travel documents under Article 17 of the Kuwaiti Nationality Law which allows the issue of a Kuwaiti travel document to any person deemed to require it. They are often issued to bidoon in government service travelling abroad on official business and their families. According to the Department of Nationality and Travel Documents, Article 17 documents may also be issued to bidoon for medical treatment outside Kuwait (for which the applicant has to provide medical reports from Kuwaiti and overseas hospitals or physicians); for study at university overseas (where accompanied by the university's letter of admission); or, for amendment of a bidoon's legal status in Kuwait (for which they should submit a letter from an embassy in Kuwait acknowledging that he/she holds their nationality).” [3b] (p4)

20.14 The paper continues:

“Article 17 documents look almost identical to Kuwaiti passports, the key difference being that they do not confer nationality on the holder. They are issued only within Kuwait (ie not at diplomatic missions outside Kuwait) and have to be renewed through the Ministry of Interior.

“According to the Kuwaiti Passport Office all Kuwaiti travel documents, including Article 17, allow re-entry into Kuwait as long as they are within their validity date. But the situation is more complex and fluid than this suggests with some Article 17 documents bearing different endorsements.

“Holders of Article 17 documents applying for visas for travel abroad may seek from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a letter stating that there is no objection to the applicant leaving Kuwait and that they will be re-admitted on return.” [3b] (p4-5)

20.15 A June 2001 response to information request produced by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) of Canada notes that “Article 17 passports contain an annotation of three Arabic letters at the bottom of the biodata page indicating that the holder is not a Kuwaiti citizen. ... The three Arabic letters are ‘ghayn’, ‘kaf’ and ‘mim’, in that order. The first two of those letters stand for the Arabic words *ghayr kuwayti*, which mean ‘non-Kuwaiti’.” [35c] The response continued by stating that, additionally, the following appeared on the observations page of an Article 17 passport: “This passport is issued according to Article 17, second paragraph of Passport Regulations Law No.11 of 1962, and it cannot be renewed or replaced without the approval of the Ministry of Interior.” [35c]

“There are two types of Article 17 passports: Type 1 and Type 2. The Type 2 variety, unlike the Type 1 variety, “does not include a stamp which advises that the travel document should not be withdrawn at any time during its validity” or within five years of issue. ...

“The following information is based on an examination of a Type 2 Article 17 passport:

“The stamp located on page 62 of a type 2 Article 17 passport could be provisionally translated as ‘This passport was issued according to Law Number 11 of the Fixed Law of Passports for the year of 1962. It can not/not (sic) be re-issued or renewed without the approval of the Ministry of the Interior.’ The endorsement on page 63 read ‘According to Law/Article 17.’ The stamp on page 1 read ‘See (or refer to) page 63.’ The endorsement on page 2 read ‘non-Kuwaiti’.” (IRB, 11 June 2001) [35c]

Alien reporting cards

- 20.16 Alien Reporting Cards were issued by the Government until the middle of 2003 when they ceased to renew them. Issuance of the card was a means to obtain correct bidun numbers for the purpose of a population census and it explicitly indicated that it was not a form of identification. The card/document was a plastic, wallet-sized card and divided into three columns with a photograph of the subject in the far left column. (IRB, 22 December 2003 & 9 June 2003) [35a] [35b]

PALESTINIANS

- 20.17 Before the 1990, Iraqi invasion there were some 400,000 Palestinians living in Kuwait. Palestinians had originally gone to Kuwait to find work after the war in 1948. At that stage Palestinians were a clear asset to an under-developed Kuwait, which was in need of teachers, labourers and civil servants. Whilst it was hard to acquire citizenship, this was not necessary for long-term work and residency. The numbers of Palestinian children were restricted within the Kuwaiti education system, but Palestinians were allowed to open their own schools. (Islam Online, 9 May 2005) [20]
- 20.18 The Palestinian leadership was seen to support Iraq following the invasion in 1990 and, after Kuwait’s liberation, non-Kuwaitis, including Palestinians, were subject to many legal restrictions. By 1992 it was estimated that only 30,000 to 40,000 Palestinians remained in Kuwait. Around half of this number had Egyptian travel documents, but because they did not have Israeli identity cards, were not allowed to return to the Gaza Strip, and did not have access to citizenship in Kuwait. (Islam Online, 9 May 2005) [20]

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LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS

- 21.01 Homosexuality between males is illegal in Kuwait but not between females. Article 193 of the Penal Code punished sexual intercourse between men over 21 years of age with imprisonment of up to seven years. (ILGA, April 2007) [11] (p20)
- 21.02 The USSD HR report 2006 records that
- “There was discrimination against homosexuals in societal attitudes and legal issues. In February 2005 police charged a group of 28 alleged homosexuals with creating a public disturbance after they met outside a fast-food restaurant. On October 27 [2006], police raided a party where homosexuals were allegedly celebrating a wedding. On December 10 [2006], the legislative committee of the National Assembly unanimously approved a law to impose a fine of \$3,450 (1,000 dinars) and/or one year's imprisonment for those imitating the opposite sex.” [1b] (Section 5)
- 21.03 Following the implementation of the new law, a December 2007 Al Arabiya news article reports:
- “Security sources in Kuwait said the Interior Ministry has allocated separate cells in the country's central prison for convicts who are bisexual or the so-called ‘sexually undecided’.
- “Five ‘sexually undecided’ convicts have already been transferred to the new section and the number is expected to reach 16 within the coming week.
- “Inmates had their heads shaved before they were transferred to the new area, reported Kuwaiti daily Al-Rai on Tuesday.” [47]

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DISABILITY

22.01 The USSD HR report 2006 states:

“The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities and imposes penalties against employers who refrain from hiring persons with disabilities without reasonable cause. The law also mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities. The government generally enforced these provisions. There was no reported discrimination against persons with disabilities; however, noncitizens did not have access to government-operated shelters or receive stipends paid to citizens with disabilities, which covered transportation, housing, job training, and social welfare.” [1b] (Section 5)

22.02 “Representatives from ministries, other governmental bodies, Kuwait University, and several NGOs constitute the government's Higher Council for Handicapped Affairs, which makes policy recommendations, provides financial aid to the disabled, and facilitates the integration of the handicapped into schools, jobs, and other social institutions. The government supervised and contributed to schools, and job and training programs that catered to people with special needs.” (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5)

22.03 The Landmine Monitor Report of 2006 reported that “No progress has been made on the establishment of a national fund for disabled people as recommended by civil society groups on 3 December 2003, the International Day of Disabled People.” [13] (Survivor Assistance, Disability Policy and Practice)

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WOMEN

- 23.01 Article 29 of the Constitution declared that “all people are equal in human dignity, and in public rights and duties before the law, without distinction to race, origin, language or religion.” Whilst the constitution did not explicitly discriminate on the basis of gender a number of laws adopted under the constitution ensured the unequal treatment of women. There were few protections against gender discrimination. Kuwait’s laws and policies, such as the Personal Status Law, certain welfare laws and decree laws on housing care, defined Kuwaiti women as dependents of men and not as individuals with equal rights and responsibilities. (FH, Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (Nondiscrimination and Access to Justice)

LEGAL RIGHTS

- 23.02 Kuwait’s Nationality Law denied Kuwaiti women the legal right to confer their nationality on their foreign-born husbands or the children of these marriages, whilst Kuwaiti men were permitted to exercise these rights. Adult women were recognised as full persons before the court and were not barred from testifying in the secular courts. However, Shari’a law, which was interpreted in family court, deemed the testimony of one man to be equal to that of two women. In principle, all perpetrators of murder, rape or violence against women were subject to severe penalties such as life imprisonment or execution. (FH, Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (Nondiscrimination and Access to Justice)

See also Section 23 on ‘Honour’ crimes

- 23.03 The Sunni Family Law, as interpreted in Kuwait, allowed male control over women. However, whilst Sunni Family Law required husbands to support their wives and children, it did not provide the husband with the absolute right to ‘ta’a’ (obedience). Article 89 of the Sunni Family Law specified that a husband should not forbid his wife from working outside the home unless such work negatively affected “family interests” But the law did not clearly define family interests. (FH, Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (Autonomy, Security, and Freedom of the Person)
- 23.04 A husband was permitted to have more than one wife under both Sunni and Shi’a family laws as “Polygamy is legal but more common among tribal elements of the population.” (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5) (FH, Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (Autonomy, Security, and Freedom of the Person) A man could marry a second wife without the permission of his first wife, and in some cases, without her knowledge. A wife could not petition for divorce on the grounds that her husband had taken another wife. If a man remarried, his second wife was expected to share the same house with his first wife unless the husband had the means to provide his second wife with a new home. Under Sunni family law, a divorced woman retained custody of her children until her sons reached 15 years of age and her daughters married. If the father remarried, she forfeited the right to custody. (FH, Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (Autonomy, Security, and Freedom of the Person)

- 23.05 Whilst Sunni Family Law in Kuwait provided husbands with the unconditional right of divorce, women did not have the same rights and were unable to petition for divorce. However, women did have some form of protection against arbitrary divorce and mistreatment. A woman was owed financial compensation equal to one year of maintenance if her husband divorced her without her consent. Women also had the right to seek divorce if they were deserted in the marriage or subjected to '*darar*' (violent treatment that led to physical injury). However, proof of injury was required in such cases and this was often difficult for many women as they tended not to file complaints with the police and did not report cause of injury to doctors. (FH, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (**Autonomy, Security, and Freedom of the Person**)
- 23.06 The Sunni Family Law deprived a woman of the right to conclude a marriage contract without the presence and consent of her '*wali*' (guardian). The wali was usually the woman's father, or in his absence, her brother, uncle, or other close male relative. In other words, a woman could not marry the partner of her choice without the prior approval of her family. Yet, in cases where the father of a Kuwaiti woman had refused her choice of husband, the Sunni Family Law gave a woman the right to appeal against the decision of her '*wali*' in family court. Some women opted to marry outside Kuwait to circumvent the marriage restrictions. Nevertheless, a marriage contracted outside Kuwait was not legally recognised within the country; and the head of the bride's family had the right to ask the court to annul the marriage. (FH, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (**Autonomy, Security, and Freedom of the Person**)

"The law discriminates against female citizens married to noncitizen men. These women, unlike male citizens, are not entitled to government housing subsidies and are required by law to pay annual residence fees of \$684 (200 dinars) for their husbands and children. The law does not recognize marriage as the basis for granting residency to noncitizen husbands. Instead the law grants residency only if the husband is employed. By contrast, male citizens married to noncitizen women do not have to pay residency fees for their spouses, and their spouses' right to residency derives from marriage. Noncitizen women can obtain citizenship from their husbands, but citizen women cannot pass citizenship to their noncitizen husbands or their children." (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (**Section 5**)

See also Section 20 on [Biduns](#) and Section 24 on [Children](#)

POLITICAL RIGHTS

- 23.07 In May 2005, the Kuwaiti parliament approved a Bill granting women the right to vote and stand in elections. (*The Times* (UK), 17 May 2005) [24] Formal political parties were banned but Kuwaiti women were involved with many of the informal political groupings operating in the country and occasionally even serving as founding members or contributing board members. (FH, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (**Political Rights and Civic Voice**)
- 23.08 It was reported that in the 2006 elections nearly as many women voted as men. Voter turnout figures indicated that 58 per cent of women who were registered to vote, all of whom were newly enfranchised, cast their ballots. A

law passed before the elections ensured that 100 per cent of all eligible Kuwaiti women were registered to vote, while only 80 per cent of men eligible to vote actually registered, despite the several decades during which voting had been open to men. Given this disparity in registration and turnout, the total number of Kuwaiti women that voted was nearly equal to the total number of males turning out to vote, indicating a strong democratic impulse among Kuwaiti women and undermining the position of those who argued that women had little interest in politics. (Brookings Institution, 12 February 2007) [34]

- 23.09 Women's activism and participation throughout the elections had a ripple effect in other areas of political life. It had, for example, opened up the *diwaniyya*, a traditional element of politics in Kuwait which had previously been an exclusively male domain. A *diwaniyya* is an evening gathering at which people discussed issues of political, economic and social importance. Before the 2006 elections, some Kuwaitis had questioned how women could effectively participate in politics without attending any *diwaniyya*. In the run-up to the elections, therefore, some women candidates and activists began to attend *diwaniyyas*, and held some of their own. By the end of 2006, women were even welcomed at the Amir of Kuwait's high-profile *diwaniyya* that was held at the beginning of Ramadan. (Brookings Institution, 12 February 2007) [34]

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

- 23.10 The USSD HR report 2006 notes that "The law requires that classes at all universities, private and public, be segregated by gender. Public universities enforced this law more rigorously than private universities." [1b] (Section 5)
- 23.11 Kuwaiti women were entitled to own and have full and independent use of their land, property, income and assets. A woman's right to inheritance, as defined in the family law and in accordance with Islamic Shari'a, stipulated that a brother received double his sister's share. (FH, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (Economic Rights and Equal Opportunity) Shari'a differs according to the branch of Islam; "In the absence of a direct male heir, Shi'a women may inherit all property, while Sunni women inherit only a portion, with the balance divided among brothers, uncles, and male cousins of the deceased." (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5)
- "Citizen families (a 'family' must always include a male) are entitled to receive either a house or a plot of land and a \$240,400 (70,000 dinars) interest-free government loan ('housing allowance') to purchase a house. The government registers the house in the names of both the husband and the wife. However, in case of divorce, a female citizen loses her right to the house regardless of any payments she may have made on the loan. She may continue to reside in the house if she has custody of any minor children resulting from the marriage, but she must move once the children reach age 18. A divorced single mother and her minor children or a female citizen married to a noncitizen cannot, by law, qualify for the government housing allowance." (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5)
- 23.12 Kuwaiti women were freely able to enter into business and financial contracts and activities at all levels. Women had the right of ownership and the right to dispose of assets as well as the legal right to undertake civil and commercial transactions, conclude contracts, and engage in commercial transactions. It

was not necessary for a woman to obtain the consent of a husband to exercise these rights. By law any Kuwaiti over 21 years of age could conduct any commercial activity in Kuwait provided that he or she was not affected by a personal legal restriction, such as a criminal record. (FH, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (Economic Rights and Equal Opportunity)

- 23.13 In June 2007, the Kuwaiti parliament passed a law banning women from working at night, except those in the medical profession, and barring them from jobs considered "immoral". The law, which was passed unanimously, prohibited women from working between 8.00 p.m. and 7.00 a.m. and in jobs that "contravene public morals". (*The Daily Star* (Lebanon), 12 June 2007) [37] The USSD HR report 2006 notes that "The law provides for female 'remuneration equal to that of a man provided she does the same work.' The law prohibits women from working in 'dangerous industries' and trades 'harmful' to health." [1b] (Section 5)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- 23.14 The USSD HR report 2006 notes that:

"Violence against women continued to be a serious and overlooked problem. The law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence, although cases are tried as assault. Each of the country's 83 police stations reportedly received weekly complaints of domestic abuse. The courts have found husbands guilty of spousal abuse; however, most domestic abuse cases were not reported, especially outside of the capital. Abusive husbands, if convicted, rarely faced severe penalties, and there was no criminalization of spousal rape." [1b] (Section 5)

- 23.15 The same report recorded that there were no shelters or telephone advice lines for victims of domestic violence and that some noncitizen women married to citizens reported that they had suffered domestic abuse and subsequently experienced inaction or discrimination by the police during 2006. This was despite the law stating that a victim of domestic violence could make a complaint to the police and request that formal charges be brought against the abuser. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5)

"In practice, however, even with documented evidence of the abuse such as eyewitness accounts, hospital reports, and social worker testimony, police officials rarely took into custody perpetrators of domestic violence. An abused woman may petition for divorce based on injury, but the law does not provide clear legal standard as to what constitutes injury. In addition a woman must provide at least two male witnesses (or a male witness and two female witnesses) to attest to the injury suffered. Individuals reportedly bribed police officials to ignore charges of domestic abuse." (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5)

- 23.16 The USSD HR report 2006 also related that "... rape and sexual assault remained serious problems, particularly for domestic servants and other foreign workers. ... The police occasionally arrested rapists and several were tried and convicted during the year [2006]; however, laws against rape were not always enforced effectively." [1b] (Section 5)

'Honour' crimes

- 23.17 "Honor crimes are prohibited; however, article 153 of the penal code reduces penalties for these crimes to misdemeanors. The maximum sentence is three years in prison. During the year there were at least three reported cases of honor crimes. The perpetrators of two of the three crimes were convicted and given prison sentences. The criminal court pursued a case during the year against three brothers who were charged several years previously with killing their sister because of their suspicions about her behavior. The case was still pending at year's end. The courts sentenced two men to seven and 10 years, respectively, for killing their daughters." (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5)
- 23.18 According to Freedom House's 'Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005', "... in cases of 'honor killings,' the penalties are reduced for men. According to Article 153 of the penal code 16/1960, a husband who murders his wife and/or her partner during an adulterous act will be sentenced to a maximum of three years in jail." (FH, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005) [10b] (Nondiscrimination and Access to Justice)

ABORTION

- 23.19 Before 1981, abortion was generally illegal in Kuwait under the Penal Code (Law No.16 of 2 June 1960). A person who performed an abortion was subject to up to ten years in prison and payment of a fine, and a woman who undertook her own abortion or who allowed one to be performed was subject to up to five years in prison and/or payment of a fine. Physicians, pharmacists and midwives who committed the offence were liable to harsher penalties. Abortions were permitted to be performed only for the good faith purpose of saving the life of the pregnant woman by a person in possession of the necessary skills. Such penalties were still applicable in the case of illegally performed abortions. (UN Population Division, June 2002) [31] (Kuwait)
- 23.20 Following the enactment of Law No.25 of 1981, Kuwait became one of the first countries in Western Asia to allow abortion on less restrictive grounds. If the pregnancy was of less than four months duration, an abortion could be performed if the continuation of the pregnancy would cause serious injury to health, or if it was established that the foetus would be born with a serious physical or mental malformation that could not be expected to be cured. With the exception of urgent cases, the abortion had to be performed in a State hospital and had to be approved by a medical commission consisting of three specialised physicians, one of whom was a specialist in gynaecology and obstetrics. (UN Population Division, June 2002) [31] (Kuwait)
- 23.21 Ministerial Decree No.55 of 1984 was issued to implement the law of 1981. It required that an abortion be performed in a public hospital which had a gynaecology and obstetrics department. If the woman was not already at the public hospital nearest her usual residence, she was to be referred to it and was to bring a detailed report of her case signed by her physician and the reasons for the requested abortion. In the event that the woman could not be transferred to the nearest government hospital without endangering her life, an abortion could be performed in a private hospital that was approved by the Ministry of Public Health. The decision of the commission approving the abortion had to be unanimous. All members of the commission had to be of the Muslim faith. The hospital director had to be notified before the abortion

was performed. The consent of the pregnant woman and her husband or, in the absence of the latter, of any person standing in loco parentis, was required. This foregoing procedure did not apply in cases of inevitable, incomplete, septic or retarded abortions, or in cases of extra-uterine or ovarian pregnancy. (UN Population Division, June 2002) [31] (Kuwait)

23.22 Although Ministerial Decree No.55 required that the Ministry of Public Health should be notified of all abortions performed, no comprehensive data on the incidence of abortion and on mortality due to abortion were readily available. The Government did not consider the level of induced abortion and complications associated with induced abortion to be a matter of concern. Maternal mortality associated with abortion was negligible. No family planning programme was active in Kuwait. The Government provided incentives for childbearing among Kuwaiti nationals. However, access to contraceptive methods was permitted, and, in practice, contraceptives and family planning advice was available in the free government health clinics. (UN Population Division, June 2002) [31] (Kuwait)

23.23 Grounds on which abortion was permitted:

To save the life of the woman	Yes
To preserve physical health	Yes
To preserve mental health	Yes
Rape or incest	No
Foetal Impairment	Yes
Economic or social reasons	No
Available on request	No

(UN Population Division, June 2002) [31] (Kuwait)

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CHILDREN

BASIC INFORMATION

- 24.01 The Government was generally committed to the rights and welfare of citizen children. "There was no societal pattern of child abuse, although there were isolated instances." (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5) The April 2007 reports published by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child dealt extensively with the measures taken by Kuwait to implement the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the state's implementation of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. [45a] [45b]

MINIMUM LEGAL AGE FOR MARRIAGE / AGE OF MAJORITY

- 24.02 The minimum legal age for marriage was 15 for girls and 17 for boys; "Within the urban community, it is rare for girls to be married at an early age or forced into marriage. However, arranged marriages between families of similar social standings are still the norm." (FH, Women's Rights in the Middle East, 2005) [10b] (Autonomy, Security and Freedom of the Person) However, the USSD HR report 2006 records "Citizen girls younger than 15, the legal age, continued to marry within some tribal groups. The MOJ estimated the incidence of underage marriage ranged from 2 to 3 percent of total marriages. The government attempted to educate the rural community via the MAIA and through imams in local mosques." [1b] (Section 5)

Article 192 of the Kuwaiti Penal Code punished sexual intercourse with a male or female less than 21 years of age with imprisonment of up to ten years. (ILGA, April 2007) [11] (p20) UNDP's Kuwait at a Glance states that the age of majority, when male and female Kuwaitis were considered adults and, therefore able to vote, was also 21 years of age. [7c]

CHILD LABOUR

- 24.03 The USSD HR report 2006 states that:

"The labor law prohibits child labor, forced or compulsory labor, and exploitation of workers; however, there were credible reports of some underage domestic servants.

"The legal minimum age is 18 years for all forms of work, both full- and part-time. Employers may obtain permits from the MOSAL to employ juveniles between the ages of 14 and 18 in nonhazardous trades. Juveniles may work a maximum of six hours a day on the condition that they work no more than four consecutive hours followed by a one-hour rest period." [1b] (Section 5)

EDUCATION

- 24.04 School attendance in Kuwait is compulsory for all children between the ages of six and fourteen; public education is provided without charge, through to university level, to Kuwaiti citizens. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 5) (Kuwaitiah.net, undated) [21] The Government provides free kindergartens for Kuwait children between the ages of four and six. For expatriate children,

between the ages of two and four, there are a large number of private nursery schools. Many of the schools for foreign children include kindergartens for children aged four to six. (Kuwaitiah.net, undated) [21]

“Attendance at state schools is restricted to Kuwait children, the children of teachers working for the ME and the children of expatriates who obtained residence prior to 1960. All other expatriate children must be educated privately. In 1997-98, there were 104 private foreign schools in Kuwait, of which 42 were following non-Arabic curricula. With more than 120.000 students, over 75.000 pupils were attending Arabic foreign schools and over 40.000 were enrolled in non-Arabic schools were Arab children of whom nearly half were Kuwaitis. ...

“According to educationalists, there is a marked preference among Kuwaitis for a Western education for several reasons. There include the perceived inadequacy of state education, the importance of an English language education as a preparation for further education overseas and life in general, and the advanced curricula of the non-Arabic foreign schools in Kuwait. Despite comparatively high fees, schools that teach American and British curricula are booming.” (Kuwaitiah.net, undated) [21]

HEALTH CARE

- 24.05 The USSD HR report 2006 records that “The government provides free healthcare and a variety of other services to citizen children; noncitizen children must pay a small fee to be admitted into a health facility and pay additional fees for specialized care. Government hospitals made certain medicines available to citizens but would not dispense them to noncitizens. Both boys and girls had access to the same quality of medical treatment.” [1b] (Section 5)

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TRAFFICKING

- 25.01 The UN Committee to Protect Children's report of April 2007 recorded that it is a criminal offence in Kuwait to engage in trafficking by selling, buying, offering for sale, or making a gift of, a person as a slave; "... article 185 of the Criminal Code No. 16 of 1970 provides: 'Anyone who brings a person into or out of Kuwait with a view to selling that person as a slave and anyone who buys, offers to sell, or makes a gift of, a person as a slave shall be subject to a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 5,000 rupees.'" [45a] (p3)
- 25.02 Kuwait was, however, a destination country for men and women who migrated willingly from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines to work, some of whom were subjected to conditions of involuntary servitude by employers in Kuwait. (USSD Trafficking in Persons, June 2007) [1d] (Kuwait) A Human Rights Watch report of November 2007 contended with the ill-treatment of Sri Lankan domestic workers in four Middle East countries, including Kuwait. [9b] See also Section 31 on [Employment Rights](#)
- 25.03 Victims suffered conditions including physical and sexual abuse, non-payment of wages, threats, confinement to the home, and withholding of passports to restrict freedom of movement. Also, some female domestic workers were forced into prostitution after running away from abusive employers or after being deceived with promises of jobs in different sectors. (USSD Trafficking in Persons, June 2007) [1d] (Kuwait)
- 25.04 Kuwait was also reportedly a transit country for South and East Asian workers recruited by Kuwaiti labour recruitment agencies for low-skilled work in Iraq. Some of these workers were deceived as to the true location and nature of this work, whilst others willingly moved to Iraq through Kuwait but subsequently endured conditions of involuntary servitude in Iraq. (USSD Trafficking in Persons, June 2007) [1d] (Kuwait) The US Department of State Report on Trafficking of 2007 asserts:
- "The Government of Kuwait does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. The Kuwaiti government created a public awareness program to prevent trafficking of domestic workers for involuntary servitude and instituted a standardized contract detailing workers' rights. Nonetheless, Kuwait showed insufficient efforts to criminally prosecute and adequately punish abusive employers and those who traffic women for commercial sexual exploitation. The government has promised for several years to pass a new labor law that would strengthen criminal penalties for the exploitation of foreign workers, but there was no tangible progress on this legislation this year. In addition, the government failed for a third year in a row to live up to promises to provide a shelter or adequate protection services to victims of involuntary domestic servitude and other forms of trafficking." [1d] (Kuwait)
- 25.05 It was reported that a Kuwaiti justice committee had rejected the USSD Report on Trafficking, indicating that the US report was a distortion of the facts. (People's Daily Online, 28 June 2007) [29]

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MEDICAL ISSUES

- 26.01 The WHO EMRO Country Profile for Kuwait listed a number of key statistical indicators for 2005 including demographic, socio-economic, health expenditure and health status. Government and private (out-of-pocket) expenditure on health as a percentage of total health expenditure were at 77.5 and 20.5 respectively for 2003 with the government allocating 6.1 per cent of its expenditure on health as a percentage of total government expenditure. Total life expectancy at birth at 2005 was 77.5 and the under-five mortality rate was 10 per 1,000 live births in 2005. [22a]

OVERVIEW OF AVAILABILITY OF MEDICAL TREATMENT AND DRUGS

- 26.02 The percentage of the population with access to local health services in urban areas was reported as 100 per cent in 2005 but there was no figure given for rural areas:

The number of physicians per 10,000 population for 2005 = 18.0

The number of dentists per 10,000 population for 2005 = 3.00

The number of pharmacists per 10,000 population for 2005 = 5.00

The number of nurses and midwives per 10,000 population = 37.0

(WHO EMRO Country Profile 2005) [22a]

HIV/AIDS – ANTI-RETROVIRAL TREATMENT

- 26.03 A UNAIDS Epidemiological Fact Sheet on HIV/AIDS reports that:

“Out of 275,307 people including foreigners screened in 2000, 1.7% tested HIV positive. In 2000, the HIV seroprevalence among blood donors was found to be 1%; only one patient with STD tested positive out of 417 STD patients; and all of the 417 pregnant women who were screened have tested negative. In the 10 years since 1992, 500 to 800 pregnant women have been tested yearly and there has been no evidence of HIV infection among this group.

“The transmission mode among reported cases between 1997 and 2001 was: 73% heterosexual, 6% men who have sex with men (MSM), 6% injection drug use (IDU), 2% mother to child transmission (MTCT), 6% via blood products, and 8% due to unknown causes.” [23a] (p2)

- 26.04 A further UNAIDS report of 2006 indicates the number of people living with HIV was at “<1000 [<2000]” with a “[<0.2]” prevalence rate in adults aged between 15 and 49. There were no extant figures about the level of anti-retroviral treatment received. [23b]
- 26.05 A doctor from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health indicated at a 2004 conference that the number of HIV/AIDS cases in the country were at a low level, and also that the majority of such cases were part of the temporary expatriate labour force who were deported back home upon identification with the disease. (HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States, June 2004) [28]

MENTAL HEALTH

- 26.06 The WHO Mental Health Atlas Map for 2005 indicated that a mental health policy existed for Kuwait and it had been initially formulated in 1957; "The components of the policy were advocacy, promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation." [22b] (p1) "The primary sources of mental health financing in descending order are social insurance, private insurances and out-of-pocket expenditure by the patient or family. The country has disability benefits for persons with mental disorders. Treatment is provided by the Government and social benefits by the Ministry of Social Affairs." (WHO Mental Health Atlas, 2005) [22b] (p1)

"Mental health is a part of primary health care system. Actual treatment of severe mental disorders is available at the primary level. Primary care is provided by the family doctor. Facilities should be developed further.

"... There are community care facilities for patients with mental disorders. Community care is provided through district and general hospitals and family doctors. Community care facilities are not well developed. However, there are 2 day care centres which cater to more than 30 clients and one half-way house that caters to 30 clients. (WHO Mental Health Atlas, 2005) [22b] (p2)

- 26.07 Psychiatric Beds and Professionals:

Total psychiatric beds per 10,000 population = 3.4
 Psychiatric beds in mental hospitals per 10,000 population = 3.4
 Psychiatric beds in general hospitals per 10,000 population = 0
 Psychiatric beds in other settings per 10,000 population = 0
 Number of psychiatrists per 100,000 population = 3.1
 Number of psychiatric nurses per 100,000 population = 22.5
 Number of psychologists per 100,000 population = 1.4
 Number of social workers per 100,000 = 0.4.
 (WHO Mental Health Atlas, 2005) [22b] (p3)

- 26.08 The WHO Mental Health Atlas, 2005, reports that "There is a plan to increase bed numbers in mental hospitals from the current level of 3.4 per 10,000 to 4.58 per 10,000 population in 2005. ... There is a specialised unit for treating PTSD patients. Although there are more than 1,000 psychologists and social workers only a few worked in the field of mental health. Thirty-one of them are employed by the psychiatric hospital which served as the main psychiatric set-up for Kuwait." [22b] (p3)

- 26.09 "The following therapeutic drugs are generally available at the primary health care level of the country: carbamazepine, ethosuximide, phenobarbital, phenytoin sodium, sodium valproate, amitriptyline, chlorpromazine, diazepam, fluphenazine, haloperidol, lithium, biperiden, carbidopa, levodopa." (WHO Mental Health Atlas, 2005) [22b] (p4)

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FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

- 27.01 The law provided for the right of freedom of movement but, in practice, the Government placed some limits on movement. Unmarried women had to be 21 years of age or older to obtain a passport and travel abroad without permission of a male relative. Married women had to obtain their husband's permission to apply for a passport. A married woman with a passport did not require her husband's permission to travel. At a husband's request, immigration authorities could prevent a wife's departure from the country by a 24-hour travel ban, after which a court order was required to prevent her leaving the country. However, in practice, many travel bans were issued without court order, effectively preventing citizens and foreigners from departing. All minor children under 21 years of age required their father's permission to travel outside the country. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2d)
- 27.02 The law allowed the Government to put a travel ban on any citizen or foreigner who had a legal case pending before the courts. The law also permitted any citizen to petition the authorities to place a travel ban against any other person suspected of infringing local law. In practice, this resulted in citizens and foreigners being prevented from leaving the country without investigation or a legal case going before a court of law. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2d)
- 27.03 Although illegal, many citizen employers often confiscated the travel documents of foreign employees, forcing them to remain in the country against their will. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 2d)

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FOREIGN REFUGEES

28.01 The USSD HR report 2006 records:

“The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided protection against *refoulement*, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. The government did not grant refugee status or asylum. The law prohibits the extradition of political refugees. The government stated that it did not deport persons who claimed to fear persecution in their home countries; however, it often kept such persons in detention rather than grant them permission to live and work in the country. The government cooperated with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

“The government did not permit the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] to verify whether deportees objected to returning to their countries of origin and detained those with objections until they either changed their minds or made alternative travel arrangements.” [1b] (Section 2d)

28.02 Statistics for 2003 indicated that more than 65,000 refugees were living in Kuwait, including an estimated 50,000 Palestinians, 15,000 Iraqis, and some 1700 from Afghanistan, Somalia and other countries. Figures were only rough estimates given that Kuwait did not recognise refugees. The presence of such foreigners was tolerated, however, as they were part of its expatriate labour force. (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, World Survey 2004) [25]

28.03 According to Refugees International (RI) webpage on Kuwait, last updated in January 2004, “Kuwait has largely maintained a closed-door policy toward refugees. However, the country hosted 35,000 Palestinians, 15,000 Iraqis, and 2,000 Somalis refugees throughout the 1990's, most of whom have become long-term residents. Currently, the country shelters some 13,000 Iraqis of concern to UNHCR, plus an additional small number of asylum seekers from various countries.” [18c] Further:

“Kuwait signed and ratified an agreement with UNHCR in 1996 recognizing UNHCR's mandate to protect refugees. In practice, the government allows UNHCR to adjudicate refugee claims, to date, 2,000 to 3,000 refugees have been registered by UNHCR. Primarily, UNHCR pursues local integration as a sustainable solution for these and other refugee groups. Kuwait however denies the option of local settlement, citing the threat to security.” [18c]

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CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY

- 29.01 The US Office of Personnel Management's March 2001 report on Citizenship Laws of the World records the following:

"Citizenship laws were based upon the Constitution of Kuwait.

"BY BIRTH: Birth within the territory of Kuwait does not automatically confer citizenship. Kuwait has a large number of guest workers living in the country; Kuwaiti law considers them to be citizens of their country of origin. Children born in Kuwait of long term guest residents do not qualify for citizenship. In all cases, unless the child is born to a Kuwaiti citizen, the child is born a citizen of the parents' home country.

"BY DESCENT: (i) Child born in wedlock, whose father is a citizen of Kuwait, regardless of the child's country of birth. (ii) Child born out of wedlock, to a Kuwaiti mother and an unknown father, regardless of the child's country of birth.

"MARRIAGE: (i) A foreign woman who marries a citizen of Kuwait may obtain citizenship after 15 years residency. (ii) A foreign man who marries a citizen of Kuwait is not eligible for citizenship.

"BY NATURALISATION: Kuwaiti citizenship may be obtained under the following specific condition: person is granted citizenship through a special act of government.

"DUAL CITIZENSHIP is not recognised.

"LOSS OF CITIZENSHIP: Voluntary renunciation of Kuwaiti citizenship is permitted by law. There are no grounds for involuntary loss of Kuwaiti citizenship." [26] (p113)

- 29.02 A *Kuwait Times* report of October 2007 notes that "Informed sources [had] revealed that the sons of divorced Kuwaiti women will receive citizenship and this will be announced by the Ministry of Interior during the next few days. Moreover, the relevant committee for nationality affairs will add the names of bedoon sons who have high educational degrees or qualifications in the list of suggested names to receive citizenship." [49b] However, a Refugees International bulletin of July 2007 indicated that the children of divorced Kuwaiti mothers were already eligible to receive citizenship. [18a] No formal announcement concerning the information reported by the *Kuwait Times* appeared to have been made at time of writing.

See also Section 20 – [Biduns - Citizenship and nationality](#)

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EXIT/ENTRY PROCEDURES

- 30.01 To live permanently in Kuwait an expatriate (other than GCC citizens) had to have an *iqama*, i.e. a residence permit. A person discovered without a valid *iqama* was fined and deported. There were different types of *iqama* which were colloquially known by the article numbers in the immigration regulations. The three main types were work visas, domestic and dependant visas, all of which required a sponsor. Individuals possessing resident status had to observe certain rules regarding travelling outside Kuwait. (Kuwaitiah.net, undated) [21b] (**Obtaining Residence**) "Expatriate employees of ministries and some other government institutions must obtain exit permits before they can leave Kuwait. Other expatriate do not require exit visas." (Kuwaitiah.net, undated) [21b] (**Exit Permits**)
- 30.02 Residence visas were cancelled if the holder was absent abroad for a continuous period of six months. The only exception was for those who (a) were studying abroad, (b) were receiving necessary medical treatment abroad, (c) were required by virtue of their work to be abroad, provided permissions in all three cases were obtained before leaving country. (Kuwaitiah.net, undated) [21b] (**Absence Abroad**)

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EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

31.01 The USSD HR report 2006 records that:

“With the notable exceptions of the country's approximately 450 - 540,000 domestic servants and an unknown number of maritime employees, the labor law provides that most workers have the right to join unions without previous authorization. Foreign laborers employed as domestics constitute one-third of the noncitizen workforce and are specifically excluded from the right to associate and organize. An estimated 80,000 persons, or 5 percent, of a total workforce of 1.6 million were organized into unions.” [1b] (Section 6a)

31.02 The government restricted the right of freedom of association to only one union per occupational trade and permitted unions to establish only one federation, the Kuwait Trade Union Federation (KTUF), which was comprised of fifteen unions. The law stipulated that any new union must include at least 100 workers, 15 of which must be citizens; a requirement criticised by both the ILO and the International Trade Union Confederation as it discouraged unions in sectors that employed few citizens, such as the construction industry and much of the private sector. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 6a)

31.03 Strike action was allowed only in the private sector which accounted for six per cent of the workforce. Compulsory arbitration was imposed if the workers and employers were unable to resolve a conflict. Although, according to international labour standards, compulsory arbitration should apply to essential services only. There was no protection for strikers against retribution by the state. (USSD HR report 2006) [1b] (Section 6b) (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, 2006) [27]

NON-CITIZEN WORKERS

31.04 The USSD HR report 2006 reported on the ‘two-tiered’ labour market that saw noncitizen workers receive substantially lower wages, and the substandard working conditions and legal situation of noncitizen workers. [1b] (Section 6e) Human Rights Watch (HRW) produced an extensive report on the plight of Sri Lankan domestic workers in four Middle East countries, including Kuwait, in November 2007. [9b]

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Annex A: Chronology of events

Information extracted from source [5b] (BBC Timeline: Kuwait, 9 October 2007)

- 1600s** North-east portion of Arabian peninsula becomes part of the Turkish Ottoman empire.
- 1700s** Settlers arrive at the site of present-day Kuwait City from the interior of the Arabian peninsula. The settlement grows into a bustling trading hub by the early 1800s.
- 1756** Kuwait comes under the control of the Al-Sabah family, predecessors of Kuwait's present rulers. A degree of semi-autonomy from Ottoman Turkey prevails.
- 1899** Fearing direct rule from Turkey, Sheikh Mubarak "the Great" strikes a deal with Britain and Kuwait becomes a protectorate. Britain provides naval protection in return for Kuwait allowing London to control its foreign affairs.
- 1937** Large oil reserves discovered by the US-British Kuwait Oil Company. Exploitation is delayed by World War II, but thereafter fuels the country's development into a modern commercial centre.
- 1951** Major public works programme begins; Kuwait's infrastructure is transformed, residents enjoy a high standard of living.
- 1961** June – Kuwait becomes independent with the end of the British protectorate; the sheikh becomes an emir. The country joins the Arab league. Iraq renews claims that Kuwait is part of its territory but backs down after British military intervention.
- 1963** Elections held for National Assembly, under terms of newly drafted constitution.
- 1976** Emir suspends National Assembly, saying it is not acting in the country's interests.
- 1980** Iran – Iraq war: Kuwait supports Iraq strategically and financially.
- 1981** National Assembly recalled; dissolved again in 1986.
- 1985-6** Domestic security concerns, particularly about Iran's perceived influence over the Shi'ite minority, prompt the deportations of thousands of expatriates, many of them Iranian.
- 1990** **July:** Iraq complains to Opec, accusing Kuwait of stealing its oil from a field near the border. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein threatens military action.
- 1990** **August:** Iraq invades and then annexes Kuwait. The emir and cabinet flee to Saudi Arabia.
- 1991** **January:** Iraq fails to comply with a UN resolution ordering it to pull out. A US-led and UN backed bombing aerial campaign begins in Kuwait and Iraq. By

late February allied forces reach Kuwait City. Iraqi forces torch oil wells as they pull out.

- 1991 March:** Emir returns, imposes three month period of martial law.
- 1992** Under domestic and international pressure, Emir gives green light to National Assembly elections. Opposition forces perform well in the vote.
- 1993** UN demarcates new Kuwait – Iraq border, awarding a port and a number of oil wells to Kuwait. US troops despatched to Kuwait following Iraqi border incursions.
- 1994** Iraq officially recognises Kuwait's independence and the UN-demarcated borders following UN pressure and Russian mediation.
- 1999** Emir suspends National Assembly after bitter feud between MPs and cabinet about misprints in state published edition of the Koran. Government supporters suffer shock setback in resulting elections; liberals and Islamists predominate in the new assembly.
- 2001 March:** Kuwaiti court commutes to life imprisonment a death sentence handed down in 2000 to the country's pro-Iraqi puppet ruler during the 1990-91 invasion.
- 2003 March:** Tens of thousands of soldiers converge on the Kuwait-Iraq border for a US led military campaign to disarm and oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.
- 2003 July:** Islamist and pro-government candidates fare well in parliamentary elections. There are major losses for liberal candidates. Emir appoints Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah prime minister, separating post from role of heir to throne for the first time since independence.
- 2005 January:** Deadly gun battles erupt between suspected Islamist militants and police.
- 2005 May:** Parliament approves a law allowing women to vote and run for parliament. In June the first woman cabinet minister, Massouma al-Mubarak, is appointed.
- 2006 January:** The emir, Sheikh Jaber, dies. The crown prince, Sheikh Saad, succeeds him but is removed days later because of concerns about his ailing health. Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad is sworn in as emir.
- 2006 February:** Sheikh Sabah names his brother, Sheikh Nawaf, as crown prince and his nephew Sheikh Nasser as prime minister.
- 2006 April:** Women cast their votes for the first time, in a municipal by-election.
- 2006 June:** Women fail to win any seats in their first attempt to compete in parliamentary elections. The opposition - a loose alliance of reformists, liberals and Islamists – makes gains, winning nearly two thirds of the seats.

- 2006** **December:** Information Minister Mohammad al-Sanousi resigns. He was to face questioning in parliament over allegations that he curbed media freedoms in the run-up to parliamentary elections in June.
- 2007** **March:** The government resigns in a move aimed at thwarting a no-confidence motion against the health minister. The new cabinet includes two women.
- 2007** **June:** Oil Minister Sheikh Ali resigns amid a political standoff between the government and parliament.
- 2007** **July:** Kuwaitis are urged to conserve electricity as generators struggle to meet demands of economic growth fuelled by record oil exports.

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Annex B: Political organisations

Information extracted from source [2] (Europa World Online)

Constitutional Group

Supported by merchants

Islamic Constitutional Movement

Sunni Muslim; political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood;
Spokesman: Abdullah al-Olaim

Kuwait Democratic Forum

Founded 1991; loose association of secular, liberal and Arab nationalist groups;
campaigns for the extension of voting rights to women.

National Democratic Rally (NDR)

Founded 1997; secular, liberal
Secretary General: Dr. Ahmad Bishara

National Islamic Movement

Shi'a Muslim

Salafeen (Islamic Popular Movement)

Sunni Muslim

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Annex C: Prominent people

Information extracted from source [2] (Europa World Online)

His Highness Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber as-Sabah

Amir of Kuwait (acceded January 2006)

Sheikh Nasser al-Muhammad al-Ahmad as-Sabah

Prime Minister

Sheikh Jaber Mubarak al-Hamad as-Sabah

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior and of Defence

Sheikh Dr Muhammad Sabah as-Salem as-Sabah

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Faisal Muhammad al-Hajji Bukhadhour

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs

Dr Massouma Saleh al-Mubarak

Minister of Health

Muhammad Abdullah Hadi al-Olaim

Minister of Electricity and Water, and Acting Minister of Oil

Bader Mishari al-Humaidhi

Minister of Finance

Moussa Hussein Abdullah as-Sarraf

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs

Nouriya Subeeh Barrak as-Subeeh

Minister of Education and Higher Education

Dr Abdullah Ma'tuq al-Ma'tuq

Minister of Justice and of Awqaf (Religious Endowments) and Islamic Affairs

Abdullah Saud al-Muhailbi

Minister of Information

Sheikh Sabah al-Khaled al-hamad as-Sabah

Minister of Social Affairs and labour

Dr Falah Fahd al-Hajeri

Minister of Commerce and Industry

Abd al-Wahid Mahmoud al-Awadhi

Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Acting Minister of Communications, and Acting Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs

Provincial Governors

Al-Ahmadi: Sheikh Dr Ibrahim ad-Duaij al-Ibrahim as-Sabah

Farwaniya: Abd al-Hamid Hajji Abd ar-Rahim

Graet Mubarak; Sheikh Ali Abdullah as-Salem as-Sabah

Hawalli: Abdullah Abd ar-Rahman al-Faris

Al-Jahra: Sheikh Mubarak al-Humoud as- Sabah

Kuwait (Capital): Sheikh Ali Jaber al-Ahmad as-Sabah

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Annex D: List of abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
FH	Freedom House
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee for Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
RSF	Reporters sans Frontières
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
TI	Transparency International
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSD	United States State Department
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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