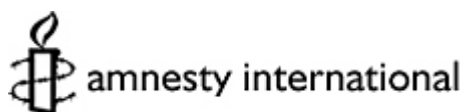


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## Amnesty International Report 2009 - Kuwait

**Head of state:** al-Shaikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah  
**Head of government:** al-Shaikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah  
**Death penalty:** retentionist  
**Population:** 2.9 million  
**Life expectancy:** 77.3 years  
**Under-5 mortality (m/f):** 11/9 per 1,000  
**Adult literacy:** 93.3 per cent

Migrant workers continued to experience exploitation and abuse, and to demand protection of their rights. Some were deported after participating in mass protests. The government promised to improve conditions. Several journalists were prosecuted. One case of torture was reported. At least 12 people were under sentence of death but no executions were known to have been carried out.

### Migrants' rights

In July, thousands of migrant workers, mostly Bangladeshis, held mass protests to demand better pay and working conditions. Police used batons and tear gas to disperse the protests, and as many as 1,000 workers were reported to have been rounded up and deported. Some alleged that they had been beaten and otherwise ill-treated by police at the time of arrest and while detained.

Following the unrest the government introduced a minimum monthly wage for cleaners and security guards employed by companies on government contracts but not for other workers. On 8 September, the parliamentary Human Rights Committee called for a review of the system under which foreign workers must be sponsored by a Kuwaiti employer.

Thousands of women domestic workers were especially vulnerable to abuse by employers. In August, the parliamentary Human Rights Committee proposed a new bill stipulating jail terms of up to 15 years for offences including forced labour, abusing workers and sexually exploiting domestic workers.

## Counter-terror and security

Four Kuwaiti men continued to be held at the US detention facility in Guantánamo Bay. On 22 October, US military prosecutors filed war crimes charges against two of them, Fouad al-Rabia and Faiz al-Kandari. If convicted of conspiracy and supporting terrorism, they could be sentenced to life imprisonment.

- On 22 May, masked State Security officials detained Adel Abdul Salam al-Dhofairi, blindfolded, handcuffed and shackled him, and interrogated him over three days. They asked him to identify an Afghan man suspected of sending people to Afghanistan, and accused him of passing a small amount of money for families in need to this man, which he denied. The officials beat Adel al-Dhofairi severely, plunged him in freezing water and made him run blindfolded and handcuffed along a corridor. He was then taken before the prosecutor, who authorized his further detention for 15 days and fined him. He was released without charge after 18 days in detention. Adel al-Dhofairi's attempt to lodge a complaint to the authorities was refused and no investigation was carried out.

## Freedom of expression

An independent journalists' union was formed in July, four years after its establishment had been rejected by a court. However, several journalists were prosecuted on defamation and other charges although these no longer incur prison sentences.

- On 8 March, two editors were fined by the Criminal Court in Kuwait City and their newspaper licences were withdrawn. Mansur Ahmad Muhareb al-Hayni, editor of the weekly *al-Abraj* newspaper, was convicted of defaming the Prime Minister, and Hamed Turki Abu Yabes, editor of the weekly *al-Shaab*, was convicted of publishing political articles (his newspaper is licensed only to report on arts and culture).

A proposed new law to punish "internet offenders" would, according to reports, prescribe imprisonment and fines for a range of online offences, including promoting immoral conduct, encouraging anti-government sentiments, divulging state secrets, and insulting Islam.

## Death penalty

At least 12 people were on death row, including six who were sentenced in 2008, but no executions were known to have been carried out. Two of four death sentences confirmed by the Supreme Court were later commuted by the Amir, the Head of State.

In December, Kuwait voted against a UN General Assembly resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions.

- On 24 June, the Supreme Court confirmed the death sentence imposed on Sheikh Talal bin Nasser al-Sabah, a member of the royal family, in December 2007 for drug smuggling.
- On 8 July, the Amir commuted the death sentence imposed on May Membriri Vecina, a domestic worker from the Philippines, after she was convicted of murdering one of her employer's children and attempting to murder two others. At her trial, she alleged that her employer had physically and mentally abused her, causing her to become mentally incapable.

