



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Kuwait - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 24 & Wednesday 25 September 2013**

### **What is the legal status of pro Bidoun organisations such as Group 29**

In April 2013 a publication by the *United States Department of State* commenting on events of the preceding year notes:

“In January, April, May, July, October, and December, security forces dispersed illegal gatherings of Bidoon protesters calling for citizenship rights and access to basic services, including personal documents, health care, and education. After demonstrators refused to leave, security forces used nonlethal means, including water cannons, smoke bombs, tear gas, batons, and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. Security forces detained 61 demonstrators during the January 13 and 14 protests and 34 during the October 2 demonstrations. MPs and human rights groups criticized what they alleged was the use of force against demonstrators. Authorities released all participants on bail, and most cases were pending as of year’s end. Abdulhakeem al-Fadhli, a prominent Bidoon organizer, was convicted in absentia on November 17 and sentenced to two years in prison for allegedly assaulting a police officer during an April demonstration. Al-Fadhli was arrested on December 11 and, on December 26, his attorney challenged the evidentiary basis for the conviction and sentence. Al-Fadhli remained incarcerated at year’s end” (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012, Kuwait*, Section 2b Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association/Freedom of Assembly).

This report also states:

“The constitution provides for freedom of association; however, the government restricted this right. The law prohibits officially licensed groups from engaging in political activities. The government uses its power to license associations as a means of political control. There were approximately 100 officially licensed NGOs in the country, including a bar association, other professional groups, and scientific bodies. Dozens of unlicensed civic groups, clubs, and unofficial NGOs had no legal status. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor rejected some license requests, contending established NGOs already provided services similar to those the petitioners proposed. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor can also reject an NGO’s application if it deems the NGO does not provide a public service. Members of licensed NGOs must obtain permission from the ministry to attend international conferences as official representatives of their organization” (ibid, Section 2b Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association/Freedom of Association).

This document also points out that:

“Locally licensed NGOs devoted to the rights or welfare of specific groups, such as women, children, foreign workers, prisoners, and persons with disabilities, operated without government interference, as did a few dozen local, unlicensed human rights groups” (ibid, Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights).

A report issued in September 2013 by *Amnesty International* notes:

“In February 2013, Group 29, a local NGO named after the article of Kuwait’s Constitution providing for equality before the law, held a conference on statelessness in Kuwait and set out clear recommendations to the authorities...In May, a coalition of Kuwaiti NGOs formed the National Committee for the Resolution of Statelessness in Kuwait. Days later, the head of the Central System wrote to the government asking it to oppose the work of the coalition” (Amnesty International (16 September 2013) *The ‘Withouts’ of Kuwait*, p.7).

In April 2013 *The National* states:

“Next month, young Kuwaiti professionals calling themselves Group 29 will organise the first public conference on statelessness” (The National (1 April 2013) *Recognition still eludes Kuwait’s stateless. Passports could be awarded to 4,000*).

A publication in April 2013 by the *United Kingdom Government* notes that:

“16 April saw Ambassador Frank Baker and two members of the political team at the Embassy attended Group 29’s inaugural conference on stateless issues in Kuwait, entitled “situation and solution”. The conference was attended by activists, community members, Kuwaiti politicians, Embassy representatives and many others. The keynote speech was given by a representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees” (United Kingdom Government (16 April 2013) *Ambassador Frank Baker Attends Conference on Stateless*).

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

## References

Amnesty International (16 September 2013) *The ‘Withouts’ of Kuwait*  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE17/001/2013/en/2ed5b1d7-84bc-4a63-9ead-3de541e8e3a7/mde170012013en.pdf>

Accessed Tuesday 24 September 2013

The National (1 April 2013) *Recognition still eludes Kuwait’s stateless. Passports could be awarded to 4,000*

[http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/legal/results/docview/docview.do?docLinkInd=true&risb=21\\_T18223942550&format=GNBFULL&sort=BOOLEAN&startDocNo=1&resultsUrlKey=29\\_T18223942554&cisb=22\\_T18223942553&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=381176&docNo=4THis](http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/legal/results/docview/docview.do?docLinkInd=true&risb=21_T18223942550&format=GNBFULL&sort=BOOLEAN&startDocNo=1&resultsUrlKey=29_T18223942554&cisb=22_T18223942553&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=381176&docNo=4THis) This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 24 September 2013

United Kingdom Government (16 April 2013) *Ambassador Frank Baker Attends Conference on Stateless*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/ambassador-frank-baker-attends-conference-on-stateless>

Accessed Tuesday 24 September 2013

United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012, Kuwait*

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

Accessed Tuesday 24 September 2013

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

#### Sources Consulted

Amnesty International  
BBC News  
Electronic Immigration Network  
European Country of Origin Information Network  
Freedom House  
Google  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
International Crisis Group  
IRIN News  
Lexis Nexis  
Minority Rights Group International  
Online Newspapers  
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library  
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database  
Reliefweb  
Reuters  
United Kingdom Home Office  
United States Department of State  
UNHCR Refworld