



Kuwait – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 April 2013

**Have there been demonstrations by Bidoon in Kuwait during 2012-13?
Are there any reports of arrests or detention?**

A Refugees International field report states:

“Almost ten percent of Kuwait’s population is stateless. Called ‘*bidoon*,’ over the last twelve months thousands have been gathering peacefully in Taima Square to insist that the government recognize their Kuwaiti nationality. Tear gas, rubber bullets, and beatings have all been used to quell the demonstrators.” (Refugees International (6 March 2012) *Kuwait: Bidoon Nationality Demands Can’t Be Silenced*)

A number of reports from Agence France Presse refer to demonstrations by Bidoon in January 2012 as follows:

“More than 4,000 stateless people in Kuwait demonstrated on Friday for the fourth week, insisting that the only solution to their plight is by getting Kuwaiti citizenship and other human rights. ‘There is no solution without citizenship,’ read one banner carried by the protesters in Jahra, northwest of the capital Kuwait City, who rallied peacefully as riot police looked on. The crowd, which was the largest so far, carried hundreds of Kuwaiti flags and pictures of Kuwait’s ruler, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, insisting that they are Kuwaitis and should be granted citizenship.” (Agence France Presse (6 January 2012) *Kuwait stateless protest for citizenship*)

“Several people were wounded and dozens arrested on Friday as Kuwaiti police used tear gas, water cannons and batons to disperse stateless protesters demanding citizenship, witnesses and a rights group said. Hundreds of riot police backed by armoured vehicles assaulted several hundred protesters who defied an interior ministry warning not to demonstrate as the authorities promised to resolve their decades-old plight. The ministry said later in a statement that 21 policemen were wounded when protesters hurled rocks at them, with 16 of them treated on the spot and the rest hospitalised. The statement said protesters ignored repeated police appeals to end the illegal demonstration and began throwing rocks and damaging public property, prompting police to intervene. It said a number of protesters were arrested without revealing how many, but a security source told AFP that as many as 50 stateless people were detained. Police chased the protesters into the streets of Jahra, northwest of the capital Kuwait City, and arrested many of them, including a 13-year-old boy, the independent Kuwait Association of Human Rights said on Twitter. Some young protesters were seen with their heads bleeding after being beaten with batons by riot police, witnesses said.” (Agence France Presse (13 January 2012) *Kuwait police break up demo, scores wounded*)

“Kuwaiti riot police on Saturday used tear gas and batons to disperse hundreds of stateless demonstrators for the second day in a row and arrested dozens, witnesses and a rights group said. A day after riot police beat stateless protesters demanding citizenship in Jahra, northwest of Kuwait City, demonstrations expanded on Saturday to include Sulaibiya, west of the capital. The independent Kuwait Association of Human Rights (KAHR) said three of its members monitoring the protests were arrested but one was later released. Riot police chased demonstrators and arrested dozens in the two towns where most of the 105,000 stateless, locally known as bidoons, live, witnesses said.” (Agence France Presse (14 January 2012) *Kuwait police fire tear gas to break up fresh demos*)

“Kuwait has decided to deport stateless people who took part in protests demanding citizenship which turned violent, newspapers reported on Tuesday. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Central Agency for Illegal Residents, which deals with the stateless people known as bidoons, chaired by Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad al-Humud al-Sabah, Al-Anbaa newspaper reported. Other measures included dismissing all bidoons from the army and the police force if they or their children attended the protests, and evicting them from housing provided by the government. The government also decided to confiscate security IDs from any protester bidoons, their only form of identification, and cancel their applications for Kuwaiti nationality. Riot police used tear gas, water cannon and batons to disperse thousands of bidoon protesters on Friday and Saturday, injuring scores and arresting more than 100 people, according to activists.” (Agence France Presse (17 January 2012) *Kuwait to deport stateless protesters: report*)

“Kuwait's public prosecutor has ordered 61 stateless men be detained for three weeks pending a probe into their alleged involvement in protests that turned violent, their lawyer said Thursday. The men were arrested in mid-January when riot police cracked down on thousands of stateless protesters who were demanding the right to Kuwaiti citizenship and a host of basic rights.” (Agence France Presse (26 January 2012) *Kuwait detains stateless protesters for 3 weeks*)

A Global Insight report on a protest by Bidoon in March 2012 states:

“Kuwaiti security forces dispersed a crowd of stateless people known as Bedouns who had gathered in the Taima district after Friday Prayers on 23 March. The protestors were made to leave, despite requests by a team from the Kuwait Human Rights Society (KHRS) that the gathering should be allowed to take place for an allotted period of time. Despite the police dispersing the demonstration, it proceeded peacefully and while some few bedouns were arrested, they were later released without charge.” (Global Insight (26 March 2012) *Kuwaiti Police Disperse Stateless Protestors*)

A May 2012 Al Jazeera report states:

“Kuwaiti riot police have used batons and armoured vehicles to disperse a group of about 200 stateless protesters, the latest rally by descendants of mainly desert nomads seeking improved rights in the oil-exporting Gulf state. Photos of convoys of security forces moving along the highways, then gathering and confronting what seems to be a small crowd on Tuesday were also posted on Twitter. Known in Arabic as ‘bidoon’ and numbering up to

180,000 people, the stateless are denied citizenship under strict nationality laws in Kuwait, where citizens are entitled to generous welfare benefits. Security forces have cracked down on the bidoon before, notably in January, when they employed tear gas and batons to disperse crowds demanding citizenship.” (Al Jazeera (1 May 2012) *Kuwait police disperse 'stateless' protesters*)

A Human Rights Watch report on this incident states:

“Masked officers used batons and armoured vehicles to disperse and arrest the protesters, participants and Kuwaiti activists told Human Rights Watch. On May 2 the Interior issued a statement confirming the arrests of 14 people. The ministry alleged that demonstrators ignored its ‘repeated warnings’ that demonstrations by ‘illegal residents’ are not allowed and that the protesters had committed ‘shameful acts that are punishable by law,’ such as trying to ‘burn tires and block roads.’ Local rights activists challenged the statement and told Human Rights Watch that the gathering was peaceful.” (Human Rights Watch (3 May 2012) *Kuwait: Security Forces Forcibly Disperse Stateless Residents*)

A public statement by Amnesty International states:

“On 12 July 2012 the Ministry of the Interior issued another warning for ‘illegal residents’ in Kuwait not to demonstrate. This follows a peaceful protest by some of the Bidun on 5 July 2012 that Kuwaiti security forces broke up using water canons, tear gas and beatings. Eleven Bidun were arrested and are believed to remain in custody. Bidun in Kuwait have been protesting regularly after Friday’s prayer in Freedom Square in Taima’ in the Governorate of Jahra, north western Kuwait against their continuing statelessness and to demand Kuwaiti nationality, which would allow them to access free education, free health care and employment opportunities on the same basis as Kuwaiti citizens. The Kuwaiti authorities consider many of them to be illegal residents.” (Amnesty International (13 July 2012) *Kuwait: Respect freedom of expression and assembly for Bidun*)

An Agence France Presse report on a demonstration in October 2012 states:

“Kuwaiti riot police on Tuesday used tear gas and smoke bombs to disperse hundreds of stateless demonstrators who were demanding citizenship and other rights, witnesses and activists said. The stateless, known in Kuwait as bidoons, converged on the Freedom Square in Jahra area, 50 kilometres (31 miles) west of the capital Kuwait City to observe the International Non-Violence Day. Witnesses and activists said at least three people, including a policeman, were slightly wounded and 10 stateless were arrested as security forces laid a siege on Taima suburb in Jahra which houses tens of thousands of bidoons.” (Agence France Presse (2 October 2012) *Kuwait police fire tear gas to break up stateless demo*)

See also Agence France Presse report which states:

“Police in Kuwait have arrested seven leading stateless activists for ‘instigating’ demonstrations and are hunting for eight more in a clampdown aimed at preventing protests, a rights official said on Tuesday. Among those detained was the head of the Kuwaiti Bidoons (stateless) Committee, Ahmad

al-Tameemi and his assistant Ali al-Enezi, the director of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights, Mohammad al-Humaidi, told AFP. Twenty-three stateless protesters including five teenagers were arrested on October 2 during a demonstration, said Humaidi.” (Agence France Presse (9 October 2012) *Kuwait police clamp down on stateless activists*)

An Amnesty International Urgent Action alert refers to these events as follows:

“On 2 October 2012, International Day of Non-Violence, hundreds of Bidun - stateless people who are long-term residents of Kuwait - gathered in Taima’s Freedom Square in al-Jahra Governorate, calling for a resolution to their decades-long statelessness and an end to their social exclusion. Despite increased security, the demonstrators assembled in the square after leaving an adjacent mosque but were soon met by riot and security forces who used plastic bullets, tear gas and sound bombs to disperse the protesters. Over 20, were arrested, 18 of whom remain in detention. Following the arrests, further demonstrations planned for 5 October did not take place as a result of a heavy presence of security forces but further arrests of Bidun took place during the night and into the next day. Some Bidun activists have been asked to hand themselves over to the authorities.” (Amnesty International (9 October 2012) *Bidun Arrested After Peaceful Protests*)

A report from the Kuwait Times states:

“A number of political and human rights groups released a joint statement yesterday condemning the government's policy towards the stateless people's demonstrations in Kuwait, saying it resulted in 'serious injuries' and 'permanent disabilities' to protesters. 'Not only did the government use excessive violence against peaceful Bedouin demonstrators on October 12, 2012 leaving many with serious injuries, but it also failed to take measures to prosecute those police officers who violated their legal authority and used unprecedented violence and adopted an arbitrary approach against the participants at the sit-in,' the statement read. The statement said serious injuries such as bone fractures and open wounds were 'a result of attacks with batons and merciless dragging', in addition to burns caused by 'smoke and sound bombs shot directly at the demonstrators with an intention to injure them.' “(Kuwait Times (13 October 2012) *'Bedoon protesters left with serious injuries' - Excessive violence used*)

A report on a demonstration in December 2012 from the English-language Kuwaiti newspaper Arab Times report states:

“Bedouns staged a demonstration in the square of Al-Shaabi Mosque in Taima after Asr prayers on Monday to demand citizenship and other civil rights. The protesters raised Kuwaiti flags and placards to air their grievances and present their demands, calling on the concerned authorities to end to their suffering.” (Arab Times (11 December 2012) *Bedouns stage demo for rights*)

See also Arab Times report which states:

“Scores of bedoun demonstrated on the streets of Taima calling upon the authorities not to classify them according to color codes, reports Al-Seyassah daily. They also demanded the immediate release of 'bedoun brothers' Abdul

Hakim and Abdul Nasser Al-Fadhli and others who were arrested by the police during previous demonstrations.” (Arab Times (20 December 2012) *Bedoun hold Taima demo*)

An Arab Times report on a demonstration in January 2013 states:

“The Special Forces Friday quelled the bedoun demonstrators who took to the streets soon after Friday prayers in Taima, Jahra. The Special Forces were called in after the Bedoun ignored calls to disperse peacefully and instead continued chanting slogans demanding naturalization. The Special Forces, after warning the demonstrators, used stun bombs and tear gas.” (Arab Times (26 January 2013) *Special Forces quell protests by Bedouns*)

An Arab Times report on a demonstration in February 2013 states:

“Bedouns organized another rally Monday after Asr prayer and marched from Al-Sha'abi Mosque in Taima area to commemorate the third anniversary of the first demonstration they held to demand social and civil rights, citizenship and proper living conditions.” (Arab Times (19 February 2013) *Bedouns stage new protest*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit 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.

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