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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Visit to Kuwait

Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem***

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem, conducted an official visit to Kuwait from 2 to 9 September 2025. In the present report, she assesses the situation of violence against women and girls in the country and examines the legal and institutional framework for the prevention of violence against women and girls and the extent to which victims are assisted and protected. She also makes recommendations for strengthening national efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls in Kuwait.

* The present document was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

** The summary of the report is being circulated in all official languages. The report itself, which is annexed to the summary, is being circulated in the language of submission and Arabic only.

Annex

Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem, on her visit to Kuwait

I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem, conducted an official visit to Kuwait from 2 to 9 September 2025, at the invitation of the Government of Kuwait. The main objective of the visit was to assess the situation of violence against women and girls in the country and to provide recommendations to strengthen the efforts by Kuwait to prevent and respond to such violence.
2. The Special Rapporteur would like to extend her sincere appreciation to the Government of Kuwait for the invitation to conduct a visit and for its excellent engagement and cooperation before, during and after her visit.
3. During the visit, the Special Rapporteur met with representatives of a wide range of governmental and other public institutions, including the Ministry of Interior, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Public Authority for Youth, the Ministry of Information and the Kuwait Trade Union Federation. She also met with representatives of the Central Agency for Remedying Illegal Residents' Status, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, she engaged with representatives of the Public Authority for Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Public Authority for Sport and the Public Authority for the Workforce. In addition, she met with representatives of various international and non-governmental organizations, including United Nations agencies and civil society organizations, as well as with academics and Kuwaiti and foreign women and girls. In addition, the Special Rapporteur visited the following key facilities: a shelter for women migrant workers and the women's police academy (Khaitan, Farwaniyah Governorate), a deportation centre and women's prison (Sulaibiya, Jahra' Governorate) and a police station (Al-Siddiq, Hawalli Governorate).
4. The present report does not cover the consequences of the attacks on Kuwait in the context of the war in the Persian Gulf that started in February 2026, which are likely to impact the enjoyment by women and girls of their rights and their access to services.

II. Context and international legal responsibilities

5. Kuwait is a constitutional hereditary emirate, established in 1961 following independence from British protection. Governed by the Al-Sabah family, Kuwait combines hereditary rule with an elected National Assembly that plays an important role in legislative oversight. The country is home to a diverse population, with migrant workers comprising approximately two thirds of its residents. Kuwait has long prioritized economic development and social welfare, leveraging its substantial oil wealth to invest in infrastructure, education and healthcare.
6. Kuwait has ratified seven of the nine core human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and two of the optional protocols thereto. These instruments have become part of the domestic legal system under article 70 of the Constitution.
7. Nevertheless, Kuwait has not yet ratified some key treaties, such as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman

or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

8. Kuwait has also submitted reservations to article 9 (2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, inasmuch as it runs counter to the Kuwaiti Nationality Law, which stipulates that a child's nationality is to be determined by that of the father, and to article 16 (f) of the Convention, inasmuch as it conflicts with the provisions of the Islamic sharia. The State maintains its interpretative declarations with regard to articles 2 (2), 3 and 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in relation to non-discrimination and equality between men and women, as well as its declarations with regard to articles 7 and 21 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which concern the equal right to nationality, as well as the rejection of the concept of adoption.

9. Article 29 of the Constitution states that all people are equal in human dignity and in public rights and duties before the law, although, in practice, it applies only to citizens. In addition, Kuwaiti women continue to be discriminated against in the exercise of their rights, particularly in the areas of nationality and economic and political participation.

III. Legal and policy framework promoting gender equality, and the empowerment and participation of women

A. Unequal enjoyment of nationality rights

1. Transmitting Kuwaiti nationality to spouses and children on an equal basis with men

10. The Kuwaiti Nationality Law of 1959 discriminates against women by automatically granting Kuwaiti nationality to children born to a Kuwaiti father regardless of the mother's nationality, while children born to a Kuwaiti mother and a non-Kuwaiti (or unknown) father may only acquire nationality through a discretionary decree after reaching the age of 21. A favourable decision is subject to strict conditions, such as long-term residence in Kuwait and the foreign father's death or irrevocable divorce from him.

11. The Special Rapporteur regrets that, despite persistent recommendations from the human rights treaty bodies, Kuwait has not only refrained from changing its nationality laws but has also enacted further discriminatory changes. Recently, Kuwait amended its Nationality Law, through Decree-Law No. 116 of 2024, no longer allowing a Kuwaiti man to pass his nationality to his non-Kuwaiti wife through marriage. This is concerning, as, in accordance with the international human rights principle of non-regression in international law, States are called upon to promote equality by uplifting disadvantaged groups, such as enabling Kuwaiti women to pass citizenship to their spouses and children, rather than stripping men of this right.

2. Denationalization of Kuwaiti women

12. Since March 2025, the Government of Kuwait has increasingly resorted to the withdrawal of Kuwaiti nationality from women. The policy was introduced and implemented as a measure to correct "legal errors" in the naturalization process, targeting those who had obtained nationality on fraudulent grounds and those who had dual nationality, which is not allowed under Kuwaiti nationality law. In addition, persons, including women, had their Kuwaiti nationality revoked if it was deemed to be in the higher interest of the State, in accordance with the 1959 Nationality Law.

13. As a result, as of August 2025, between 40,000 and 60,000 individuals have been affected by these decisions, with women being disproportionately affected, particularly women who had naturalized through marriage to Kuwaiti men under article 8 of the Nationality Law, which has been repealed.

14. The Special Rapporteur received information from affected women and their family members ahead of, during and after the visit. More than 100 emails and letters were received. The Special Rapporteur is particularly concerned that the law was applied retroactively, and

revocations were applied not only to the concerned individuals, but also to their families, in violation of the principle of non-retroactivity and non-retroactive criminalization. The Special Rapporteur took note of several subsequent measures adopted to mitigate the impact of the changes, such as granting affected women special residence status and limited civil rights. However, these measures were applied sporadically. The Government of Kuwait also established a grievance committee on nationality loss and revocation, in line with Decision No. 207 of 2025, as well as an online appeal portal, granting a grace period of three months for those affected to demonstrate that they had made a serious attempt to reinstate the original citizenship that they had held prior to acquiring Kuwaiti nationality, in order to be able to remain in the country. It also issued a temporary Kuwaiti passport to women stripped of the nationality that they had been granted under article 8 of the Nationality Law, to enable them to travel to regularize their status. There are legitimate concerns regarding the independence of the grievance committee and its work, as well as the clarity of its procedures and the information provided on how to access it. The Special Rapporteur also recognizes that the insistence of the authorities that the affected women should approach countries in which they had habitually resided or whose nationalities they had held prior to acquiring Kuwaiti nationality has placed them in a difficult situation, as most of them would like to remain Kuwaiti and remain in Kuwait. The Special Rapporteur is alarmed that this practice has continued, with the additional retroactive withdrawal of the nationality of 2,176 adult children that had been extended to them legally through their Kuwaiti mothers, through Decree No. 22 of 2026. The vast majority of these children were born in Kuwait and had lived in Kuwait all their lives.

B. Marriage, divorce and child custody

15. Two laws applicable to Kuwaitis govern personal status in Kuwait. The country also has a separate personal status law that applies to the minority Shiite population, namely, the Ja'fari personal status law of 2019.

1. Marriage

16. Kuwaiti law requires adult women to obtain a male guardian's consent before marriage, preventing them from independently entering into a marriage contract. Under the 1984 personal status law for Sunnis, both bride and groom must consent, but the bride also needs a male guardian to be present when the contract is officiated. Forced marriage is prohibited, and any such marriages that have been celebrated are void, and judges can override unreasonable guardian refusal, yet social pressures often lead women to submit rather than risk family confrontation or ostracization. For Shia, the 2019 Ja'fari law mandates the consent of the father or grandfather for adult women and bans forced marriage. Marriage registration is required but not essential for validity.

17. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the repeal of article 182 of the Penal Code, known as the "marry your rapist" clause. Nevertheless, rape-related legislation is not fully in line with international standards, as marital rape is not criminalized.

18. She further welcomes the move of Kuwait to criminalize child marriage by raising the minimum marriage age to 18 for both sexes, in 2025. She remains concerned, however, that children born outside marriage do not have access to birth certificates.

19. Regarding divorce, the personal status laws of Kuwait discriminate against women in divorce matters by permitting husbands to unilaterally repudiate marriage through *talaq* at any time without cause, while restricting wives to narrower judicial divorce (*tatliq/tafriq*) on limited grounds. An alternative is *khul'* divorce, whereby the wife initiates the dissolution of the marriage, in exchange for which she offers compensation or waives her financial rights. Documented challenges for women requesting divorce include prolonged delays relating to burdensome evidentiary standards, particularly in domestic violence situations, financial penalties through *khul'* and challenges in verifying the divorce for alimony or inheritance claims.

2. Child custody and guardianship

20. Under the various personal status laws of Kuwait, mothers have priority custody of young children (until puberty or marriage/consummation for Sunnis, and only until age 7 for Shia, after which it shifts to the father until puberty, when the child may choose), while legal and financial guardianship remains with the father or paternal relatives. Mothers, however, lose custody if they remarry.

21. In 2020, an amendment was introduced to health-related laws, allowing mothers and other female relatives in some contexts to sign consents, waivers and approvals for the medical treatment of a child.

C. Political participation

22. While Kuwaiti women's political participation is formally guaranteed, it is constrained in practice by structural and sociocultural barriers. Only a small minority run for the parliament (e.g. 29 candidates in the 2020 elections). Prior to the dissolution of the parliament in 2024, women occupied 3.1% of seats.¹ Over the years, special procedure mandate holders have raised concerns with the Government of Kuwait regarding violence against women with public profiles in Kuwait, such as in the context of peaceful demonstrations (2012) and the expression of political opinion or human rights work (2016 and 2019).²

D. Economic participation

23. In Kuwait, in 2025, the female labour force participation rate was approximately 47.2%, compared with 88.6% for men. Most nationals of both sexes are in high-skilled occupations. While national bans exist on employment discrimination based on gender, age, pregnancy or social status, there is no explicit protection of women against discrimination in employment opportunities, training, promotions or demotions, and there are prohibitions on women working during evening hours or working in professions considered dangerous. While new mothers receive 70 days of paid leave, fathers do not receive any. Existing social norms, however, continue to discourage women from working. Some 68% of the population agree that children will suffer if the mother has a paid job outside the home, compared with an average of 70% in the Middle East and North Africa region.³ In 2024, 71.5% of women, compared with 76.1% of men, had accounts in Kuwait.⁴

24. Concerning migrants, as of 2024, 78 per cent of total employment in Kuwait was accounted for by non-nationals. Almost all low-skilled occupations, particularly domestic work, are accounted for by non-nationals, most of whom are women.⁵ Domestic workers are not included in the ambit of Kuwaiti labour law,⁶ but the domestic workers law (No. 68/2015) provides for employer-provided protections such as minimum wages, rest days and healthcare. While labour law stipulates that any new union must include at least 100 workers and that at least 15 must be citizens, this law does not apply to domestic workers. Over the

¹ World Bank, Gender Data Portal, "Kuwait", available at

<https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/kuwait> (accessed on 10 April 2026).

² See communications KWT 2/2012, KWT 1/2016 and KWT 2/2019. All allegation letters and/or urgent appeals mentioned in the present document are available from

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmssearch/TMDocuments>.

³ See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development

Centre, "Kuwait: Social Institutions and Gender Index country profile", 17 June 2024, available at

https://webfs.oecd.org/devsigi/SIGI%202023%20Country%20Profiles/MENA/country_profile_KWT_Kuwait.pdf.

⁴ See <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/kuwait>.

⁵ See International Labour Organization, "State of Kuwait: the employment, environment and climate nexus factsheet", August 2025.

⁶ Migrant workers, including women, under the foreigners' residency law (Decree-Law No. 114 of 2024) and its executive regulations (Ministerial Decision No. 2249 of 2025) can obtain longer residency permits but remain tied to sponsors.

years, Kuwait has also adopted additional measures to improve the conditions of migrant workers, including women, such as obligating employers to transfer wages to the bank accounts of employees, allowing employees to change jobs in some circumstances without the permission of the employer and investigating complaints of abuse in a timely manner.

25. Many Kuwaitis, however, are not familiar with the law, despite some awareness-raising campaigns. Moreover, and despite the codification of the rights of domestic workers and some improvements,⁷ the sponsorship (*kafalah*) system continues to render migrant workers vulnerable to abuse, with limited recourse through the Public Authority for the Workforce. In July 2025, Kuwait adopted a new exit policy that requires migrant workers, including women, to obtain permission from employers before leaving the country, further exacerbating their vulnerability to abuse and limiting their freedom of movement.⁸

E. Participation in sport

26. Kuwait has taken gradual steps to improve women's inclusion in sport through recognition in policy, institutional support and increased participation at the national and international levels. Authorities such as the Public Authority for Sport have supported the expansion of women's teams in disciplines including athletics, fencing and shooting, while Kuwaiti women athletes have participated in global competitions such as the Olympic Games and the Asian Games. Grass-roots initiatives and educational institutions, including Kuwait University, have also contributed to increasing opportunities for girls and young women to engage in sport. However, progress remains uneven, with persistent challenges related to limited funding, inadequate infrastructure and sociocultural barriers that continue to constrain the full development of women's sport in the country.

F. Access to sexual and reproductive health rights

27. Abortion in Kuwait is governed primarily by the Penal Code (Law No. 16 of 1960), which is based on a highly restrictive approach. Under this framework, abortion is generally prohibited and punishable as a criminal offence, with relevant provisions – particularly articles 174 to 177 – criminalizing the performance, procurement and facilitation of abortion, including self-induced abortion. The law provides only a narrow exception under article 175, permitting abortion where it is deemed necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman, and this must be carried out by a qualified physician acting in good faith. In practice, this exception has sometimes been interpreted to extend to serious threats to the woman's health and, in limited cases, to severe fetal impairment, typically subject to strict procedural requirements such as approval by medical specialists. Importantly, the law does not enumerate a broader set of permissible grounds, and it notably does not mention rape or incest. As a result, abortion in cases of rape is not expressly prohibited but remains illegal by default.

G. Asylum and international protection

28. Kuwait has no national asylum and international protection system, as it is not a Party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its Protocol and has no specific laws governing asylum or refugee status. The Constitution (art. 46) prohibits extradition of political refugees and, in principle, refoulement, without formal procedures. Refugee status determination is handled solely by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under a 1996 cooperation agreement. As of mid-2025, UNHCR data show approximately 1,105 persons in need of international protection in Kuwait: 418

⁷ These improvements include the facilitation of the transfer of contracts from one employer to another, digitalizing the issuance and renewal of work permits and digitalizing the receipt and management of complaints without requiring the concerned worker to attend in person.

⁸ See Human Rights Research Center, "Kuwait's new exit permit rule deepens grip on migrant workers", 20 June 2025.

recognized refugees and 687 asylum-seekers.⁹ The data are disaggregated according to sex. Their presence is treated as temporary, and efforts are focused on repatriation or third-country resettlement rather than integration.

IV. Legal framework governing violence against women

A. Domestic violence

29. According to a 2022 study, an estimated 1,100 cases of violence against women are reported each year, and 80% of the victims are women.¹⁰ Statistics from the Ministry of Justice show that, between 2020 and 31 March 2025, 9,107 domestic violence cases were recorded. Of the 11,051 accused, 3,201 were women (29%) and 7,850 were men (71%). Among the 9,543 victims, 5,609 were female (59%) and 3,934 were male (41%).¹¹

30. In 2020, the Domestic Violence Law was adopted, marking an important advance towards increased protection of women against violence. It defines and criminalizes domestic violence as “any act, omission, or threat thereof committed by a family member against one or more members ... inflicting physical, psychological, sexual, or financial harm, which entails a penal sanction”.¹² The Act provides for means of reporting violence confidentially and accessing protection and support, including protection orders.

31. Even though the Domestic Violence Law formally prohibits physical assault, there are concerning references in other laws of Kuwait, such as article 2 of the Penal Code, which allows the use of “disciplinary” physical force within the family, if the force is considered “light” and not injurious. Moreover, it is concerning that the Domestic Violence Law does not explicitly cover domestic workers or violence perpetrated by former intimate partners, including those outside official marriage.

B. Physical violence, including rape and femicide

32. Kuwait has introduced several important amendments to its laws that have improved the prospects for accountability for crimes against women and girls. In a welcome development, in 2025, Kuwait repealed article 153 of the Penal Code, which had allowed for lenient sentencing for men who killed their female relatives in “honour killings”.

33. Furthermore, Kuwait has also criminalized rape, under article 186 of the Penal Code, which includes lack of consent.¹³ However, the definition is not compliant with international standards, as it is conditional on the use of force, threats or deception, thereby not recognizing coercive circumstances where voluntary and informed consent cannot be given. The Penal Code also does not stipulate what sexual acts are covered by the term “sexual intercourse”. Article 191 has been interpreted in practice to solely focus on vaginal penetration.

C. Sexual harassment in the workplace

34. Kuwait does not have a single definition or comprehensive, stand-alone law dedicated solely to sexual harassment across all contexts. Articles 191 and 192 of the Penal Code criminalize acts of sexual harassment or indecent assault, with penalties of up to 15 years’

⁹ See Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Annexes for global and mid-year trends”, Refugee Data Finder, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/annexes/trends-annexes.html>.

¹⁰ See United States of America, Department of State, “2022 country reports on human rights practices: Kuwait”, 20 March 2023.

¹¹ See Gamal Khattab, “Domestic violence in Kuwait: between social reality and the power of law”, *Al Mujtama*, 31 January 2026.

¹² See <https://al-dostour.com/new-domestic-violence-law-in-kuwait-2026/>.

¹³ It is defined as including anyone having sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent through the use of force, threats or deception.

imprisonment (or life in aggravated cases involving relatives, authority figures, minors or those lacking capacity) when coercion, threats or deceit are involved and up to 10 years otherwise. Complementing those provisions, Ministerial Decision No. 177/2021, issued by the Minister of Commerce and Industry, prohibits sexual harassment in all its forms and by any means in private sector workplaces.

D. Digital technology-facilitated violence

35. According to a 2022 study, 54.5% of women aged between 18 and 30 claimed that they had experienced violence online.¹⁴ Younger women, especially adolescents, face higher risks due to heavy social media use and limited digital awareness. Exposure is also greater among women with high online visibility, particularly when they challenge social norms for women and girls, and unmarried women who are subject to strict reputational scrutiny are more vulnerable to blackmail and sexualized threats in particular.¹⁵ The consequences are significant, as women report anxiety, fear and depression, alongside shame and reputational harm in a conservative social context. Many may withdraw from digital spaces or self-censor, reducing their participation in public life and limiting professional or economic opportunities.

36. Regarding digital violence, the cybercrime law (No. 63 of 2015) broadly covers cybercrimes ranging from illegal access to a personal computer to using the Internet for exploitation. Article 4 (5) outlaws enticement or incitement to commit acts of prostitution and debauchery, or assistance in doing so, using information networks or any form of information technology means. Nevertheless, the current laws are largely silent on the current manifestations of online violence or gender-based violence targeting women and girls. Women and girls may fall under the protections of the cybercrime law that apply to all, such as protection against harassment and extortion. Those convicted can be imprisoned for up to five years.

E. Trafficking in persons

37. Article 185 of the Penal Code stipulates that anyone who brings into or takes out of Kuwait any individual with the intention of enslaving him or her or who buys, sells or gifts another person as a slave is liable to a term of imprisonment of not more than five years, a fine not exceeding 375 Kuwaiti dinars, or both. As such, ownership of a person who is not being moved is not criminalized separately.

38. Trafficking in persons is criminalized by Law No. 91 of 2013, with imprisonment for 14 years and fines of up to 20,000 Kuwaiti dinars. In 2018, Kuwait adopted its first national strategy to prevent trafficking in persons through Decree No. 261. Kuwait has an anti-trafficking strategy for the period 2023–2028. The Kuwait Trade Union Federation is also engaged in combating trafficking, including through a dedicated hotline and an online reporting system. However, these efforts have had limited results. For example, while the authorities employ a screening process at shelters to identify victims of trafficking, as of December 2023, only two potential trafficking victims were identified through the screening of 1,623 women and 58 children.¹⁶ The rate of prosecutions remains low.

39. A national committee to prevent trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants was also created in 2018 through Decree No. 2062. Nevertheless, cases of servitude or slavery were investigated as labour or immigration offences, rather than as offences of trafficking in persons. The country's migration laws allow the deportation of migrants for violations without requiring an assessment of whether they have been victims of trafficking.

¹⁴ See Nourah M. AlMutairi, "Digital violence in Kuwait: unpacking women's experiences", SecDev Foundation, November 2022.

¹⁵ Ibid. and confidential submission.

¹⁶ See United States of America, Department of State, "2024 trafficking in persons report: Kuwait".

V. Policy framework for addressing discrimination and violence against women

A. National machinery for achieving gender equality

40. Kuwait has taken steps in recent years to establish interministerial coordination mechanisms aimed at advancing women's rights and addressing violence against them, most notably through the decision of 2023 to create a national committee on protection from domestic violence. Established through Law No. 11 of 2026, this committee dedicated to addressing domestic violence brings together representatives of key ministries and reportedly also civil society. The committee is responsible for setting and overseeing family protection policy, coordinating between relevant institutions, reviewing legislation, approving training programmes, raising public awareness of domestic violence and issuing annual reports. It has, however, not yet been constituted.

41. Two bodies focus on discrimination and violence against women and girls. One is the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, which faces significant limitations in addressing discrimination and violence against women and girls due to its primarily advisory role, lack of enforcement powers and limited institutional independence. Its mandate is framed around "family affairs" rather than women's rights. It has not fully assumed its coordinating role, as the national committee on protection from domestic violence, to comprise experts, and mandated in article 4 of the Domestic Violence Law, was not established. Resource constraints and limited influence over legal reform further restrict its effectiveness, leaving gaps in protection, accountability and the ability to address structural discrimination.

42. The second is the Ministry of Social Affairs, which oversees the provision of services and assistance to victims of violence. It does not have an adequate budget and has weak oversight and accountability powers. It also has not adopted operational regulations for implementing the law. As a result, Kuwait lacks a strong, centralized national machinery dedicated exclusively to advancing equality and preventing violence against women and girls more effectively.

43. While Kuwait is known for its vibrant and strong civil society, including its long-standing women's rights movement, the concerned government entities do not effectively engage civil society actors in the design and implementation of policies, nor do they consult them.

B. Access of survivors to effective protection and assistance

44. Article 5 of the Domestic Violence Act instructs the Supreme Council for Family Affairs to establish shelters for victims of domestic violence, ensure the provision of psychological and health services, provide family counselling, establish a telephone hotline to receive complaints and set up a fund to provide adequate support and care to victims. Few victims, however, are aware of referral mechanisms, as well as the assistance and protection measures available to them.

45. While the Special Rapporteur was informed that there are five shelters for women victims of violence, all of them were reportedly being refurbished, so she could not visit any. The hotlines that exist do not operate full-time. The shelters and the overall protection and response strategy suffer from chronic underfunding and lack of trained and experienced staff. Victims are also discouraged from staying at shelters due to: the inability to maintain family unity, as male children aged 14 years or older are not allowed to join them; the short period of stay permitted; the rejection of non-Kuwaiti victims; and the lack of long-term support for victims beyond the initial stay period.

46. Furthermore, shelters are not operated confidentially. The Special Rapporteur was alarmed to receive information during the visit regarding situations of exploitation and abuse of vulnerable unaccompanied girls and young women who are housed in the Fanar shelter and were subjected to trafficking and sexual exploitation. The situation was facilitated by the lack of management and oversight of the facilities.

C. Access to justice

47. The rate of complaints is low in Kuwait. The Domestic Violence Law mandates the public prosecutor to investigate and prosecute domestic violence incidents and to initiate criminal proceedings at the request of any person or entity. The public prosecutor must also punish any violations of emergency protection orders, through prison sentences, monetary fines or both. The perpetrator must also attend educational programmes. Nevertheless, obstacles to access to justice by survivors remain, caused by insufficient specialized judicial courts or circuits dedicated to gender-based violence cases, limited access to free legal aid services, social stigma, gender bias and inadequate institutional coordination among entities such as the police, prosecution authorities and shelters. Furthermore, victims often undergo forced mediation at police stations even though it is prohibited. Forcing a victim to withdraw her complaint is punishable through fines and prison time. Many complaints are abandoned in the middle of the process. While the prosecutor may still proceed with the case even if the victim has withdrawn it, such decisions are not common.

48. Kuwait has made efforts to increase the number of female police officers by establishing a women's police academy in 2008 to improve outreach to women victims of violence and designating a unit in the community police department focused on domestic violence, yet the number of female police officers present for the enforcement of court orders and child custody rulings remains grossly insufficient. It has been even more challenging to increase the number of women in the country's judiciary and as prosecutors.

D. Women and peace and security

49. Kuwait established a national committee for women and peace and security in December 2023 to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). It ranks seventh in the Middle East and North Africa region and seventieth globally on the Women, Peace and Security Index for 2025–2026.¹⁷ In 2024, Kuwait co-hosted the Peace Day Forum with the United Nations and other organizations, strengthening its advocacy for women's participation in peacebuilding and protection in conflict zones.

50. Internationally, Kuwait has been designated by the United Nations as an international humanitarian centre for the eleventh year in a row, in recognition of the country's exceptional contributions to global relief efforts. True to its long tradition of solidarity, Kuwait has mobilized significant support to address a number of crises, such as in the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, as well as in Gaza, and for Rohingya and Syrian refugees, where the majority of those affected are women and children. In August 2025, Kuwaiti society raised over 6.5 million Kuwaiti dinars in three days, complementing the more than 60 relief flights sent since October 2023 under the "Fazaa for Palestine" campaign. Kuwait has also hosted major humanitarian conferences, including the May 2024 international donor conference on Gaza. The Special Rapporteur commends Kuwait for the continuation of its commitment to providing humanitarian assistance in a flexible manner, at a time when humanitarian support has dwindled or has become heavily earmarked.

VI. Legal framework on child protection

A. Prohibition of discrimination, including in access to basic services

51. Article 3 (b) of the law on the rights of the child (No. 21 of 2015) enshrines fundamental rights for all children, including protection from any form of discrimination based on place of birth, parentage, gender, religion, race or disability or for any other reason, ensuring equality in the enjoyment of rights. In addition, article 39 (f) specifies that one of

¹⁷ Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute Oslo, *Women, Peace and Security Index 2025/26* (Washington, D.C., 2025), p. 58.

the goals of education is to promote equality among individuals and prohibit discrimination based on religion, sex, ethnicity, race, social origin, disability or any other ground.

52. Children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaiti men, including girls, face systemic legal and social discrimination due to gaps in nationality and residency laws, as well as in accessing essential services such as health and education. They do not automatically acquire citizenship and remain dependent on their mother's legal status, which is lost upon her death. Under Kuwaiti law, they may inherit their mother's movable assets, such as bank deposits, shares and stocks. However, they are not entitled to inherit real estate or immovable property, including land and buildings. They may exceptionally obtain approval from the Council of Ministers to retain or transfer ownership of such property, but this remains subject to discretionary approval. When they become adults, these children are also excluded from senior positions in the public sector and face difficulties in accessing public services.

B. Exploitation and abuse

53. The law on the rights of the child (No. 21 of 2015), in its article 71, defines and prohibits neglect, physical abuse and psychological or emotional abuse. It also defines sexual abuse as "exposing the child to any sexual activity or behaviour by mature adults, including exercises of a sexual nature, whether oral, touching, hugging, or penetration of or with the genitalia or any part of the body or by means of any tool, and verbal abuse. It shall further include exploiting the child for prostitution or to produce nude pictures; or exploiting him for sexual purposes through the use of state-of-the-art means of communication, such as the Internet."¹⁸ Article 88 criminalizes anyone who imports, exports, produces, prepares, displays, prints, stores, possesses or distributes material involving child pornography or sexual exploitation and anyone who uses computers, the Internet, information technology networks or digital media to prepare, store, process, publish or circulate material involving sexual exploitation, prostitution, pornography, defamation or sale of children or who incites children to engage in criminal or immoral acts, even if the crime does not occur.

54. Article 3 (a) of the same law guarantees the child all fundamental rights, including the right to life, survival and development within a cohesive and supportive family and protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or mistreatment. In addition, article 6, on care and protection of children, provides that it is prohibited to intentionally subject the child to physical, psychological or emotional harm or to any harmful or unlawful practices and that the State is to work to eliminate practices harmful to their health.

55. In April 2025, Kuwait enacted Decree-Law No. 70 of 2025, which repealed articles 159 and 182¹⁹ of the Penal Code on the basis that the repealed provisions were inconsistent with the country's national and international obligations.

56. In May 2025, Kuwait enacted Decree-Law No. 65 of 2025, amending article 164²⁰ of the Penal Code, penalizing sexual assault of a child with imprisonment for a period depending on the child's age: up to 20 years of imprisonment if the child is under 12, up to 15 years if the child is under 15 and up to 10 years if the child is under 18. The amended article also increased the penalty to the maximum term if the assault is committed by a relative, guardian, custodian, teacher, domestic worker or any person in a position of trust or authority over the child. Furthermore, this decree-law added an additional provision, with article 164 bis stating that any person who attempts, incites or facilitates the commission of a sexual offence against a minor (even without completion of the act) is to be punished with imprisonment not exceeding five years, without prejudice to harsher penalties elsewhere.

¹⁸ See <https://www.nspc.org.kw/uploads/2024-Sep-30--03--39--07pm-7TA1E-Law%20No.%20%7B21%20%202015%20on%20the%20Protection%20of%20Children's%20Rights.pdf>.

¹⁹ Article 159 exempted a perpetrator from punishment or reduced the penalty in cases of killing a newborn child.

²⁰ Article 164 penalized sexual assaults on minors.

C. Technology-facilitated violence

57. In the same reform, article 285 of the Penal Code, on the electronic exploitation of minors, was amended, now stating that anyone who uses electronic means to exploit a minor for sexual purposes, trafficking or manipulation or to induce the minor to engage in prohibited acts is to be punished with imprisonment not exceeding 5 years, and article 286, on child pornography, was amended, now stating that anyone who creates, distributes, possesses, acquires or accesses child sexual abuse material is to be punished with imprisonment not exceeding 10 years. In a positive development, Kuwait temporarily banned Roblox in August 2025 for a few months, citing its legal powers to protect users, especially children, after receiving complaints from the public and concerned authorities regarding content deemed dangerous to children's safety. It lifted the ban once stricter safety rules and monitoring had been put in place.²¹ Nevertheless, Kuwait lacks specialized units for gender-based cyberviolence, staff trained in digital safety and legal tools to investigate or trace perpetrators, leaving children, particularly girls, exposed and without effective remedies or timely, child-sensitive redress mechanisms.

D. Child marriage

58. Child marriage remains a culturally accepted practice. Stateless girls are more prone to child marriage. In 2023, 6% of girls aged between 15 and 19 were married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union, compared with 3% of boys.²²

59. In March 2025, Kuwait enacted Decree-Law No. 10 of 2025 prohibiting the documentation, registration or authentication of marriage certificates or any marriage contracts where one of the parties is under the age of 18 at the time. This reform marks a critical step towards eliminating child marriage and reinforcing the principle of free and full consent in marital unions. There is a need to ensure compliance with this decree-law.

E. Female genital mutilation

60. While underreported, female genital mutilation persists in the country,²³ particularly among migrant communities. Kuwait does not have official data on its prevalence. While this offence could fall under the crimes of assault (Penal Code, arts. 160–166) or causing permanent injury (Penal Code, arts. 150–152), there is no explicit prohibition of female genital mutilation in the law on children's rights or the Penal Code.

F. Violence in the family, and child custody proceedings

61. Articles 76 to 79 of the law on the rights of the child (No. 21 of 2015) address matters concerning children in danger, including domestic violence, abandonment and neglect. The law also establishes the scope of action of child protection centres and defines the protective measures that can be adopted.

62. In 2025, Kuwait enacted Decree-Law No. 65 of 2025, amending the Penal Code issued by Law No. 16 of 1960. The amended version of article 283, on unlawful custody of a minor, states that anyone who unlawfully removes a child from the custody of a lawful guardian is to be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years. The amended version of article 284, on exploitation of a minor's need, immaturity or vulnerability, states that anyone who takes advantage of a minor's need, lack of understanding, immaturity or vulnerability to commit any act harmful to the minor's well-being is to be punished with imprisonment not exceeding 3 years.

²¹ See <https://www.gamingamigos.com/post/roblox-ban-lifted-kuwait> and <https://kuwaittimes.com/article/32165/kuwait/other-news/kuwait-blocks-unsafe-roblox/>.

²² See OECD, "Kuwait: Social Institution and Gender Index country profile".

²³ See Equality Now, *The Time Is Now: End Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) – An Urgent Need for Global Response (Five Year Update – 2025)*, February 2025.

VII. Policy framework for addressing discrimination and violence against girls

A. National machinery on the protection of children, including girls

63. The Ministry of Social Affairs of Kuwait leads on implementing the law on the rights of the child of 2015. With the ministries responsible for justice, health and education and community-based organizations, it funds protection centres, shelters, counselling and hotlines. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs operates shelters and protection centres for children. The High Committee for the Protection of Children focuses on child-specific policy, coordinating cross-sector protocols and monitoring compliance with international obligations, and organizes training and technical guidance for relevant actors.

64. The Child Protection Office of the Ministry of Health provides a front-line response for children, running the 147 child helpline, deploying multidisciplinary suspected child abuse and neglect teams in hospitals and managing identification, referral and case management. It also delivers psychosocial rehabilitation and coordinates with schools, hospitals and law enforcement agencies. It organizes training with the support of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

65. Despite these systems, national mechanisms fall short of protecting all children, including non-Kuwaiti children and those residing irregularly, from violence. There is also a lack of age- and sex-sensitive and victim-centred complaint mechanisms and support for children, as well as information for children on how to access them.

B. Identification and referral mechanisms

66. Various hotlines are available as first-line reporting channels. The domestic violence hotline, operated by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, allows victims or witnesses to report abuse and request immediate assistance. The child helpline (147), managed by the Child Protection Office, is dedicated to receiving reports of child abuse, neglect and violence. However, several stakeholders expressed concerns about the fact that these helplines are not available around the clock.

67. Hospital- and school-based identification mechanisms are in place. The Ministry of Health has established multidisciplinary suspected child abuse and neglect teams in major hospitals. Doctors, psychologists and social workers are trained to detect signs of abuse during medical visits and to document and report cases to the Child Protection Office and the authorities for further assistance and protection. Teachers in schools are not systematically trained to recognize abuse indicators and refer cases, despite being required to do so, and there is little detection and few referrals, particularly if the violence is caused by family members.

68. Shelters and protection centres operated by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs should provide safe housing and psychological support. However, they do not appear to be operational, nor do they appear to be financed or staffed adequately, and the Special Rapporteur was unable to visit any of them.

C. Effective access to justice by girls

69. Effective access to justice for children, including girls, remains limited. The system relies on helplines, messaging applications and focal points in hospitals, as well as in shelters, for identification and referrals, but helplines do not operate full-time, and most shelters are not yet built or operational.

70. The Special Rapporteur learned during her visit that several key staff across ministries remain untrained regarding the reporting and referral mechanisms in case of violence against children. Teachers seldom act when abuse is suspected, and weak interministerial coordination fragments responses. The Ministry of Education cannot intervene directly in

school-detected cases, and case transmission rarely occurs. A shortage of qualified personnel hampers the enforcement of the child protection law. Social stigma, especially around violence against women and girls, discourages reporting due to fear of backlash and family pressure.

VIII. Disaggregated data on discrimination and violence against women and girls

71. The Central Statistical Bureau of Kuwait is the official national entity mandated to collect and manage statistics nationwide. The Domestic Violence Law mandates the collection and publishing of domestic violence statistics.

72. Overall, data are fragmented, outdated and not shared across relevant institutions, nor are they publicly available, particularly in the areas of violence against women and girls, access to property and unpaid care work. Data for only 33.6% of the indicators needed to monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective are available.²⁴

73. It is therefore challenging to monitor the effectiveness of policies that seek to support women and girls and to improve prevention of violence and response to the needs of survivors. Quantitative information on discrimination and violence against children, including girls, in Kuwait is also fragmented and not routinely accessible to allow for a robust analysis of patterns and risk factors.

IX. Specific groups of women and girls exposed to violence

A. Women stripped of their Kuwaiti nationality

74. The withdrawal of nationality has affected every aspect of the lives of the thousands of women who have been denationalized, as well as their families, particularly in the following ways:

- (a) Closure of bank accounts;
- (b) Loss of ownership of property obtained as Kuwaitis;
- (c) Loss of educational opportunities for their children by virtue of being Kuwaiti;
- (d) Loss of subsidized housing;
- (e) Restriction of freedom of movement, including the ability to exit and enter the country, as they were no longer in possession of Kuwaiti passports;
- (f) Closure of businesses;
- (g) Loss of social insurance and pensions;
- (h) Separation from family members if they or their family members were deported following loss of Kuwaiti nationality;
- (i) Loss of or reduced access to health services to which they were entitled as Kuwaitis. In addition, many have found themselves trapped in violent relationships, as they became financially more dependent on their partners. Others became more exposed to exploitation and abuse by other men who took advantage of their vulnerabilities.

75. Furthermore, they and their families have suffered widespread stigmatization by society, as they are incorrectly presented as having used manipulation or deceit to gain their nationality. The measures have left many in a profound state of shock and mental suffering

²⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "Kuwait", available at <https://data.unwomen.org/country/kuwait> (accessed on 2 June 2026).

that amounts to psychological, economic and political violence inflicted on them. Many live in constant fear of being deported, given that they have become irregular or illegal residents.

B. Bidoon women and girls classified as persons whose nationality could not be determined

76. Women and girls who belong to the stateless Bidoon communities are classified by the State as persons whose nationality could not be determined and face widespread discrimination in all areas of life.

77. While Kuwait passed a law in 2000 permitting the naturalization of persons whose nationality could not be determined and their descendants, where they could show that they had been registered in the 1965 census, only a very small number were able to benefit from this law. The yearly quota of 2,000 naturalizations, as stipulated by the law, was never met.²⁵

78. Bidoon women and children often lack necessary documentation and face greater difficulties in accessing public healthcare, education and legal assistance. The registration of Bidoon children at birth continues to be challenging. Their access to primary education may be affected, as they do not receive free primary education unless their mother is Kuwaiti. They may, however, qualify for financial support from charity organizations. Their access to higher education is more restricted than for Kuwaiti nationals, and only a limited number of Bidoon students are admitted to university. Outstanding graduate students may benefit from scholarships, however, including to study abroad.

79. While Bidoon may be contracted to work for public institutions, and a number of them do work in different government-owned sectors,²⁶ they receive lower pay and benefits than others, making them overrepresented in the informal sector. They tend to be part of the lower economic strata and reside in overcrowded settlements.

80. Bidoon women have reportedly experienced sexual harassment, including from government officials when applying for official documents. They are also more exposed to being exploited in prostitution. Many of the marriages of these women are unregistered, which limits their protections against domestic violence, as well as their ability to obtain their rights upon divorce.

C. Women and girls with disabilities

81. In 2024, approximately 35,000 women with disabilities resided in Kuwait.²⁷ Women and girls with disabilities are supported by a strong legal framework, particularly Law No. 8 of 2010, which provides financial allowances, specialized maternity leave at full pay, and reduced working hours. Their rights were further enhanced by Law No. 29 of 2015, promoting the employment of persons with disabilities, including the setting of a 4% quota for hiring persons with disabilities in entities with over 50 employees, with benefits such as reduced hours and early retirement. Law No. 19 of 2016 ensures access to public facilities.²⁸ In addition, the State offers an allowance of 300 Kuwaiti dinars for those caring for persons with severe disabilities and ensures inclusive comprehensive primary, secondary and tertiary education.²⁹ It provides up to 10,000 Kuwaiti dinars for residential accessibility and offers protection services against domestic violence.³⁰

²⁵ Minority Rights Group, “Bidoon in Kuwait”, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, available at <https://minorityrights.org/communities/bidoon/> (accessed on 2 June 2026).

²⁶ For example, according to the Central Agency for Remediating Illegal Residents’ Status, more than 400 are employed in dentistry, emergency medical service, nutrition, engineering, information technology, education and administration.

²⁷ See Haila Al-Mekaimi, “The role of national legislation in empowering Kuwaiti women with disabilities”, *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, vol. 26, No. 6 (2024).

²⁸ See Nebal Snan, “Study: enforcement gaps leave disabled women unsupported”, *Kuwait Times*, 3 April 2025.

²⁹ See <https://www.pada.gov.kw/en/information-center/faq/>.

³⁰ See <https://www.pada.gov.kw/en/authority-law/law-enforcement-article-no-7>.

82. Nevertheless, challenges persist, particularly with regard to the equal, gender-sensitive implementation of such policies. While women with disabilities appeared to be satisfied with their access to educational opportunities, and Kuwait guarantees inclusive education and educational support for persons with disabilities across primary, secondary and tertiary education, they are not sufficiently economically included. There is also unequal access to disability-related benefits. A Kuwaiti woman married to non-Kuwaiti man who has a child with a disability does not receive the same benefits as a woman married to a Kuwait man, unless she is divorced or widowed.

D. Women migrants, particularly domestic workers

83. In 2023, Kuwait employed approximately 426,000 female domestic workers, constituting over 26.9% of its migrant workforce. Most of them come from South-East Asia, particularly the Philippines.³¹ In 2023, 88% of the estimated 69,000 Filipino workers were domestic workers, with 73% of them estimated to be women. The *kafalah* system, which is the labour visa sponsorship system, creates profound structural vulnerabilities for women migrant domestic workers by tying their legal residency, visa status and right to remain in the country directly to their employer-sponsor.³² This dependency isolates live-in workers within private households, leaving them beyond routine labour inspections or public oversight.

84. Reports of the exposure of migrant women, including domestic workers, to situations of physical, sexual and verbal abuse have continued, as well as economic exploitation that includes wage theft, overwork and poor working conditions. They may receive different wages for the same work based on different grounds, including nationality. Murders of female domestic workers have also been reported. According to the Department of Migrant Workers of the Philippines, there were over 24,000 cases of abuse and violations in 2022, representing a significant increase from 6,500 in 2016.³³

85. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about the credible reports that she has received of migrant women being kept in abusive situations and being sexually exploited, including through prostitution and trafficking. Their high vulnerability to violence remains recognized in the public discourse.

86. Most of the migrant workers cannot seek meaningful redress against mistreatment, withholding of pay and arbitrary cancellation of contracts.³⁴ Those who flee abuse can often be accused of absconding, leading to their detention and deportation, including before their court hearings. Collectively, these measures lead to underreporting of complaints. The two shelters for vulnerable migrant women, including those who have become victims of trafficking, recently made available constitute a positive attempt to address these gaps, although the rate of identification of actual victims remains very low.

87. Those who are irregularly in the country face greater difficulties in accessing healthcare, higher education and legal assistance, exacerbating their vulnerability to violence against women and girls due to insufficient protection and support.

88. Women migrant workers, particularly those who are in the country irregularly, encounter significant challenges in navigating the justice system, particularly in the absence of financial and institutional support. Migrants, including women,³⁵ are at particular risk of

³¹ See Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, “Trapped in the system: women domestic workers and kafala in the Gulf States”, 11 June 2025.

³² While certain terminology such as “kafeel”, i. e. “sponsored person”, may not be used officially, the *kafalah* system remains largely intact.

³³ See <https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/47000-filipinos-will-lose-job-opportunities-in-kuwait>.

³⁴ Lucy Harry, Carolyn Hoyle and Jocelyn Hutton, “Migratory dependency and the death penalty: foreign nationals facing capital punishment in the Gulf”, *Punishment & Society*, vol. 26, No. 1, (January 2024), pp. 109–127.

³⁵ See Advocates for Human Rights and World Coalition against the Death Penalty, letter to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, prior to her visit to Kuwait, 18 July 2025.

receiving harsh and disproportionate punishment, including death sentences. In November 2022, two women, one of them a foreign national, were sentenced to death.³⁶ They cannot seek support from any labour unions, and the diaspora organizations are very limited.

E. Women in detention

89. The women's prison holds women from a range of different nationalities. The administration is staffed predominantly by female police officers. The prison conditions appear to be adequate, with inmates able to receive visits, as well as to continue their education. The Special Rapporteur met with three inmates who had been selected by the authorities. Several women over the years had been sentenced to death and had been executed, including for drug-related offences and killing of partners. For other crimes, once the women have served the sentence, they are deported.

90. Overall, women and girls reportedly account for up to 30% of those deported. On her visit to the Sulaibiya deportation facility, she met with non-Kuwaiti women scheduled for deportation. Many had been in the facility for a period of several weeks to several months. Most of them had been born in Kuwait and had lived most of their lives in the country. Some of them were nationals of countries in conflict or post-conflict situations, such as the Syrian Arab Republic. The Government of Kuwait does not appear to sufficiently take into consideration the history of vulnerabilities and violence that these women have experienced, the coercion that they have experienced in the sentencing process or their needs for international protection.

X. Conclusions and recommendations

91. Based on the above findings, and in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue, the Special Rapporteur offers the following conclusions and recommendations to the Government of Kuwait, to be considered in coordination with other stakeholders.

92. On strengthening the framework to achieve equality and improve the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Withdraw the reservations and declarations made to international human rights treaties that impact the enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls;

(b) Accede to all relevant human rights instruments, particularly the Domestic Workers Convention, (2011) No. 189, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness;

(c) Strengthen the national mechanism for advancing equality between men and women by establishing a higher council or ministry responsible for women, which is well resourced and has a clear mandate for leading a nationwide strategy on advancing and empowering women;

(d) Carry out targeted and large-scale education and awareness-raising campaigns on equality between the sexes and address harmful social and cultural practices and attitudes that perpetuate violence against women and girls, including in school curricula;

(e) Ensure that the conditions in shelters for victims and the services that they provide are adequate, engage experts and civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, in the management and monitoring of shelters and the services provided, and professionalize the management of the shelters and reception and

³⁶ See Africanews, "Ethiopian woman among seven executed in Kuwait in rare mass execution", last updated 13 August 2024.

referral mechanisms for victims of violence to ensure that they are confidential and trauma-informed;

(f) Amend the Penal Code (Law No. 16 of 1960) and related medical regulations to decriminalize abortion in clearly defined circumstances, explicitly permitting access to safe and legal abortion at a minimum in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life and health of the pregnant woman and severe fetal impairment, remove punitive measures against women and girls seeking such services and guarantee timely, confidential and non-discriminatory access to quality reproductive healthcare, based on the woman's consent;

(g) Adopt the abolitionist model on prostitution, treating women and girls who have been engaged in prostitution or sexually exploited as victims who can access protection, assistance and exit mechanisms, and explicitly criminalize the buying of sexual acts and pimping. Their identification as victims of prostitution should not be linked to their identification as victims of trafficking;

(h) Permit civil society organizations working with women and girls who are victims of violence to raise and receive funds from the State and private entities, including from the zakat funds, to ensure the continuity of their services;

(i) Adopt temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of equality between men and women, and increase women's political and economic participation;

(j) Explicitly criminalize femicide, as well as female genital mutilation and marital rape, and centre the definition of rape around the absence of context-based consent;

(k) Strengthen the protection of domestic violence victims, including by discouraging forced mediation in cases of violence against women, particularly domestic violence, and addressing impunity, and extend its application to domestic workers;

(l) Explicitly criminalize all forms of modern slavery, including forced labour, recognizing them as distinct crimes from trafficking in persons.

93. With regard to equality in the family, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Remove the duty to have a guardian to enter into marriage and grant women and men equal divorce rights, requiring all divorces to occur in court;

(b) Determine child custody based on the best interests of the child.

94. On improved access to justice for women and girls, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Provide training for all relevant stakeholders on a sex- and gender-sensitive and victim-centred response strategy;

(b) Strengthen the training of all officials on the different manifestations of violence that all women and girls may experience in Kuwait and on trauma-informed, sex- and gender-sensitive approaches to cases, prioritizing efforts to eliminate sex- and gender-specific stereotypes and biases among law enforcement officials, the judiciary, health professionals, social workers and border officials;

(c) Ensure the prompt and timely investigation of all complaints of violence against all women and girls in Kuwait and ensure that they receive free legal aid and counselling in a language that they understand;

(d) Establish dedicated family violence courts, increase the number of female judges and staff, and prioritize training on violence against women and children, including girls, as well as gender bias for law enforcement officials, the judiciary and staff in the ministries coming in contact with victims;

(e) Ensure privacy, trauma-centred approaches and confidentiality in all processes pertaining to victims of violence;

(f) Reintroduce a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing it and provide for gender-specific defences and mitigating circumstances in capital trials.

95. Regarding Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis and their children, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Amend national laws to allow Kuwaiti women to pass their nationality to non-Kuwaiti spouses and children on equal terms with Kuwaiti men;

(b) Grant the children of Kuwaiti mothers with foreign fathers the same rights as other children, issue, in the meantime, a stand-alone law that clearly sets out the rights of their spouses and children, and assign a separate categorization in the civil registry to Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis and their children that allows for their identification.

96. On the denationalization of Kuwaiti women and their relatives, the Government should:

(a) Reinstate the nationality of women who have been stripped of their Kuwaiti nationality retroactively, following the entry into force of the law in 2025, ensure, in the meantime, the independence of the appeals committee, and accelerate the processing of the appeals;

(b) Provide clear and comprehensive information to the women who have been aggrieved regarding pathways for support, their rights and the appeal processes, and consider establishing a central department for the purpose of addressing requests for information;

(c) Ensure that, pending the resolution of their situation, denationalized women and their families maintain the same access to essential services, education, healthcare and employment, as well as access to their accounts and property;

(d) Amend article 13 of the Nationality Law to restrict arbitrary revocations of nationality in the future, strictly limiting revocations to situations where fraud has been established by a final judicial ruling and ensuring that such revocations do not result in statelessness, and that no person is deprived of nationality retroactively where it was acquired in accordance with the law applicable at the time.

97. Regarding enhanced protections of girls in Kuwait against violence, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Prevent new situations of statelessness among children, by ensuring that all children, including girls born in Kuwait, are given access to birth registration and pathways to acquire nationality;

(b) Ensure that the child protection law is implemented in practice, particularly in the context of the family. The number of child protection officers in all line ministries must be increased, particularly in the ministries responsible for education, social services, health and justice, and services must include psychosocial counselling, legal aid, digital safety assistance and reintegration support;

(c) Appoint and train focal points for child protection in schools and hospitals throughout the country to strengthen early detection, assistance and referral pathways, develop detailed guidelines and strengthen interministerial coordination mechanisms;

(d) Strengthen the investigation of reports of crimes committed against children, including girls, particularly in domestic settings, and address the cultural, social or legal norms that usually impede such investigations in a prompt and effective manner.

98. Regarding the prevention and response to digitally facilitated violence against women and girls, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Urgently adopt specific legislation that addresses the issue of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including deepfakes, sextortion and grooming, ensuring that it includes an emphasis on raising awareness among women

and girls of their rights and ways of obtaining assistance and protection, set up specialized digital safety units and train specialist investigators, and develop child-sensitive procedures for online reporting and redress;

(b) Ensure safe, confidential reporting mechanisms, expanded victim support services, and digital literacy initiatives targeting women and girls;

(c) Address underlying social norms, including by combating victim blaming, and promote women's safe participation online.

99. Regarding disaggregated data, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Ensure that data on the prevalence, patterns and consequences of violence against women and girls are unified and disaggregated at least by a few key variables, including sex, age and nationality, and, in cases of femicide, record the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator;

(b) Publish data on the number of women who have been sentenced to death and the number who have been executed;

(c) Take data into consideration in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies affecting women and girls.

100. With regard to women and girls with disability, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Intensify information campaigns regarding the challenges faced by and rights of women with disabilities, and strengthen the implementation of inclusive national policies, particularly with regard to access to private employment opportunities and housing;

(b) Ensure that children with disabilities have access to the same services and benefits as other children, irrespective of nationality.

101. Concerning the enhancement of participation of women and girls in sport, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Increase the resources and support available to women and girls to compete in professional sports;

(b) Develop and implement robust mandatory rules on the prevention of violence against women and girls in sport, including sexual exploitation and abuse, develop functioning trauma-informed and confidential mechanisms to assist and protect victims, and disseminate information to women and girls in sport on how to access such mechanisms.

102. Concerning migrant women, the Government of Kuwait should:

(a) Abolish the *kafalah* sponsorship system, replacing it with a residence permit system for workers, and repeal the crime of "absconding" to ensure that migrant workers do not stay in abusive contracts and conditions;

(b) Limit the excessive powers granted to sponsors and employers, carry out background checks on employers, increase spot checks of employment conditions and allow workers to change employers more freely;

(c) Adjust the legislative and policy framework to allow migrant workers to report on abuse and mistreatment without fear of detention and deportation;

(d) Impose mandatory orientation activities for employers and new domestic workers on the content of the domestic worker laws, their rights and available support services and complaint procedures;

(e) Establish community-based, women-only centres for non-Kuwaiti women, providing outreach activities, legal aid, psychological support, economic empowerment and health advice, and recruit and train social workers from within these communities in order to staff the centres, in collaboration with authorities and other stakeholders;

(f) Provide free legal aid and translation services for all migrant workers in contact with law enforcement or the justice system;

(g) Ensure that detention, particularly for children or parents with children, is adopted as a measure of last resort, consider alternatives to detention and, where it is used, ensure that detention occurs for the shortest period necessary, is proportionate and can be legally challenged;

(h) Concerning women and girls categorized as persons whose nationality could not be determined, ensure their equal access to basic services such as education and employment on a par with citizens and put in place effective mechanisms to address their situation of statelessness in line with international standards, taking into consideration their long-standing and genuine ties with Kuwait and habitual residence in the country.

Advance Edited Version