

URGENT ACTION

NAWAF AL-HENDAL RELEASED ON BAIL

Kuwaiti human rights activist Nawaf al-Hendal was released on bail on 25 March and charged with “illegal gathering”. Ten others were released on bail with him. Another five detainees have been released on bail and face further charges.

Nawaf al-Hendal and 10 other men were released on bail in the evening of 25 March. They were charged with “participating in an illegal demonstration” and their cases were referred to the Misdemeanours Court. No date has been set for their trial. Nawaf al-Hendal was also banned from travelling, which appears to be a move by the Kuwaiti authorities to silence him, as he is due to speak at the 29th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva in three months’ time.

Nawaf al-Hendal had been beaten on his back by five security officers as he was arrested on 23 March. He was taken, along with 10 other men, to a van where he was beaten again and taken to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in al-Salmiya, north-east of the Hawalli governorate. While they were detained there, none of the 11 had access to their families or lawyers. Nawaf al-Hendal suffers from migraines due to high blood pressure for which he takes medication every day. When they found out where he was, his family had handed his medication to the CID but it was only passed to him the following day. The Public Prosecution charged five other men with “conspiring to plan a demonstration” and “participating in an illegal demonstration”. They were released on 26 March on bail of 1,000 Kuwaiti Dinars (about US\$3,330) each, and their cases have been referred to the Criminal Court.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the Kuwaiti authorities to drop the charges against Nawaf al-Hendal and the other 15 men who were detained with him;
- Calling on them to order an independent investigation into the beating of Nawaf al-Hendal and other demonstrators and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to repeal all legislation that criminalizes the right to freedom of expression, and respect and protect this right and ensure that their security forces follow international standards in policing all demonstrations in Kuwait.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 MAY 2015 TO:

Amir of the State of Kuwait

His Highness Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad
al-Jaber Al Sabah
Al Diwan Al Amiri, P.O. Box: 1, al-Safat
13001, Kuwait
Fax: +965 2243 0559
Email: amirsoffice@da.gov.kw

Salutation: Your Highness

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed
Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah
Ministry of the Interior
P.O. Box 12500, Shamiya 71655
Kuwait
Fax: +965 2249 6570
E-mail: info@moi.gov.kw

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Chairperson

Parliamentary Human Rights Committee
National Assembly
P.O. Box 716, al-Safat 13008, Kuwait
Fax: +965 2243 6331
Email: ipu-grp@kna.kw (In subject line:
FAO Chairperson of the Parliamentary
Human Rights Committee)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 70/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde17/1303/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Kuwaiti authorities have increased restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly and imprisoned critics who expressed dissent using social media.

Nawaf al-Hendal is a well-known human rights activist who founded the Kuwait Watch Organisation for Human Rights in early December 2014. He was arrested on 23 March as he was monitoring a peaceful demonstration organized by Kuwaiti opposition groups calling for reforms including “upholding freedom of expression and assembly as guaranteed by the constitution”, “the release of prisoners of conscience” and “the abolition of unfair and retaliatory withdrawal of citizenship for political reasons”. Nawaf al-Hendal was beaten during arrest and had his phone confiscated. Fifteen other men were also arrested.

Nawaf al-Hendal learned in January 2015, while he was in Geneva attending the review of Kuwait by the UN Human Rights Council’s Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), that a warrant for his arrest had been issued on 27 January. The authorities withdrew the warrant on 31 January.

During the UPR, 11 reviewing states made recommendations including calling on Kuwait to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly; this to include amending its Penal Code and other legislation relating to the media and internet to bring them in line with international standards and “protecting human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers against persecution and harassment.” Kuwait has to provide its response to these recommendations during the 29th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2015.

Kuwait is a state party to key international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These covenants include the rights to freedom of expression, including “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice,” set out in ICCPR Article 19; and freedom of assembly and freedom of association, set out respectively in Articles 21 and 22 of the ICCPR.

Name: Nawaf al-Hendal
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 70/15 Index: MDE 17/1354/2015 Issue Date: 31 March 2015