

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Kuwait: Release blogger Nasser Abul, held for 100 days**

Amnesty International today reiterated its call for blogger Nasser Abul's release, following the holding of a candlelit vigil last night at the Hamza Abbas Maqames Mosque in Rumaithiya, Kuwait, to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> day of his detention.

Nasser Abul, 26, is accused of crimes against "state security", "damaging the country's interests" and "severing political relationship with brotherly countries" in connection with messages sent in his name via the microblogging site Twitter.

Amnesty International has looked at the messages sent in Nasser Abul's name that it could identify on Twitter and has concluded that, while some are critical of the ruling families and governments of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, on the one hand, and followers of Salafism, on the other, and in some places contain derogatory comments about the targets of his criticism, they nevertheless seem not to advocate violence, racism or racial hatred.

The organization wrote to the Kuwaiti Minister of Justice on 9 September 2011 requesting urgent clarification concerning the reason and legal grounds for his continuing imprisonment, but is yet to receive a response.

On the basis of the information available to it, Amnesty International believes Nasser Abul to be a prisoner of conscience detained for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and has been calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

He has been detained since his arrest on 7 June 2011 after being summoned to appear for questioning by the State Security Police. He appeared before the General Prosecution on 12 June, where the accusations were brought against him. He was not allowed to be accompanied by his lawyer, nor was his family allowed to attend the hearing.

Two days later, security officials took Nasser Abul to his family's home, which they searched, removing his computer and phone. Nasser Abdul told his mother that he had been assaulted by security officials during his first two days in detention, as well as insulted and threatened, and that he was held in a permanently lit cell.

Since then, Nasser Abul has appeared in a criminal court on several occasions, during which his detention has been repeatedly extended. A security official reportedly told the court on 16 August that he was detained at the request of the Saudi Arabian authorities.

On 15 September, a representative of Kuwait's Human Rights Association raised the issue of Nasser Abul's continuing detention with a representative of the Ministry of

Justice, who reportedly committed to ensuring that the case would be dealt with in a timely manner by the courts.

Nasser Abul reportedly denies the allegations against him, and says that messages were posted on his Twitter account after it was hacked and that once he became aware of this he deleted them.

Article 36 of Kuwait's Constitution states: "Freedom of opinion shall be guaranteed. Every person shall have the right to express and propagate his opinion verbally, in writing or otherwise, in accordance with the conditions and procedures specified by law". Kuwait is also obliged to uphold freedom of expression as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.