

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/kuwait-emir-pardons-everyone-jailed-for-07-08-2013,45028.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Kuwait

Pardon

Emir pardons everyone jailed for insulting him but law still stands

7 August 2013

Reporters Without Borders is relieved to learn that all the activists, netizens and human rights defenders jailed for insulting Kuwait's emir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, were freed yesterday under a pardon announced by the emir to mark the end of Ramadan, traditionally associated with mercy gestures.

"The emir's pardon for activists and netizens was a good thing but it depended on his goodwill," Reporters Without Borders said. "A Kuwaiti citizen can still be sentenced to imprisonment on a charge of insulting the emir. We urge the authorities to amend the law so that Kuwaitis, especially news providers, are not exposed to the possibility of such sentences."

In a [speech on Kuwait TV on 31 July](#), Sheikh Al-Sabah announced that "on the occasion of the last 10 days of the month of Ramadan, I have the pleasure of granting my pardon to all those who have been imprisoned for insulting the emir."

Those released [yesterday evening](#) included [Badr Al-Rashidi](#), a citizen-journalist held since 14 June 2012, and [Ourance Rashidi](#), a citizen-journalist held since 27 October 2011.

Under Kuwait's criminal code, any activity regarded as an "insult to the emir" is punishable by up to five years in prison.

Last April, Reporters Without Borders [condemned a proposed media law](#) that would have allowed the authorities to fine journalists up to 300,000 dinars (1 million dollars) for criticizing the emir or crown prince or "misrepresenting" their statements.

Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah eventually scrapped the proposed law.

Reporters Without Borders points out that the arrests on charges of insulting the emir were a flagrant violation of Kuwait's international obligations.

In 1996, Kuwait ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, [article 19](#) of which says: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include 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."

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