

Ms. Reen Alsalem
Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls
Subject: Input for SR VAWG's country visit to Kuwait
hrc-sr-vaw@un.org
18 July 2025

Dear Ms. Reem Alsalem,

During your upcoming country visit to Kuwait, we encourage you to investigate issues concerning women in conflict with the law who are survivors of violence against women and girls, particularly women under sentence of death. These issues are particularly relevant to several items on your list of priority topics, including the adequacy of the legal and normative framework on domestic violence, exploitation of women and girls, equality before the law of women and girls, harassment and discrimination at work, child marriage, and access to justice.

According to Amnesty International, Kuwait was among the top 10 states carrying out executions in 2024, and Kuwaiti courts sentenced at least 7 people to death in 2024 alone.¹ At least three of the people Kuwaiti courts sentenced to death in 2024 faced the death penalty for drug-related offenses.² As of the end of 2024, Kuwait held at least 32 people on death row.³

In our most recent (2024) report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (attached as Annex 1), The Advocates for Human Rights and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty highlighted several important issues relating to women in conflict with the law in Kuwait, particularly women sentenced to death. As recently as November 2022, Kuwaiti authorities executed two women—one Kuwaiti woman and one Ethiopian woman. As of 2020, the World Coalition had identified at least five women under sentence of death in Kuwait. Due to the lack of transparency, however, civil society organizations such as ours have not been able to determine the facts surrounding the cases against the two women executed in 2022 or of the other women under sentence of death. Nor do we know whether Kuwaiti courts have sentenced additional women to death or whether Kuwaiti authorities have executed additional women since 2022. As detailed in our 2024 report to the CEDAW Committee, there is also no information about the cases against the Filipina and Ethiopian women who were migrant domestic workers and whom Kuwaiti authorities executed in 2017 for murdering members of their employers' families.

As we outlined in our 2023 report to the CEDAW Committee (attached as Annex 2), migrant domestic workers are at particular risk of being sentenced to death, and there is no information to suggest that Kuwait's legal system takes into account the multifaceted forms of oppression that migrant domestic workers face in capital cases.

We also know that on a global scale, women who are sentenced to death for murder have overwhelmingly experienced prolonged domestic violence at the hands of a partner, spouse, or

¹ Amnesty International, *Death Sentences and Executions 2024* (2025), at 4-5, 12.

² *Id.* at 14.

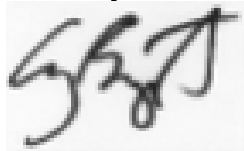
³ *Id.* at 29.

another family member. Some are survivors of child marriage. Yet courts typically fail to take into account a defendant's experience as a survivor of gender-based violence or as a victim of a manipulative or coercive relationship as mitigating factors during sentencing. Further, research shows that courts fail to account for power dynamics and tactics of coercive control that may affect a woman's involvement in and culpability for a crime. Hence, women are at risk of being sentenced to death for killing their abusers and for engaging in criminal activity arising out of a coercive control relationship.

At the conclusion of its 2024 review of Kuwait, the CEDAW Committee expressed concern about "the lack of information on the extent to which the gender-related aspects of [the cases of women sentenced to death and executed] are taken into consideration in the determination of death sentences," and recommended that Kuwait "reintroduce a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing it and, pending such abolition, provide for gender-specific defences and mitigating circumstances in capital trials, including trauma, gender-based violence, economic pressure and trafficking in persons."⁴ During your visit, we hope you will be able to engage in a dialogue with Kuwaiti authorities about their plans for addressing the Committee's concerns and for implementing these recommendations. We also hope you will be able to gather details about the cases of women sentenced to death and executed since 2017 so that your office and civil society organizations such as ours can undertake an analysis of the cases to probe whether violence against women and girls or other forms of gender-based discrimination played any role in their arrests, convictions, or sentences.

In conclusion, we encourage you to investigate issues concerning women under sentence of death during your upcoming country visit to Kuwait, and we look forward to the opportunity to learn from your findings and recommendations.

Sincerely,



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⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Kuwait*, (6 June 2024), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/KWT/CO/6, ¶¶ 23-24.

Annexes:

- (1) The Advocates for Human Rights and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, *Kuwait's Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: The Death Penalty*, 15 Apr. 2024, available at <https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/Kuwait%20CEDAW%20DP.pdf>.
- (2) The Advocates for Human Rights, Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, *Kuwait's Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Suggested List of Issues Relating to the Death Penalty*, 30 Jan. 2023, available at <https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/Kuwait%20CEDAW%20DP%20FINAL.pdf>.