

Lee Seok-ki, a National Assembly member from the Unified Progressive Party (UPP), was imprisoned along with six other party members for “conspiracy to revolt”, “inciting an insurrection”, and activities deemed to violate the NSL. On appeal in August, the Seoul High Court dismissed the charges of “conspiracy to revolt”, but upheld the other charges, and reduced the prison sentences to terms ranging from two to nine years.

The government also sought to disband the UPP before the Constitutional Court, which ruled in December that the party had violated the basic democratic order and disbanded the party. This was the first such request from the government since democratization in 1987 and the first time a party was disbanded since 1958.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Since the ferry accident in April, more than 300 people were arrested in attempts by police to quell peaceful demonstrations expressing discontent over the government’s response to the ferry sinking. Police blockades of street rallies continued for months following the accident.

In June, the police cracked down on a peaceful protest in the city of Miryang, injuring 14 protesters. Some 300 protesters, many of whom were elderly, were protesting against the construction of high-voltage electricity transmission towers, and demanding genuine consultation.

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

At least 635 conscientious objectors remained in prison at the end of the year.

Members of the public voiced concerns about the system of compulsory military service following the deaths of two male conscripts, which revealed evidence of ongoing ill-treatment in the military.

Amnesty International, along with several other NGOs, submitted arguments in August in a case before the Constitutional Court addressing the right to conscientious objection to military service as derived from

the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.<sup>2</sup>

## ARMS TRADE

South Korea exported substantial amounts of tear gas shells to countries where tear gas was used indiscriminately in riot control.<sup>3</sup> Following pressure from Amnesty International and other human rights groups, the government announced a halt to shipments of tear gas to Bahrain in January.<sup>4</sup>

South Korea signed the Arms Trade Treaty in 2013, but had yet to ratify the treaty and incorporate it into domestic legislation by the end of 2014.

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1. Bitter Harvest: Exploitation and forced labour of migrant agricultural workers in South Korea (ASA 25/004/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA25/004/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA25/004/2014/en)
  2. Korea: The right to conscientious objection to military service: amicus curiae opinion (POL 31/001/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL31/001/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL31/001/2014/en)
  3. South Korea: Open letter to the President on first anniversary of inauguration (ASA 25/001/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA25/001/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA25/001/2014/en)
  4. South Korea suspends tear gas supplies to Bahrain (NSC 11/003/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/news/south-korea-suspends-tear-gas-supplies-bahrain-2014-01-07](http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/south-korea-suspends-tear-gas-supplies-bahrain-2014-01-07)

## KUWAIT

### State of Kuwait

Head of state: **al-Shaikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah**

Head of government: **al-Shaikh Jaber al-Mubarak al-Hamad al-Sabah**

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**Peaceful criticism of the Amir, other state authorities or Islam remained criminalized. Those targeted for arrest, detention and prosecution included human rights and political reform activists. Authorities used**

**a telecommunications law to prosecute and imprison critics who expressed dissent using social media, and curtailed the right to public assembly. The government continued to withhold nationality and citizenship rights from tens of thousands of Bidun people, and arbitrarily stripped several critics and members of their families of their Kuwaiti citizenship. Women faced discrimination in law and practice. Foreign migrant workers, who comprised over half of the population, lacked adequate protection under the law and were subject to discrimination, exploitation and abuse. The death penalty remained in force for a range of crimes; no executions were reported.**

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

In April, the Public Prosecutor banned media discussion about a publicly available video recording that reportedly showed two former senior political figures discussing a plot to replace the Amir and take control of the government. The authorities stripped a media owner of his Kuwaiti nationality after his TV and radio station allegedly breached the media ban.

At least eight people were sentenced for comments they had made on social media, following prosecutions under Penal Code provisions that criminalized “insult” to the Amir and other state authorities and religion, and provisions of a 2001 law prohibiting the use of telecommunications facilities to disseminate criticism. Up to 10 others faced a cycle of prosecution, trial, conviction and appeal in connection with the expression of their views, mainly via the website Twitter. They included human rights activist and blogger Abdullah Fairouz, arrested in November 2013, who was sentenced in January to five years in prison for messages he posted on Twitter.<sup>1</sup> In July, an appeal court upheld a 10-year prison sentence imposed on blogger Hamad al-Naqi in 2012 for allegedly defaming religion and foreign leaders.

In July, the authorities arrested former parliamentarian Musallam al-Barrak, a vocal

government critic, after he reportedly accused senior officials of bribery and corruption in a speech to a large crowd in June. He was detained for 10 days and then released to stand trial on charges of “insulting” the judiciary. His arrest prompted widespread protests and accusations that the police had used excessive force against protesters, which the government denied. He continued to face a number of expression-related prosecutions at the end of the year.

## **DEPRIVATION OF NATIONALITY**

The government resorted to the new tactic of arbitrarily stripping some of its critics and their dependents of their Kuwaiti citizenship rights under provisions of the 1959 nationality law.<sup>2</sup> In July, the authorities stripped the nationality of Ahmed Jabr al-Shammari, owner of the *Al-Yawm* newspaper and TV channel, and four others, along with their dependents, rendering over 30 people stateless. The authorities revoked the citizenship of at least 10 others in August and a further 15 in September.

## **TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT**

The authorities failed to independently investigate allegations of torture of detainees by security officials. In a letter to Amnesty International in September, the government denied that arbitrary arrests took place during demonstrations or that officials committed torture or ill-treatment.

Bidun human rights activist ‘Abdulkhakim al-Fadhli complained to an investigating prosecutor in February that police had beaten him in detention to force him to sign a “confession”. The prosecutor failed to order a medical examination requested by ‘Abdulkhakim al-Fadhli or to take any other steps to investigate the alleged torture.

## **DISCRIMINATION - BIDUN**

The government continued to deny Kuwaiti nationality - and the rights and benefits associated with it, including free education, free health care and the right to vote - to

tens of thousands of Bidun, although a small number were officially recognized as Kuwaiti citizens.

In October 2012, the Prime Minister had assured Amnesty International that the government would resolve the issue of citizenship for Kuwait's Bidun residents within five years; at the end of 2014 that appeared unlikely.

Members of the Bidun community demonstrated to demand an end to discrimination, despite the ban on public gatherings by "non-citizens". Some demonstrations were dispersed by police, but the government denied using excessive force. Scores of Bidun continued to face trial on charges of illegal gathering or public order offences. Many trials were repeatedly postponed, but in September 67 were acquitted. The authorities also detained at least 15 Bidun activists, mostly on charges relating to public order offences or "illegal gathering".

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Kuwaiti women enjoyed greater rights than women in most other Gulf region states, including rights to stand as candidates and vote in elections, but they were not accorded equality under the law with men. The law required that women have a male "guardian" in family matters, such as divorce, child custody and inheritance, and when receiving medical treatment.

## MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHTS

Migrant workers, who made up the majority of Kuwait's workforce, continued to face exploitation and abuse linked partly to the official *kafala* sponsorship system. Migrant domestic workers, mostly women from Asian countries, were especially vulnerable as they were excluded from forms of protection afforded to other workers by Kuwait's labour laws.

## DEATH PENALTY

The death penalty remained in force for murder and other crimes. At least five people were sentenced to death; no executions were reported.

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1. Urgent Action: Mother of activist at risk of deportation (MDE 17/007/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE17/007/2014/en/6e01aa07-e1d7-48aa-84a1-e81352d47889/mde170072014en.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE17/007/2014/en/6e01aa07-e1d7-48aa-84a1-e81352d47889/mde170072014en.pdf)
  2. Kuwait: Halt the deplorable revocation of nationality of naturalized citizens (MDE 17/004/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE17/004/2014/en/a228d7d3-6b58-4be3-9aac-20f5bad79319/mde170042014en.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE17/004/2014/en/a228d7d3-6b58-4be3-9aac-20f5bad79319/mde170042014en.pdf)

## KYRGYZSTAN

### Kyrgyz Republic

Head of state: **Almaz Atambaev**

Head of government: **Dzhoomart Otorbaev**  
(replaced **Zhantoro Satibaldiev** in April)

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**The authorities failed to take effective measures to address allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and bring perpetrators to justice. No impartial and effective investigation took place into human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, committed during the June 2010 violence and its aftermath. MPs initiated draft laws that if adopted would have a negative impact on civil society. Prisoner of conscience Azimjan Askarov remained in detention.**

## TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment persisted despite a programme of independent monitoring of places of detention and the establishment of the National Centre for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment.