

الجمعية الكويتية لحقوق الإنسان
KUWAIT SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



MEPI

شقائق

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لمناصرة قضايا النوع الاجتماعي



Parliamentarians Stir Up Women's Issues in Media

2021



MEDI

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> Introduction

The Kuwait Society for Human Rights works to spread the culture of respect for human rights, raise awareness of international human rights covenants, and defend all individuals whose rights are subject to any violation. In the context of its interest of protecting and enhancing these rights, it established on December 2019, by cooperation with the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) the media observatory under the name "Shaqaiq" aims to advocate for gender issues by following up on the image of Kuwaiti women in various local media and following up on the latest developments in the file of women's rights in Kuwait. It is one of the activities of the Takamul project, which aims to promote gender equality in Kuwaiti society.

The Association believes that the local media is a reflection of the reality we live with all its details. The women's presence in the media if any, may also be a reflection of the culture of the community, and this is what prompted the Association to establish the observatory to undertake the task of monitoring all dimensions and aspects related to media coverage of women's issues in order to prepare periodic reports include multiple recommendations for all parties in the media field.

> Executive Summary

No woman was able to win a seat in the National Assembly, but her issues were able to do so, and women's issues were present at the parliament, which had a direct impact on the coverage of women's issues in the local media during the semiannual reporting period, which extends from January to the end of June 2021.

Perhaps the most important feature of the media coverage of women's issues is the presentation of many problems that Kuwaiti women suffer from including their right to naturalize their children and their access to permanent residency, as well as equal opportunities in employment and the right to housing.

This report addresses the reality of women in Kuwait during the middle of this year, as a news monitoring work specialized in following up the image of Kuwaiti women in the local media and following up on the latest developments in the file of women's rights in Kuwait, which is covered by the media. This report reads the effect of those variables on the women's reality and the impact of this on the commitments of the State of Kuwait in international forums.

> Reporting Period Events

The first half of this year witnessed important events related to women in general and Kuwaiti women in particular, as we celebrated International Women's Day on March 8, and we also celebrated Kuwaiti Women's Day on May 16.

On two important occasions like these, it is important to remind the media to take advantage of these two occasions to fulfill their societal media role by the following:

- ➔ **Shedding the light on the achievements made by women at all levels in order to highlight their roles more clearly, break the stereotype regarding them and present them as direct contributors to the development process.**
- ➔ **Presenting new leading women on the political scene to exercise their political right in presenting their visions for the political reform process, and to help empower them politically.**
- ➔ **Planning for the future of women and raising community awareness to support and defend women and eliminate all types of discrimination against them, whether at the societal, media or legal levels.**

The reporting period also witnessed a prominent event represented by the first Kuwaiti female prosecutor to plead before the courts in a murder case as a first judicial precedent. This event received a great interaction from the media and social media actors, while the Public Prosecutor described the representation of the Capital Prosecutor, Munira Al-Waqayan, and the performance of the oral pleading before the Criminal Court for a murder case, as a continuation of the success of Kuwaiti women in society reflecting the society's belief in their role, ability and competence in various fields, deeming the pleading as a precedent and first of its kind in the history of the Kuwaiti judicial system and other judicial systems in the Arab countries.^[1]

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[1] Al Jarida Newspaper <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1623605947451790500/>

The Committee on Women, Family and Child Affairs in the National Assembly approved, at its eighth meeting, a number of proposals along with desire, including proposals regarding giving priority to the children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis after the Kuwaitis in employment. The Committee also followed up the procedures for activating the law on protection from domestic violence.^[2]

> **Media Discourse Analysis... Mid-Year 2021 Assessment**

The media adopted discourses advocating for Kuwaiti women’s issues, and the main motive for presenting women’s issues was the proposals made by members of the Kuwaiti National Assembly, as they made a number of proposals on the residency of the Kuwaiti woman’s children from a foreign husband and providing low-cost homes and model apartments in new cities for Kuwaiti women, in addition to lowering the age of Kuwaiti women who are eligible for public assistance.

The parliamentarians also demanded that the children of a Kuwaiti woman from a non-Kuwaiti be made a priority after Kuwaitis in employment, and they followed up the procedures for activating the law on protection from domestic violence, in addition to following up on the issue of inaugurating a shelter for abused women in the Ahmadi Governorate until the operation of protection homes in various governorates, which are awaiting approval of the budget, according to the statement of the government representatives ^[3]. Further, they called for granting divorced, widowed, forty-five, single, and married to a non-Kuwaiti woman a housing unit, a monthly rent allowance, and the establishment of nurseries in government workplaces and others for female employees in preparation for the generalization of work nurseries for all women working in the government and private sectors.

[2] Al-Anba Newspaper: <https://www.alanba.com.kw/ar/kuwait-news/parliament/1050801/16-06-2021-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%88-%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%83%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9/>

[3] Al-Anba Newspaper, link: <https://www.alanba.com.kw/ar/kuwait-news/1050649/15-06-2021-%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%BA%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%83%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9/>

This parliamentary interest in Kuwaiti women received wide media coverage and prominent societal interaction during the reporting period, which had a positive impact, as women's issues emerged again and gained good space in the media, which should be commended.

➤ **Media Role on International Women's Day**

On the occasion of International Women's Day, a number of official and unofficial events were organized, and statements were issued to civil and commercial bodies. All this activity led to media attention on the occasion.

Perhaps the most prominent matter that was covered by the press was the Women and Family Empowerment Conference, organized by the Committee for Women, Family and Child Affairs, under its auspices in the National Assembly theatre, as well as the statement of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim, the statement of the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and the Minister of Social Affairs, in addition to the event (Ringling of the Bell) organized by the United Nations on International Women's Day, in cooperation with the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and Boursa Kuwait, and with the participation of a number of bodies, with the aim of promoting women's empowerment.

The media also interacted with the event organized by Kuwaiti Union of Women's Associations through a forum entitled "A pioneering experience for Kuwaiti women" which was organized through the Club House Application in cooperation with "Al-Qabas Newspaper", in addition to an event organized by the Women's Studies and Gender Unit of the History Department at the College of Arts at Kuwait University, where a symposium entitled "Gender and Academic Studies" was held and received a wide coverage.

In the following, we monitor the interaction of some Newspapers with International Women's Day:

► Al-Rai Newspaper.... Prominent Interest in Women's Issues on its International Day

Al-Rai Newspaper published a report of about two thousand words entitled: "Kuwaiti Woman on International Women's Day: Give me my Rights"^[4] that discussed the issue of ensuring women's political and leadership rights, and raising awareness about equality between men and women in rights and duties. In a clever approach of the report, it linked the occasion of International Women's Day to how women received it while they lost their only seat in the National Assembly, and the report said: "As well as the women's representation in the Cabinet of Ministers was reduced from two ministers to one, and they also won a seat in the Municipal Council by appointment, except for leadership positions in institutions, bodies, and ministries which the women can find a foothold only with hard work, to the extent that the number of women leaders who are currently at the helm of their work are only two".

The report, written by journalist Amal Atef, opened the file of women in leadership positions, and interviewed a number of women personalities who had previously held various positions, and the Newspaper allocated the appropriate space for the report.

Not only did the Newspaper publish the report, but it also interacted with the various events, as it published a statement of the progressive movement and remarkably put two different headlines for it that indicates the Newspaper's interest in the occasion.^[5] especially with its coverage of the statement of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim entitled: Al-Ghanim: Empowering Women Is Not Luxury... But Absolute Necessity^[6].

As well as allocating enough spaces to cover the speech of the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and the speech of the Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development ^[7], which were delivered on the same occasion.

[4] Al-Rai Newspaper, link: <https://www.alraimedia.com/article/1524743/-/المحليات/لقاءات-وتحقيقات/الكويتية-في-يوم-المرأة-العالمي-أعطوني-حقوقى>

[5] Al-Rai Newspaper, link: <https://www.alraimedia.com/article/1524661/-/مجتمعنا-لا-يمكن-أن-يتحقق-ما-لم-يضمن-للنساء-حقهن-المساوي-للرجال-في-الجلالات-كافة>

[6] Al-Rai Newspaper, link <https://www.alraimedia.com/article/1524658/-/محليات/الغانم-تمكين-المرأة-ليس-ترفا-بل-ضرورة-قوى>

[7] Al-Rai Newspaper, link: <https://www.alraimedia.com/article/1524813/-/محليات/وزير-الشؤون-تبني-المزيد-من-المبادرات-التنموية-لتمكين-المرأة-وتطوير-قدراتها>

It also allocated another space to cover women's issues, as journalist Walid Al-Holan covered the Women and Family Empowerment Conference by making a summary of the conference, which discussed a set of priority issues such as the subject of Article 153 of the Penal Code, and the new cultural and educational challenges facing the Kuwaiti family^[8] .

In another coverage, the Newspaper allocated about a thousand words to cover the event of ringing the bell ^[9] by highlighting the important role played by the private sector in promoting the principles of women's empowerment in order to achieve the sustainable development goals and raising awareness about these principles, and he took various statements enhancing the presence and the role that women play in the private sector

[8] Al-Rai Newspaper, link: <https://www.alraimedia.com/article/1524956/-مجلات/مجلس-الامة/تضافر-جهود-السلطين-لتفعيل-قوانين-حقوق-ابناء-الكويتية>

[9] Al Rai Newspaper, link: <https://www.alraimedia.com/article/1524893/-اقتصاد/البورصة-تقرع-جرس-تمكين-المرأة-في-يومها-العالمي>

▶ **Al-Jarida Newspaper.... Economic Axis in Feminist Giving**

Al-Jarida Newspaper allocated various spaces in interaction with International Women's Day, and the two journalists, Lafi Al-Shammari and Fadda Al-Ma'ili, wrote a joint report of about 900 words entitled "Female Writers Praising Women on International Women's Day: Daughters of Eve Presented the Most vivid Images of Struggle and Strife"^[10] in which they conveyed personal views of what Kuwaiti women accomplished during their different careers.

Al-Jarida Newspaper interacted with the various events that interested in the occasion of International Women's Day, as it transformed the statement of the Central Bank of Kuwait^[11] into information about women's participation in the Bank and their proportion from the total number of employees. It quoted the title from websites concerned with the Bank's president's statements^[12].

The Newspaper also interacted with the bell ringing by making an economic report. Through it, it focused on the role of the National Bank^[13] and a second report on the event^[14] focused on the economic aspect of the CEO's speech at the Boursa Kuwait.

The Newspaper's focus on the economic aspect was not only for the National Bank, but Zain Company as well, where the Newspaper produced a report entitled: "Zain Group" explores the challenges and prejudices faced by women^[15] a report of more than one thousand six hundred words, through which it focused on the company's annual report, which was issued on the same occasion entitled "Women... in Technology: Closing the Gender Gap in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)" which highlighted the size of the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and its impact on social and economic development in the Middle East.^[16]

[10] Al Jarida Newspaper, link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615223067969339000/>

[11] Central Bank of Kuwait website, link: <https://www.cbk.gov.kw/ar/cbk-news/announcements-and-press-releases/press-releases/2021/03/202103081039-cbk-celebrates-its-distinguished-female-talent-on-international-womens-day>

[12] Al Jarida Newspaper, link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615219026908994500/>

[13] Al Jarida Newspaper, link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615218888718981800/>

[14] Al Jarida Newspaper, link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615279267885194800/>

[15] Al Jarida Newspaper, link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615219805759047500/>

[16] Zain website, link: <https://zain.com/TLR2021/ar>

The Newspaper allocated spaces for opinion articles. Dr. Sana Al-Hamoud wrote two articles on women in two successive issues^[17], in addition to an article by Dr. Nada Al-Mutawa^[18], It also allocated a space to cover the Women and Family Empowerment Conference^[19].

The Newspaper also reported the news of the International Women's Group, which celebrated the International Day under the patronage of Sheikha Hanouf Al-Mohammed, and transmitted the statements of the female participants in the celebration.^[20]

► **Al-Anbaa Newspaper.... An Article Better Than Nothing**

It is noted that the Newspaper did not devote special spaces for discussing women's issues except for its interaction with the various events organized on the occasion of International Women's Day, especially with the celebration of the International Women's Group, the Democratic Forum symposium, and the Women and Family Empowerment Conference, in addition to the statement of the Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development, and the coverage of Zain Company's report, in addition to its interaction with a number of other events.

It should be noted that the Newspaper published an article by Youssef Abdel Rahman entitled: Sarah Akbar a Kuwaiti Epic^[21] in which he spoke about the Kuwaiti woman, "Sarah Akbar," where he said at the end of the article: "Engineer Sarah Akbar is (oil Number) that we cherish and this (oil fish) is dear to the people of Kuwait. Everyone of our veteran generation remembers her and her heroism, and she is a (Kuwaiti citizen) with (decency and dignity). We remember and recall her unique heroism as she was through the burning oil lakes amidst mines to extinguish well after well with the spirit of adventurer and with all professional excellence" And he demanded, "After more than 11 years we ask: Why is this oil icon not being honored?».

[17] Al-Jarida Newspaper, link to the first article: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615312254307717700/> and the link to the second article from here: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615388511574175500/>

[18] Al Jarida Newspaper, link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615312344327721300/>

[19] Al-Jarida Newspaper, link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615217086488878100/>

[20] Al Jarida Newspaper, link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1615301479117267500/>

[21] Alanba Newspaper, link: <https://www.alanba.com/kw/kottab/youssuf-abdulrahman/1029446/12-03-2021-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%83%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%83%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%A9/>

› **Media role in Kuwaiti Women's Day**

The occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day passed in contrast to the occasion of International Women's Day, and it seems that the Eid al-Fitr holiday affected the holding of various events concerned with women, which in turn affected the media coverage of women's issues.

Despite the scant treatment of women's issues, the tweet of the US ambassador to Kuwait^[22] and the statement of the Head of the National Office for Human Rights, which he made to Kuwait News Agency KUNA^[23] activated the focus and treatment of the Women's issues. Since the US ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski said in her tweet: "On the occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day, we are proud of the achievement of women gaining the right to vote and run for political positions, and there is still more work to be done".

Other than that, we have not witnessed a media effort to cover the role of women, especially the political, at the local and international levels.

▶ **Al-Qabas Newspaper.... The Most Commendable Experience**

Despite the almost absent media interaction to cover Kuwaiti women's issues on their National Day, Al-Qabas Newspaper was unique in devoting large spaces to cover Kuwaiti women's issues through a number of journalistic arts, in a remarkable dealing with women's issues in a way that indicates that the Newspaper has an actual interest in presenting and addressing women's issues, both in international and local events for women and regardless of the occasions. We realize this well when we follow the Newspaper, which has allocated weekly spaces in its paper pages through (Al-Qabas for the Females)^[24] which is the space that it allocated every Wednesday to address women's issues, and that should be commended and be dealt as a role model for other media outlets to allocate similar spaces for dealing with women's issues, like Al-Qabas.

[22] Tweet by US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski on Twitter, link: <https://twitter.com/USAmbKuwait/status/1393859064220852227>

[23] Kuwait News Agency KUNA, link to the statement: <https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2977626>

[24] Al-Qabas will not, Al-Qabas Newspaper, link: <https://alqabas.com/categories/64763-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B3-%D9%84%D9%87%D9%86>

On Kuwaiti Women's Day, the Newspaper allocated a good space to publish an article by journalist Amira bin Tarf that consisted of about a thousand words, through which she presented an analysis on issues of violence against women and collected special opinions from the Kuwaiti Penal Code with what the report described as "Deficiencies or Loopholes that Criminals Exploit to Practice Violence Against Women and Evade From Justice After Committing Their Crimes".^[25] On the other hand, the same journalist prepared a text interview with Souad Marafie, describing her as "a pioneer of education in Kuwait and one of the first students who left the country in the sixties of the last century to join Ain Shams University in the Egyptian Capital, Cairo, before returning bearing the torch of enlightenment to serve her country, Kuwait" ..^[26]

[25] Al-Qabas Newspaper, link: <https://alqabas.com/article/5848562>

[26] Al-Qabas Newspaper, link: <https://alqabas.com/article/5849706>

> Recommendations

Through monitoring the media performance of prominent women's issues during the reporting period, it is recommended that:

- ➔ We recommend the members of the National Assembly and the Cabinet of Ministers to move forward with interest in dealing with women's issues because of their great impact and to devote media spaces for the purpose of addressing the issues, concerns and problems of women.
- ➔ It is a good idea that the seasonal events dealing with women's issues to retake place, and the timing should not affect the events that coincide with national and international women's days.
- ➔ Women's issues do not need a seasonal approach. Societies of public interest must implement periodic activities, and respond to local events to organize events through which everything that hinders women's participation at various levels is presented.
- ➔ It is the responsibility of the media to present feminist models with intellectual, social or political backgrounds or successful experiences politically, economically or societally, in order to encourage more women to present themselves with boldness and strength.
- ➔ The reports issued by the economic entities that clarify the position occupied by women in the Kuwaiti economy are good work, and the better is empowering women and urging them to represent the entities in various events, especially on occasions that need to present work papers or give lectures taking into account that this shall be covered by media.
- ➔ In the various programs on the visual media in which personalities are hosted and interviewed, women shall be hosted even in issues that do not discuss women's issues or do not require the presence of a woman, as the media shall promote equality with regard to individuals that are hosted.
- ➔ The Kuwait Society for Human Rights has a national action plan in its capacity as a media strategy to advance the status of women in Kuwait, and we recommend the various media means to adopt the plan to raise the level of people's collective awareness and their attitudes towards women's issues.

- ➔ **We urge the media means to provide continuous information, facts and statistics on the situation of women in Kuwait and to monitor issues affecting women, especially the issue of violence against them in society and within the family.**
- ➔ **We recommend the media means to participate with the Associations of public interest to create joint programs that present local and international legislations and mechanisms for monitoring societal practices against women and how to create public awareness about legal and human rights prohibitions that cause harm to women and society.**
- ➔ **Further, we recommend the media to change the stereotyped image of women in the media and the means of communication and to enhance the presence of women in the media not only as news, but as leaders and successful women in society, provided that the published content adheres to gender standards in its editorial structure.**
- ➔ **The media means must play a vital role in raising awareness of women's issues and their important role in development, disseminating human rights culture based on gender equality, equity and balance, and strengthening community and media partnerships in order to reach the largest possible number of successful women and present them on the media means.**

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