

Local Spotlight

## SHOCKING DIVORCE RATE IN KUWAIT



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The ministry of justice recently issued a study on the rates and causes of divorce in Kuwait, and the results were shocking. Fifty percent of Kuwaitis are divorced! This ratio is very high. Kuwaitis form a small community with no one under the poverty line, wasting time traveling and being comfortable with a little knowledge of science and learning. The stats are interesting as well as the causes that lead to divorce, and of course the expected impact on children and the destruction of their future, which is the key topic of this article today.

Carefully examining the numbers, one finds an oddity in terms of age groups as well as the reasons for divorce. In the age group between 15-19 years, the proportion of female divorcees is 11.2 percent versus 1.6 percent for males. In my opinion, these children were thrown by their parents in the clutches of marriage. What kinds of parents push their children to marry at this age?! I feel angered to know that we still have ignorant people like these, who deserve to be punished. I wonder if we have a law to prosecute such parents.

In the 25-29 age group, the divorce rate among males is 27.5 percent versus 21.9 percent for females. This ratio is normal, because young people often are not prepared for marriage and its responsibilities, but most families put pressure on their sons and daughters to get hitched, which leads to such endings. For boys, they have to marry before the age of 30, and girls even earlier to avoid being labeled as spinsters. This age group is the usual age of marriage for young people here. But perhaps these youths are not psychologically ready for marriage, which is more important than physical readiness. But the society does not care, so the consequences are expected.

It is unfortunate that despite the apparent modernity and urbanization in the Kuwaiti society, the ways and methods of marriages are still mostly outdated and unjust under the pretext of customs and traditions and that do not allow youths to decide and choose their spouses. Most marriages between families are to maintain wealth, funds and assets along with social appearances, which are proven to be a failure.

The ironic thing in this study is the age group above 45 years, as the proportion of divorced males is 16.3 percent versus 8.5 percent for divorced women. This is strange, because men who seek divorce at this age have spent many years being married. This is inevitably hard on the children who are often adolescents and young people.

As a Kuwaiti, I do not worry about divorced men and women, but am more concerned about the future of their children. Not every mother or father is keen on the interests, safety and security of their children after divorce, and therefore the children will suffer all kinds of humiliation, starting at the hands of the maids. Note that raising a child is not the role or responsibility of a maid - children will always need parental counseling, guidance and a lot of love and caring.

This social reality is very worrying for the future, especially in a freer world where children are paying the price of ignorance that leads to failed marriages.

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in my view

## BIAS, CORRUPTION AND THE TARGETING OF EXPATS

By Sara Ahmed

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The Ministry of Interior in recent months has grown increasingly hardliner in a number of areas. From a crackdown on traffic law violators to stricter border controls, the measures are aimed at increasing security in Kuwait and hopefully improving the living conditions of all.

**Fair enough.**

The reality is that there are few places in the world where people love the police. Though their job is to serve and protect they are more often seen as hostile enforcers of the law that make life difficult for the average person. At the same time, their job is not easy. Imagine if you had to deal with criminals, liars and trouble makers all day? That is the reality faced by many Interior officers in Kuwait. Even traffic police can be slapped or yelled at by motorists.

Still there is a clear bias in several recent Interior Ministry actions and decrees against expatriates. For years now, expatriates have become the whipping boy of political discourse in Kuwait. Blame the expats for the crowded streets. Blame the expats for the deteriorating health care services. Blame the expats for the high cost of tuition. Blame the expats for the rising crime rates (actually government stats prove that citizens and bedoons commit the highest percentage of crimes in Kuwait). Blame the expats for how frustrated we all are with the way Kuwait has fallen behind its neighbors in pretty much every category.

Blaming us, however, will not change the reality. Raising visa fees for children, parents and visitors will not fill government coffers nor help the alleged budget deficit. Blaming foreigners and making them out to be a violent, criminal enemy exploiting the riches of Kuwait will not

make Kuwait's schools better, health care services improved or government less corrupt.

The bald truth which no one wants to say is that the corruption endemic for so long has spread like a cancer to nearly every section of the government. That within this corruption, the seeds of waste, inefficiency, inaction and destruction have long been sown and are now being reaped.

Its stunningly egregious the squandering of Kuwait's beauty and potential. This country has so much greatness within it and its shocking to see it frittered away so blithely.

None of us want to pay higher fees. But I think we would be willing if it translated into better services, better schools, hospitals, roads and fairer treatment. Some think of expatriates as foreigners who come here and like ticks feed off the Kuwaiti blood. But there are many of us who do our best to contribute to this society, who give back and who view this as a home away from home that we want to make better for ourselves, our children and society as a whole. We want only decent work, a safe and clean place to live and fair treatment under the law.

We want be able to walk into a police station and not need wasta to file a report when there is a crime or a problem. We want to be lawabiding, not law-hiding. We want to be able to lawfully drive because we applied for and received a driving license (after meeting all the qualifications, not because we had wasta). We want to use the public hospitals and pay a fair amount for insurance, tests and whatever but not be limited to evening hours only.

The Interior has become the most powerful ministry in Kuwait of late and that can be a good thing for everyone but only if it recognizes and respects all of us that contribute to building a better, safer Kuwait.

### Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Pelicans resting in a Khaitan suburb. — Photo by KUNA/Ghazy Qaff