

access to basic services discrimination against 'bachelors'

but there continued to be reports of torture and mistreatment by police and security forces against detained members of minority groups and noncitizens, the report says. "The government stated it investigated complaints against police officers and that disciplinary action was taken when warranted," it states. "Disciplinary actions in the past included fines, detention, and occasionally removal from their positions or termination. The government did not make public the findings of its investigations or punishments it imposed."

Furthermore, the report quoted the Human Rights Committee at the National Assembly, which stated that prisons lacked the minimum standards of cleanliness and sanitation, were overcrowded, and suffered from widespread corruption in management, leading to drug abuse and prisoner safety issues. Moreover, the report indicates that while the law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, there were numerous reports that police made arbitrary arrests of foreigners, regardless of their residency status, as part of sustained action against persons in the country illegally.

Under the law, questions of citizenship or residency status are not subject to judicial review, so noncitizens arrested for unlawful residency, or those whose lawful residency is canceled due to an arrest, have no access to the courts. The clause that allows government authorities to administratively deport a person without judicial review requires a person to be a threat to the national security or harmful to the state's interests. The law is broadly used and subjects noncitizens charged with non-criminal offenses, including some residency and traffic violations, to administrative deportations that cannot be challenged in court; however, noncitizens charged in criminal cases face legal deportations, which can be challenged in court.

Freedom of expression

According to the report, local activists reported they were regularly contacted by state security services and Ministry of Information officials if they published opinions deemed contrary to the government view. Meanwhile, publishers reportedly received pressure throughout the year from the Ministry of Information, resulting in the publishers often restricting which books are available in the country. The Ministry of Information received approximately 3,400 books for review and banned more than 700 due to content violating religious, political, and public morality guidelines. One author appealed to lift the ban on his book; the appeal was pending at year's end. According to the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs reviewed books of a religious nature.

On internet freedom, the report indicates that the

53 percent of Kuwaiti women were victims of domestic violence

cybercrime law criminalizes certain online activity, to include illegal access to information technology systems; unauthorized access to confidential information; black-mail; use of the internet for terrorist activity; money laundering; and utilizing the internet for human trafficking. Newspaper reports indicated that nearly 2,000 cybersecurity cases were filed under this law. The government's E-Licensing program requires bloggers and websites that provide news in the country to register with the Ministry of Information and apply for a license or be fined. The ministry has issued approximately 500 licenses to individuals and organizations this since the implementation of the law in 2016. No fines were issued during the year. The government continued to monitor internet communications, such as blogs and discussion groups, for defamation and generalized security reasons, according to the report.

Stateless persons

According to the latest government figures, there were approximately 88,000 Bidoon in the country, while in Human Rights Watch estimated the Bidoon population at more than 100,000 in 2018. The law does not provide noncitizens, including Bidoon, a clear or defined opportunity to gain nationality. The judicial system's lack of authority to rule on the status of stateless persons further complicated the process for obtaining citizenship, leaving Bidoon with no access to the judiciary to present evidence and plead their case for citizenship.

The naturalization process for Bidoon is not transparent, and decisions appeared arbitrary. The Central Agency for Illegal Residents, tasked with monitoring Bidoon affairs, had more than 88,000 registered Bidoon under review. Although Bidoon are entitled to government benefits including five-year renewable residency, free healthcare and education, and ration cards, community members have alleged it was difficult for them to avail of those services due to bureaucratic red tape.

According to Bidoon advocates and government officials, many Bidoon were unable to provide documentation proving ties to the country sufficient to qualify for citizenship. The government alleged that the vast majority of Bidoon concealed their "true" nationalities and were

not actually stateless. Agency officials have extended incentive benefits to Bidoon who disclose an alternate nationality, including priority employment after citizens, and the ability to obtain a driver's license. As of March approximately 12,700 Bidoon admitted holding other nationalities.

Bidoon leaders alleged that when some members of the Bidoon community attempted to obtain government services from the central agency, officials would routinely deceive them by promising to provide the necessary paperwork if Bidoon agreed to sign a blank piece of paper. Later, Bidoon reported, the agency would write a letter on the signed paper purportedly "confessing" the Bidoon's "true" nationality such as Saudi, Iraqi, Syrian, Iranian, or Jordanian, which rendered them ineligible for recognition or benefits as Bidoon.

According to UNHCR some Bidoon underwent DNA testing to "prove" their Kuwaiti nationality by virtue of blood relation to a Kuwaiti citizen. Bidoon are required to submit DNA samples confirming paternity to become naturalized, a practice critics said leaves them vulnerable to denial of citizenship based on DNA testing.

The government discriminated against Bidoon in some areas. Some Bidoon and international NGOs reported that the government did not uniformly grant some government services and subsidies to Bidoon, including education, employment, medical care, and the issuance of civil documents, such as birth, marriage, and death certificates. Since the government treats them as illegal immigrants, Bidoon do not have property rights.

Bidoon advocates reported that many Bidoon families were unable to obtain birth certificates for their children due to extensive administrative requirements, which restricted the children's ability to obtain government-issued identification cards, access adequate medical care, attend school, and be counted in official statistics.

Many adult Bidoon lacked identification cards due to the many administrative hurdles they face, preventing them from engaging in lawful employment or obtaining travel documents. This restriction resulted in some Bidoon children not receiving an education and working as street vendors to help support their families. Many Bidoon children who attended school enrolled in substandard private institutions as citizens were given priority to attend public school.

The government amended the existing law on military service to allow the sons of soldiers who served in the military for 30 years and the sons of soldiers killed or missing in action to be eligible to join the military. According to the head of the Interior and Defense Parliamentary Committee, more than 25,000 Bidoons are awaiting enlistment.