

21 October 2016

Kuwait – Human rights defender Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli on hunger strike in protest of arbitrary detention by Kuwaiti authorities

On 19 October 2016, **Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli** began a hunger strike refusing to consume both food and water in protest of the conditions of his detention in Anbar 4 maximum security prison facility in Kuwait. Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli turned himself in to the Kuwaiti authority at the Kuwait Central Prison facility on 27 September to serve a one-year prison sentence and was held there for 23 days. He described the conditions in the detention facility as unsanitary and filled with disease causing him to develop a fever. Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli was transferred to the Anbar 4 prison facility on 19 October 2016, where he was placed in isolation from other prisoners at the facility without being allowed to leave his cell.

[Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli](#) is a high-profile human rights defender and a member of the *Bedoun* community in Kuwait. The term *Bedoun*, meaning 'without' in Arabic, refers to the community of stateless persons, native to Kuwait, who are prohibited from obtaining any official state documents including, but not limited to birth, death or marriage certificates. They constitute approximately 180,000 of Kuwait's population. Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli has been advocating for *Bedoun* and minority rights in Kuwait through social media and has been involved in numerous peaceful demonstrations.

On 18 October 2016, the Appeals Court in Kuwait confirmed a three-month prison sentence with labour against human rights defender Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli. The Criminal Court in Kuwait delivered the sentence against the human rights defender on 16 March 2016 on charges related to his involvement in organising a demonstration calling for the rights of the *Bedoun* community. Additionally, in a separate case, the Misdemeanor Appellate Court rejected on 20 September 2016 a request by Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli to overturn a one-year sentence, including penal labour and deportation upon completion, that had been previously issued in January 2015 and upheld in November 2015 by the Appeals Court in Kuwait. The Misdemeanour Appellate Court examined this case after the Appeals Court decided in June 2016 to convert the charges from a felony to a misdemeanour and suspended the sentence. However, the human rights defender was released on 2 August after he served a three-month sentence for 'misusing his phone to organise and call for demonstrations'.

Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned by the continued targeting of Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli by the Kuwaiti authorities and condemns the recent court sentences upheld against him, as they are solely related to his peaceful and legitimate work on the promotion and protection of the rights of stateless people in Kuwait. Front Line Defenders is also concerned with the conditions under which Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli is being held.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Kuwait to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli, and quash the sentence against him;
2. Ensure the adequate medical care of Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli during, and following his hunger strike;
3. Ensure that his treatment in detention fully adheres to the conditions set out in the '*Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Kuwait are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.