



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Kuwait: Bidoons

Version 4.0
August 2024

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive summary | 4 |
| Assessment | 5 |
| About the assessment | 5 |
| 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals | 5 |
| 1.1 Credibility..... | 5 |
| 1.2 Exclusion..... | 6 |
| 2. Convention reason(s) | 6 |
| 3. Risk..... | 7 |
| 4. Protection | 10 |
| 5. Internal relocation | 10 |
| 6. Certification..... | 10 |
| Country information | 11 |
| About the country information | 11 |
| 7. Who are the Bidoon? | 11 |
| 7.1 History and Timeline..... | 11 |
| 7.2 Location and distinguishing features | 14 |
| 7.3 Population | 17 |
| 8. Kuwait’s Nationality Law | 18 |
| 8.1 The 1959 Nationality Law | 18 |
| 8.2 Implementation of the Law | 18 |
| 9. State attitudes towards Bidoons | 19 |
| 10. State apparatus regarding Bidoons | 21 |
| 10.1 Overview | 21 |
| 10.2 Central Agency for Remedying Illegal Residents’ Status (CARIRS)..... | 22 |
| 10.3 Revocation of (and difficulties faced when attempting to obtain) citizenship..... | 24 |
| 10.4 Appealing denied Kuwaiti citizenship. | 26 |
| 11. Documentation..... | 27 |
| 11.1 Review card..... | 27 |
| 11.2 Renewal of review cards | 33 |
| 11.3 Driving licenses, birth, marriage, and death certificates | 37 |
| 11.4 Article 17 travel documents | 38 |
| 12. Access to services and basic rights | 39 |
| 12.1 General overview of access to services and basic rights | 39 |
| 12.2 Employment, pay and banking | 44 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 12.3 Education | 45 |
| 12.4 Healthcare | 46 |
| 12.5 Housing | 47 |
| 12.6 Freedom of movement | 47 |
| 12.7 Arbitrary arrest and detention | 48 |
| 12.8 Civil and political rights | 48 |
| 13. Bidoon protests and treatment of activists | 49 |
| Annex A: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Bidoon briefing paper | 55 |
| Annex B: Amnesty International diagram of access to Education | 60 |
| Annex C: Email from FCDO on Article 17 Passports | 61 |
| Research methodology..... | 62 |
| Terms of Reference..... | 63 |
| Bibliography | 64 |
| Sources cited | 64 |
| Sources consulted but not cited..... | 67 |
| Version control and feedback | 70 |
| Feedback to the Home Office | 70 |
| Independent Advisory Group on Country Information..... | 70 |

Executive summary

The Bidoon (also spelt Bidun, Bedoon, Bedun), are a largely stateless Arab minority mostly descended from nomadic tribes known as Bedouin who settled in Kuwait but were not included as citizens at the time of the country's independence in 1961 or shortly thereafter. All Bidoon in Kuwait are classed as 'illegal residents' by the Kuwaiti state, who also allege that Bidoon conceal their 'true' nationalities, owing to their aspiration to acquire Kuwaiti citizenship and its associated benefits. Sources estimate there to be between 83,000 to 120,000 Bidoon in Kuwait

The Upper Tribunal (UT) in the country guidance case of [BA and Others](#) (heard on 11 June 2003 and promulgated on 15 September 2004) held that the Bidoon are a particular social group under the Refugee Convention.

There have been a number of government committees that have been established in attempts to resolve nationality and status issues of the Bidoon. In 2010, the government created the Central Agency for Remediating Illegal Residents' Status (CARIRS). This committee regulates the Bidoon population's access to documents and formal rights.

The key piece of documentation that is issued by the CARIRS is the 'review card' (also known as 'security card'). The review card is essential for Bidoon to access primary and secondary education, medical treatment, employment, driving licences, food ration cards and other official documents such as birth, death, and marriage certificates, though some of these services may be accessed without a review card depending on a person's social connections known as "wasta". Sources describe the process of renewing Review cards as arbitrary and non-transparent. Review cards have been more difficult to renew recently and are issued for shorter periods.

The UT in the country guidance case of [NM \(documented/undocumented Bidoon: risk\)](#) (heard on 14 and 30 January 2013 and promulgated on 24 July 2013) held that the evidence relating to the documented Bidoon does not show that they are at real risk of persecution or breach of their protected human rights. The undocumented Bidoon, however, do face a real risk of persecution and breach of their human rights.

Available country information does not indicate that there are very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to justify a departure from these findings.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection from the authorities and are unlikely to be able to internally relocate.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

[Back to Contents](#)

Assessment

Section updated: 31 July 2024

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is information in the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person has a well-founded fear of persecution or faces a real risk of serious harm by the state because they are a Bidoon (a stateless Arab).
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- if a claim is refused, it is likely to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

[Back to Contents](#)

1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 Some people may claim to be Bidoon when they are nationals of another country, such as Iraq. They are not usually stateless. Decision makers should consider the need to conduct language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)). Decision makers should also refer to the [Statelessness Guidance](#).
- 1.1.5 Others have regularised their status in Kuwait by showing evidence of, or successfully applying for, a second nationality. The Kuwaiti Government treats a person in this situation as a legal foreign national. A person in this scenario is not stateless.
- 1.1.6 Conversely there are Bidoons who have obtained counterfeit foreign passports to try and regularise their status. When trying to renew their review cards they found that the Kuwaiti Authorities had listed them as that foreign nationality and were no longer able to attempt to claim Kuwaiti citizenship, even if registered in the 1965 census. Family members may also find that they have been registered under that foreign nationality. Further issues may

arise when trying to renew counterfeit foreign passports. A person in this scenario may be stateless.

- 1.1.7 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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[Back to Contents](#)

2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed particular social group (PSG).
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.3 Bidoon form a particular social group (PSG) in Kuwait within the meaning of the Refugee Convention because they share an innate characteristic or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it **and** have a distinct identity in Kuwait because the group is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.

- 2.1.4 Although Bidoon in Kuwait form a PSG, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.1.5 In the country guidance case of [BA and Others \(Bidoon – statelessness – risk of persecution\) Kuwait CG \[2004\] UKIAT 00256](#) (heard on 11 June 2003 and promulgated on 15 September 2004), the Upper Tribunal held that: ‘Since the Bidoon have a tribal identity and are not simply a collection of (mainly) stateless persons, they [...] can also be seen to form a particular social group. Bidoon are a “particular social group” under the Refugee Convention.’ (paragraph 91(v)).
- 2.1.6 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Risk

- 3.1.1 In general, while documented Bidoon may face discrimination, it is not by its nature or repetition, or by an accumulation of measures, likely to amount to persecution. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.1.2 In general, undocumented Bidoon face treatment that is likely by its nature and repetition, or by an accumulation of measures, to amount to persecution.
- 3.1.3 In the country guidance case of [NM \(documented/undocumented Bidoon: risk\) Kuwait CG \[2013\] UKUT 00356\(IAC\)](#) (heard on 14 and 30 January 2013 and promulgated on 24 July 2013), the Upper Tribunal held that:
‘... [T]he evidence relating to the documented Bidoon does not show that they are at real risk of persecution or breach of their protected human rights. The undocumented Bidoon, however, do face a real risk of persecution and breach of their human rights.
‘The distinction made in previous country guidance in respect of Kuwaiti Bidoon, between those who are documented and those who are undocumented, is maintained, but the relevant crucial document, from possession of which a range of benefits depends, is the security card [review card], rather than the “civil identification documents” referred to in the previous country guidance in HE [2006] UKAIT 00051. To that extent the guidance in HE is amended.’ (paragraphs 100 and 101)
- 3.1.4 Available country information does not indicate that there are ‘very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence’ to justify a departure from the findings in [NM](#).
- 3.1.5 The Bidoon are a largely stateless Arab minority in Kuwait who were not included as citizens at the time of the country’s independence in 1961 or shortly thereafter. The current Bidoon population in Kuwait have originated from three different groups:
- those who claim citizenship under Kuwait’s Nationality Law but whose ancestors failed to apply or lacked the required documentation at the time of Kuwait’s independence.

- b. former citizens of other Arab states (such as Iraq, Syria and Jordan) and their descendants who came to Kuwait in the 1960s and 1970s to work in Kuwait's army and police forces.
 - c. persons born to Kuwaiti mothers and Bidoon fathers.
- 3.1.6 Sources estimate there to be between 83,000 to 120,000 Bidoon in Kuwait (see [Who are the Bidoon?](#)).
- 3.1.7 Kuwaiti nationality is determined by Kuwait's 1959 Nationality Law. Under Kuwaiti law, a child has the nationality of its father only. Children born to citizen mothers and non-national fathers (such as Bidoons) do not inherit citizenship. Kuwaiti women can apply to pass their nationality on to children only when the father is unknown or has failed to establish legal paternity, when the couple are divorced, or upon the death of a non-national husband. The citizenship awards process does not allow Bidoon to provide any evidence to support their case for naturalisation. The person must instead be put forward for citizenship, on a discretionary basis, by the Ministry of Interior. There is a limit of 4,000 persons being able to obtain citizenship per year. Sources do not provide further information on this process or on what basis people are put forward for citizenship (see [Kuwait's Nationality Law](#)).
- 3.1.8 In October 2022, the Kuwaiti government released figures stating that between 2011 and 2022, 18,277 people had completed the process of obtaining a nationality. However, according to the source, none of those were afforded Kuwaiti nationality and there was no explanation regarding which nationalities were given, or why. Additionally, no guarantees were given by the Kuwaiti government that the new nationalities would be validated by the corresponding country, and no clarity on the changes in rights and status for these people in Kuwait. No updated information on the numbers of persons who have obtained Kuwaiti (or another country's) nationality since 2022 could be found in the sources consulted (see [Central Agency for Remediating Illegal Residents' Status \(CARIRS\)](#)).
- 3.1.9 All Bidoon in Kuwait are classed as 'illegal residents' by the Kuwaiti state, who also allege that Bidoon conceal their 'true' nationalities, owing to their aspiration to acquire Kuwaiti citizenship and its associated benefits (see [State attitudes towards Bidoons](#)).
- 3.1.10 Since 1993, there have been a number of government committees that have been established in attempts to resolve nationality and status issues of the Bidoon. In 1996, the Executive Committee for the Affairs of Illegal Residents was set up which required Bidoons to register their claims of nationality between 1996 and 2000 (see [State apparatus regarding Bidoons](#)). It was this committee that first issued 'review cards' (also known as 'security cards') to Bidoon ([Review Card](#)). In 2010, the government created the Central Agency for Remediating Illegal Residents' Status (CARIRS) (also known as the Central Agency for the Remedy of the Situation of Illegal Residents, the Central System or the Central Agency). This committee reportedly regulates the Bidoon population's access to documents and formal rights (see [Central Agency for Remediating Illegal Residents' Status \(CARIRS\)](#)).
- 3.1.11 The key piece of documentation that is issued by the CARIRS is the 'review card' (also known as 'security card'). The review card is essential for Bidoon

to access education, medical treatment, employment, driving licences, food ration cards and other official documents such as birth, death, and marriage certificates. Available information presents conflicting accounts regarding review cards. Discrepancies include the colours of these cards, what each colour card means or entitles the holder to, and their validity periods. However, among these sources, yellow emerges as the most frequently cited colour for the review cards (see [Review Card](#) and [Access to services and basic rights](#)).

- 3.1.12 A number of sources describe the processes involved in applying for and renewing a review card as arbitrary, unclear and difficult, with the CARIRS using a number of methods to pressure as many Bidoon as possible to declare their 'true nationality', renouncing their claim on Kuwaiti citizenship in the process. Some of these methods include:
- repeated postponements of permissions to access services and requests for additional documentation
 - shortening the validity periods of the review cards (they were previously valid for one or 2 years but cards only valid for 3 or 6 months are now becoming more common)
 - pressure to sign various types of documents in exchange for a renewed card, including declarations renouncing their claim to citizenship, confirmations of information not divulged to the Agency previously and signing blank pieces of paper (which are then used as a confession of having another nationality)
 - arbitrary and unjustified attribution of presumed nationality, which then appears both on the renewed review card and in the database records system.
- 3.1.13 The time taken to renew a review card varies. However, sources stated that an electronic service for renewing review cards that was introduced in November 2022 can take between 4 and 5 days. Information regarding the processes involved with the online review card renewal could not be found within the sources consulted.
- 3.1.14 Data regarding the number of review cards that have been issued or renewed is limited. The Times Kuwait, a weekly English language newspaper in Kuwait, noted that 32,767 new review cards were issued between January and June 2023. The estimated population of Bidoon in Kuwait is between 80,000 and 120,000.
- 3.1.15 Review cards may be declined or revoked for security reasons such as criminality, activism, or there being 'strong evidence' that the applicant or holder holds another nationality. Family members of Bidoon with security restrictions may also have difficulty renewing review cards. Sources indicate there was an increase in 'denationalisation' and security blocks since the Arab Spring protests in 2011, with a peak in 2014, although there are no comprehensive figures on how many people have been denationalised (see [Renewal of review cards](#) and [Revocation of \(and difficulties faced when attempting to obtain\) citizenship](#)).
- 3.1.16 The documented Bidoon (those who hold a review card), are generally able

to access government services, gain public and private sector employment and access healthcare and private education. Available information indicates that a person may be unable to renew their review card because of various forms of administrative hurdles or if they have been found to have previously acquired falsified foreign passports in order to obtain government jobs, birth and / or marriage certificates. Despite having held a review card previously, if an individual is unable to renew their review card, they may become de facto undocumented (see [Documentation](#) and [Treatment of Bidoon](#)).

- 3.1.17 Undocumented Bidoon, (those who do not possess a review card), even if they possess other pieces of official documentation, are in general unlikely to be able to access basic services such as education, employment, medical care and civil documents such as birth, marriage or death certificates (see [Documentation](#) and [Treatment of Bidoon](#)).
- 3.1.18 The Kuwaiti constitution allows for peaceful assembly and association for citizens. However, this is not extended to Bidoon and other non-citizens. Sources indicate that any political activity by Bidoon is heavily restricted and those who speak out publicly are likely to be subject to adverse attention from the state. There have been reports of torture, ill-treatment, sexual abuse and excessive force against Bidoon while in custody although the scale and extent to which this occurs is unclear (see [Bidoon protests and treatment of activists](#)).
- 3.1.19 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

4. Protection

- 4.1.1 A person who fears the state is unlikely to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on considering internal relocation, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **31 July 2024**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

[Back to Contents](#)

7. Who are the Bidoon?

7.1 History and Timeline

7.1.1 Minority Rights Group International (MRG) published a Bidoon profile as part of an undated directory of minorities and indigenous peoples. It stated that ‘Bidoon (short for bidoon jinsiya, meaning “without nationality” in Arabic, and alternately spelt as Bedoon, Bidun and Bedun) are a stateless Arab minority in Kuwait who were not included as citizens at the time of the country’s independence or shortly thereafter.’¹

7.1.2 The same source provided a history of the Bidoon which stated:

‘Most Bidoon come from nomadic tribes [known as Bedouin] native to the Arabian Peninsula who were in Kuwait when the country gained independence in 1961. The process of determining who was eligible for citizenship, was set out by the 1959 nationality law [see [Kuwait’s Nationality Law](#)] inherently favoured Kuwait’s urban residents and those who were connected to influential tribes or families.

‘... On the other hand, many tribal communities in outlying areas failed to register for citizenship when the law was passed, whether due to lack of awareness or understanding of the new law and its implications, illiteracy, or lack of documentation proving their connection to the territory. The concept of territorially-defined citizenship would also have been a foreign concept to many, as it diverged from traditional tribal understandings of belonging which were defined by allegiance to a leader in a context, moreover, where there continued to be migratory communities for whom the notion of states was unfamiliar.

‘... Consequently, approximately one third of the population of Kuwait at the time did not obtain citizenship and was classified as bidoon jinsiya.’²

¹ MRG, [‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon – History’](#), no date

² MRG, [‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon – History’](#), no date

7.1.3 MRG also commented:

'In the first few decades after Kuwait's independence, being Bidoon carried relatively few disadvantages. Bidoon had access to employment, public education and free healthcare, just as Kuwaiti citizens did. They were also able to register civil marriages and receive other forms of documentation.

'...From this situation of relatively equal status, Bidoon began to face increased restrictions on their rights from the mid-1980s onwards.

'...the Kuwaiti government began to view Bidoon as a security threat, particularly as it became known that some incoming refugees and individuals from Iraq wishing to avoid military service and persecution were getting rid of their identity papers and posing as Bidoon.

'...In 1986, the government changed the status of Bidoon to 'illegal residents' and began to strip them of their rights. Large numbers were fired from their jobs, while the community as a whole was excluded from free education, housing and healthcare.

7.1.4 The 2011 report published by Human Rights Watch (HRW) entitled 'Prisoners of the Past – Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness', based on interviews and primary research conducted by HRW and from which many other reports^{3,4,5,6} refer to, stated:

'Today's Bidun population originates from three different categories. First, there are those Bidun who claim citizenship under Kuwait's Nationality Law, but whose ancestors failed to apply or lacked necessary documentation at the time of Kuwait's independence. Among this group are the descendants of nomadic clans which regularly traversed the borders of modern-day Gulf states but settled permanently in Kuwait prior to independence. This group of Bidun have never held the citizenship of any other country.

'A second group is composed of former citizens of other Arab states (such as Iraq, Syria, and Jordan), and their descendants, who came to Kuwait in the 1960s and 70s, to work in Kuwait's army and police forces. The Kuwaiti government preferred to register them as Bidun rather than to reveal this politically-sensitive recruitment policy. Some of these migrants settled in Kuwait with their families and never left.

'The third category of Bidun is composed of individuals born to Kuwaiti mothers and Bidun fathers.'⁷

7.1.5 Below is a timeline compiled using various sources highlighting important events affecting Bidoons in the years since the nationality law was introduced:

1959 – The nationality laws define categories of Kuwaiti nationality and a range of criteria and limitations⁸.

1979-1981 – Following increased regional tensions due to the Iranian

³ MENA Rights Group, '[Joint submission ahead of Kuwait's review by the UN...](#)', 1 July 2020

⁴ ENS & INS, '[Statelessness in Kuwait; Country Position Paper](#)', May 2019

⁵ IRB, '[...Whether Bedoun residents who were included in the 1965 census...](#)', 20 February 2012

⁶ AI, '[...Stateless Kuwaitis and the right to education](#)', 17 August 2023

⁷ HRW, '[...Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness](#)', (Page 15), June 2011

⁸ [Kuwaiti Nationality Law 1959](#), 1959

revolution and the Iran/Iraq war, the Kuwaiti government began to view Bidoon as a security threat⁹.

1985 – An assassination attempt on the then-Amir [emir – monarch and head of state] was a turning point as, despite Islamic Jihad Organisation taking responsibility for the attempt, Kuwait blamed a faction of the Bidoon community¹⁰.

1985-1986 – Following the assassination attempt, Amiri Decree 41/1987 officially reclassified Bidoon from ‘Bedouins of Kuwait’ to ‘Illegal Residents’, stripping them of previous access to state services and benefits of any kind¹¹. A number of Bidoon were reportedly expelled. Large numbers were fired from their jobs, while the community as a whole was excluded from free education, housing and healthcare¹².

1988 – An appeal court ruled that as no other state considered them nationals, they could not be considered “aliens” in terms of the law. The government ignored the ruling and continued, reportedly, to deport members of the Bidoon community¹³.

1990 – Iraq invasion of Kuwait. The number of Bidoon in Kuwait prior to the war was estimated to be around 250,000. However, many fled during the war and were denied re-entry into Kuwait when the war ended¹⁴. Approximately 10,000 Bidoon were deported¹⁵.

1991 – Post war figures estimate the number of Bidoons in Kuwait to be 125,000¹⁶.

1993 – The Central Committee to Resolve the Status of Illegal Residents was established to regularise the status of the Bidoon. The Central Committee concluded its work on 26 March 1996¹⁷.

1996 – The Executive Committee for Illegal Residents’ Affairs (ECIR) was established to process all those who claimed to be illegal residents (Bidoons).¹⁸.

2000 – Law passed permitting naturalisation of individuals registered in the 1965 census and their descendants, limited to 2,000 per year, which has never been met¹⁹.

2005-2008 – 3,346 Bidoon granted citizenship²⁰.

2010 – November - the Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents’ Status was established and is the current administrative body responsible for

⁹ MRG, [‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon’](#), no date

¹⁰ FCDO, [‘Bidoon briefing paper’](#) (Paragraph 5), October 2023

¹¹ FCDO, [‘Bidoon briefing paper’](#) (Paragraph 5), October 2023

¹² MRG, [‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon’](#), no date

¹³ MRG, [‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon’](#), no date

¹⁴ HRW, [‘...Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness’](#), (Page 14), 13 June 2011

¹⁵ MRG, [‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Kuwait Bidoon’](#), no date

¹⁶ HRW, [‘...Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness’](#), (Page 14), 13 June 2011

¹⁷ HRW, [‘...Response to its Questions and Inquiries \[from Kuwaiti Government\]’](#), (Page 3), no date

¹⁸ HRW, [‘...Response to its Questions and Inquiries \[from Kuwaiti Government\]’](#), (Page 3), no date

¹⁹ HRW, [‘...Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness’](#), (Page 14), 13 June 2011

²⁰ HRW, [‘...Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness’](#), (Page 18), 13 June 2011

reviewing Bidoon claims to nationality²¹. The Committee accepted that 34,000 Bidoon are meeting the eligibility requirements for Kuwaiti citizenship²². 68,000 Bidoon are said to be Iraqi citizens or have 'other origins', and have 3 years to correct their status or face legal action. A further 4,000 individuals are recorded as status unknown²³.

2011 – February - Bidoon community began protesting peacefully, demanding to be recognised as citizens of Kuwait. The security forces used force to disperse demonstrations and arrested protesters²⁴.

2014 – February/March – Authorities used tear gas and rubber bullets to halt demonstrators. Dozens of people arrested with many injured²⁵.

2015 – Government officials suggest that Kuwait may 'solve' the Bidoon community's nationality claims by paying the Comoros Islands to grant the Bidun a form of economic citizenship²⁶.

2017 – April - The Government announced a new initiative that would allow Bidoon sons of soldiers who were either killed, missing in action, or served in the military for 30 years to be eligible to join the military²⁷.

2019 – July – Protests take place following the suicide of 20-year-old Ayed Hamad Moudath after he was reportedly unable to obtain official documentation and as a result lost his job²⁸.

2019 – November – New legislation brought up in Kuwait's Parliament that stated Bidoons could apply for citizenship and be granted residency providing that they declare their original nationalities²⁹.

2020 – November – The mandate of the Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents' Status was extended by another year by the Kuwaiti authorities³⁰.

2021 – Bidoons who did not have a security card or whose card had expired, could not register for Covid-19 vaccinations³¹.

2022 – August – Kuwaiti authorities arrested 18 people, including 3 candidates for upcoming parliamentary elections, for taking part in a peaceful demonstration in support of Kuwait's Bidoon community³².

[Back to Contents](#)

7.2 Location and distinguishing features

7.2.1 The MRG profile on Bidoons stated that 'Most Bidoon live in slum-like settlements on the outskirts of Kuwait City, Tayma, Sulaibiyya and Ahmadi where they lack adequate housing and protection from Kuwait's extreme

²¹ HRW, '[...Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness](#)', (Page 18-19), 13 June 2011

²² Women's Refugee Commission, '[...Statelessness in the Middle East](#)', (Page 7), 4 June 2013

²³ HRW, '[...Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness](#)', (Page 20), 13 June 2011

²⁴ HRW, '[...Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness](#)', (Page 11), 13 June 2011

²⁵ Thomson Reuters, '[Kuwait clamps down as...Bidoons call for Citizenship](#)' 26 February 2014

²⁶ HRW, '[World Report 2016: Kuwait – Events of 2015](#)' (Treatment of Minorities) 27 January 2016

²⁷ The New Arab, '[Kuwait soldier shortage sees 'stateless' called up for duty](#)', 2 April 2017

²⁸ The New Arab, '[Kuwait arrests...Bidoon protesters demanding citizenship](#)' 17 July 2019

²⁹ The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, '[Stateless in Kuwait](#)' 8 November 2019

³⁰ AI, '[Kuwait: Mandate of...government body...extended](#)' 24 November 2020

³¹ Salam for Democracy & ISI, '[Nothing but a pen](#)', (Page 29), 9 January 2023

³² AI, '[Kuwait: Authorities must stop targeting pro-Bidun protesters..](#)', 1 September 2022

weather conditions.³³

- 7.2.2 The Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (OFPRA), the French government refugee agency published their report ‘Les Bidoun’ (the OFPRA paper) on 6 September 2019. The information below and from this source, and used elsewhere in this CPIN has been translated from French using Google translate. As such, 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed.– (translation available upon request):

‘There is no physical or clothing element to distinguish the Bidoun from Kuwaiti citizens. The Bidoun are “administratively foreign but share the same ethnic and cultural heritage with nationals,” summarizes researcher Claire Beaugrand³⁴, a specialist in the issue of the Bidoun in Kuwait. They speak the same language, with the exception of some dialect intonations. They wear, like all Kuwaiti citizens, a white toga (“dishdasha”) and a scarf (“ghutra”) which they tie on their heads with a black rope (“iqal”).³⁵

CPIT was unable to find further information about the differences in dialect between Kuwaiti and Bidoons however this may be due to differences in education.

- 7.2.3 The OFPRA paper added ‘The Bidoun mainly reside on the outskirts of Kuwait City, in the towns of Tayma, Sulaibiyya, Ahmadi or Al-Jahra.’³⁶

- 7.2.4 In March 2024, following a request for information by CPIT regarding Bidoons, Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, the Fellow for the Middle East at Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy³⁷ stated that:

‘Many Bidoon live in slum-like settlements, often on the outskirts of Kuwait City, especially in the neighbourhoods of Tayma, Sulaibiyya, and Ahmadi, and in substandard housing. They are largely segregated from most Kuwaitis who do not live in such neighbourhoods (they are far more likely to live among communities of migrant, i.e. non-Kuwaiti workers). Kuwaiti citizens are generally able to identify by accents and aspects of dress elements of an individual’s background that likely would identify them as Bidoon.’³⁸

- 7.2.5 In April 2024, following a request for information by CPIT regarding Bidoons, Dr Claire Beaugrand, a lecturer at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at Exeter University³⁹ stated: ‘Distinguishing between a Kuwaiti citizen and a Bidoon is impossible - apart from situations where the social acceptance excludes the possibility of the person being a Kuwaiti, for instance for street sellers who would never be Kuwaitis.

- 7.2.6 She added

‘There have historically been areas where Bidoons live, in what is called “popular housing” areas, in South Ahmadi, Tayma (Jahra) and Sulaybiyya. These housings were linked to their employment in the police and armed

³³ MRG, ‘[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon](#)’, no date

³⁴ University of Exeter, ‘[Claire Beaugrand](#)’, no date

³⁵ OFPRA, ‘[Les Bidoun](#)’, (Page 3), 6 September 2019

³⁶ OFPRA, ‘[Les Bidoun](#)’, (Page 3), 6 September 2019

³⁷ Washington Institute, ‘[Kristian Coates Ulrichsen](#)’, no date

³⁸ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, March 2024 - available upon request

³⁹ University of Exeter, ‘[Claire Beaugrand](#)’, no date

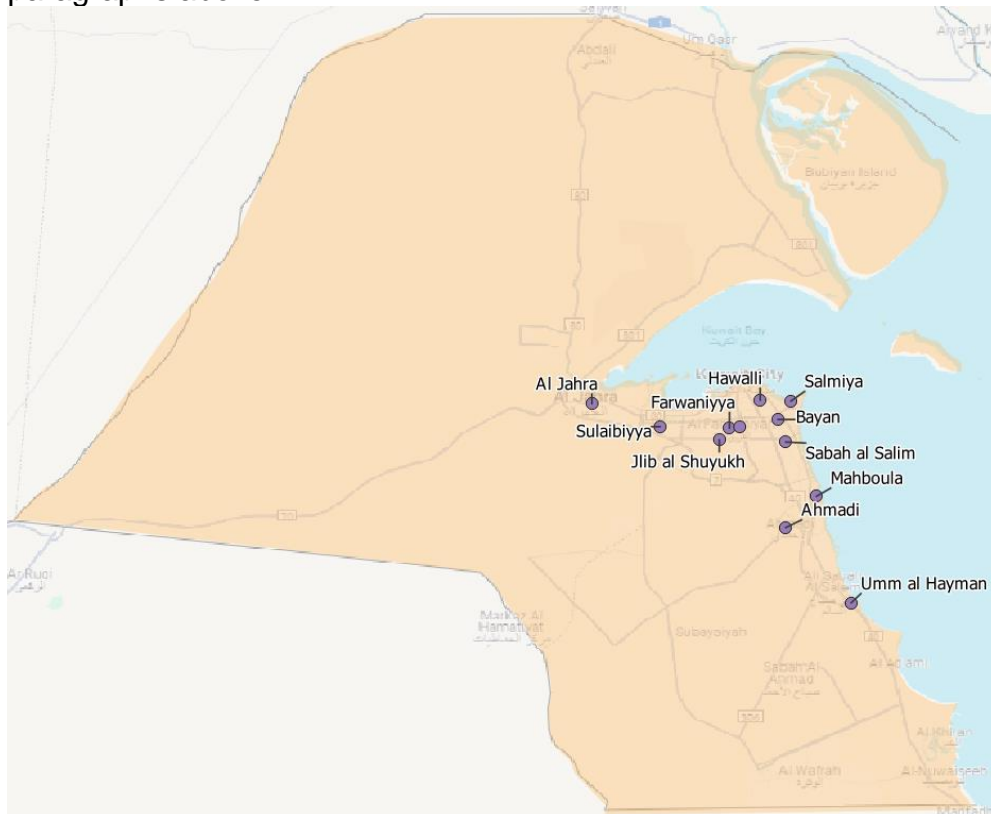
forces.

'Yet even at the time when popular housings were built, some Bidoons, in other employment, were living outside of these areas.

'I noted in my book⁴⁰: "As a result, the new generations have left the popular housing to rent in lower-class expatriate areas like Farwaniyya, Jlib al Shuyukh, Sabah al Salim and further south on the road towards Ahmadi. They joined the other biduns, who never benefited from the state housing of the armed forces, around Umm al Hayman and in any other affordable accommodation (Khaitan, Hawalli)."⁴¹

7.2.7 In April 2024, following a request for information by CPIT regarding Bidoons, the UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) stated that: '[Bidoons live in] Shanty towns on outskirts of Kuwait City, Tayma, Sulaibiyya and Ahmadi. Those who find employment may live in Bayan, Salmiya and Mahboula but this is dependent on finding a willing landlord'⁴²

7.2.8 The below map, created by CPIT in May 2024, shows the locations of where Bidoons are predominantly found in Kuwait according to the sources in the paragraphs above:



7.2.9 The FCDO additionally stated '[The] Vast majority [of Bidoons] are Sunni.'⁴³

7.2.10 Dr Beaugrand explained that '... Bidoon are said to be mostly Shiites and in my view, the majority of them probably is. Yet I met Sunni Bidoons when I was carrying fieldwork in Kuwait. In the absence of figures, it is difficult to

⁴⁰ Dr Claire Beaugrand, '[Stateless in the Gulf: Migration, nationality and society...](#)', (Page 142), 2017

⁴¹ Dr Claire Beaugrand, 'Response to CPIT questions', April 2024 - available upon request

⁴² FCDO, 'Response to CPIT questions', April 2024 - available upon request

⁴³ FCDO, 'Response to CPIT questions', April 2024 - available upon request

have a precise idea of the religious composition of the group.⁴⁴

- 7.2.11 It should be noted that sources differ on whether the Bidoon are predominantly Shia or Sunni Muslims. CPIT was unable to find further information on this topic within the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

7.3 Population

- 7.3.1 Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (SDHR) is a human rights NGO undertaking research and advocacy on statelessness in the Gulf and wider Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region⁴⁵. Their report entitled 'The Bidoon in Kuwait, History at a Glance' from October 2020 stated:

'In several countries of the Gulf there are stateless persons referred to as the Bidoon... The most prominent case is in Kuwait where there is a particularly large Bidoon population, often estimated at around 100,000 - 120,000... According to official Kuwaiti estimates, there were some 4.4 million people living in the country in 2019, of whom 1.3 million - just short of 30% - were Kuwaiti nationals. Even if one accepts the lower estimate of the Bidoon population (100,000 persons) this would equal just under 8% of Kuwaiti nationals.'⁴⁶

- 7.3.2 The United States Department of State (USSD) report for human rights practices in Kuwait, covering events in 2023 and published in April 2024 stated (repeated from previous years):

'UNHCR estimated there were 83,000 stateless persons in the country, mostly Bidoon residents considered illegal residents by authorities and denied citizenship. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and international and local media estimated the Bidoon resident population was more than 100,000, while the government reported the Bidoon population was approximately 83,000, based on those who held Central Agency identity cards.'⁴⁷

The source does not provide further evidence of the Kuwaiti government source or how it arrived at the figure of 83,000. Whilst it may be possible to extrapolate that 83,000 Bidoon hold identity cards ([Review cards](#)), the source does not explicitly say that 83,000 Bidoon hold cards. No further information on the number of Bidoon holding review cards can be found by CPIT within the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

- 7.3.3 A briefing paper on Bidoons produced by the FCDO in October 2023 (see [Annex A](#)) stated: 'According to Kuwait official estimates, there were, at a peak pre-1990, c. 220,000 [Bidoons] in country, and around 85,000 as of 2018. These figures remain contested by Amnesty International, who claim there are approximately 100,000 Bidoon currently in Kuwait.'⁴⁸

[Back to Contents](#)

⁴⁴ Dr Claire Beaugrand, 'Response to CPIT questions', April 2024 - available upon request

⁴⁵ SDHR, '[About us](#)', no date

⁴⁶ SDHR, '[The Bidoon in Kuwait, History at a Glance](#)', (Page 3), 24 October 2020

⁴⁷ USSD, '[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

⁴⁸ FCDO, '[Bidoon briefing paper](#)' (Paragraph 3), October 2023

8. Kuwait's Nationality Law

8.1 The 1959 Nationality Law

8.1.1 Kuwaiti nationality is determined by Kuwait's 1959 Nationality Law. The main relevant provisions are:

- Article 1 – those who were settled in Kuwait prior to 1920 and who maintained their normal residence there until the date of the publication of the Law;
- Article 2 – those born in, or outside, Kuwait whose father is a Kuwaiti national;
- Article 3 – those born in Kuwait whose parents are unknown;
- Article 4 – Kuwaiti nationality may be granted by Decree upon the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior to those proficient in Arabic who could prove their lawful residence in Kuwait for 15 years for Arabs or 20 years for non Arabs⁴⁹.

8.1.2 The MRG profile on Bidoons stated 'Children of Bidoon parents do not have any claim to citizenship, despite being born in Kuwait. Moreover, children born to Kuwaiti mothers and Bidoon fathers are also considered Bidoon, except in cases of divorce or death of the father.'⁵⁰

8.1.3 Dr Susan Kennedy Nour al Deen, a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Adelaide with an interest in statelessness and citizenship⁵¹, in her October 2016 Doctoral Thesis entitled 'The Stateless Bedoun in Kuwait Society. A study of Bedouin Identity, Culture and the Growth of an Intellectual Ideal' stated: '[T]hose who served in the police or armed forces were qualified to receive citizenship due to their service to the nation, in Article 4, paragraph 4 of the Nationality Law 1959.'⁵²

8.1.4 A previous iteration of the USSD human rights report for Kuwait, covering events in 2022 and published in March 2023 (information not included in the latest 2023 report) stated that 'The government often granted citizenship to orphaned or abandoned infants, including Bidoon infants.'⁵³

8.1.5 The October 2023 FCDO briefing paper on Bidoons ([Annex A](#)) stated: 'The citizenship awards process set out in the Nationality Law of 1959 is... unclear... as it does not allow the Bidoon to provide any evidence to support their case for naturalisation. The provisions of the law - that authorises executive naturalisation (after birth) - requires the individual to be proposed for citizenship, on a discretionary basis, by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and cannot exceed the legal quota 4,000-naturalisation p.a. [per annum].'⁵⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

8.2 Implementation of the Law

⁴⁹ [Kuwaiti Nationality Law 1959](#), 1959

⁵⁰ MRG, '[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon](#)', no date

⁵¹ Academia.edu, '[Susan Kennedy Nour al Deen](#)', no date

⁵² Dr Susan Kennedy Nour al Deen, '[The Stateless Bedoun in Kuwait...](#)', (page 183), October 2016

⁵³ USSD, '[2022 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 6), 20 March 2023

⁵⁴ FCDO, '[Bidoon briefing paper](#)', (Paragraph 8), October 2023

8.2.1 The undated MRG profile on Bidoons stated:

‘There has been little progress on naturalization, despite repeated promises. A law passed in 2000 permitted the naturalization of Bidoon and their descendants, provided they could show that they were registered in the 1965 census, thereby proving that they were in the country at the time of independence. However, it has been reported that only a small number of Bidoon were able to acquire nationality through this process, and these were predominately those with wealth or connections’⁵⁵

8.2.2 Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) a Geneva based human rights association⁵⁶, stated in their article ‘Kuwait: Just wanting to belong’ published on 18 January 2021 that: ‘The Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, issued a decree in 1999 that makes the naturalization of 2,000 Bidoon per year possible. However, research by the portal Inside Arabia shows that only three percent of the Bidoon in Kuwait had received citizenship by 2019.’⁵⁷

8.2.3 A previous iteration of the USSD human rights report covering events in Kuwait in 2021, published 12 April 2022, (information not included in the latest 2023 report) stated: ‘According to international observers, some Bidoon residents underwent DNA testing purportedly to “prove” their Kuwaiti nationality by virtue of blood relation to a citizen. Bidoon residents 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.’⁵⁸

CPIT was unable to find any further evidence regarding Bidoons undergoing DNA testing in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

9. State attitudes towards Bidoons

9.1.1 The MRG profile on Bidoons stated: ‘The overall attitude of the Kuwaiti authorities to Bidoon has changed very little since the 1990s. The government has asserted that Bidoon enjoy human rights on an equal basis with nationals of Kuwait but it continues to refer to Bidoon as illegal residents, and paints them as opportunistic foreign nationals who have destroyed their original documents in order to stay in Kuwait and take advantage of the provisions of the welfare state.’⁵⁹

9.1.2 In the response of Kuwait to Concluding Observations of the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), filed on 27 April 2017, which sought to encourage Kuwait to resolve the Bidoon situation positively, the Government of Kuwait responded inter alia to the recommendation of the UNHRC that it increase regularisation of status of the Bidoon and guarantee their human rights by stating as follows:

‘1. It should first be emphasized that there are no so-called “stateless

⁵⁵ MRG, ‘[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon](#)’, no date

⁵⁶ RLS, ‘[About us](#)’, no date

⁵⁷ RLS, ‘[Kuwait: just wanting to belong](#)’, 18 January 2021

⁵⁸ USSD, ‘[2021 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 2), 12 April 2022

⁵⁹ MRG, ‘[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon](#)’, no date

persons” or “Bidoon” in the State of Kuwait, since these terms refer to persons who have no nationality. This is not applicable to the status and concept of illegal residents, who entered Kuwait illegally and concealed the documents indicating their original nationalities owing to their aspiration to acquire Kuwaiti citizenship and its associated benefits.

‘2. They are officially designated “illegal residents” pursuant to Decree No. 467/2010 concerning the establishment of the Central Agency.

‘3. The granting of Kuwaiti citizenship is a sovereign matter that the State assesses in accordance with its best interests. It is subject to the conditions and regulations laid down in the Kuwaiti Nationality Act No. 15/1959, as amended, which specifies the cases in which the possibility of granting citizenship may be considered. The Central Agency for Regularization of the Status of Illegal Residents [see [Central Agency for Remedying Illegal Residents’ Status \(CARIRS\)](#)] examines, investigates and scrutinizes the situation of such persons on a case-by-case basis, in full transparency and without succumbing to pressure or personal whims, in accordance with the road map produced by the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, approved by the Council of Ministers and promulgated by Amiri Decree No. 1612/2010.

‘... 14. If the idea is that the State should apply the provisions of these Conventions to illegal residents, we wish to point out that many international human rights organizations confuse the terms “stateless” and “illegal residents”, although there is an enormous difference between them in both conceptual and legal terms.

‘... 15. In conceptual terms, “stateless persons” are persons who are not recognized as citizens under the law of any State, in other words persons without a nationality of their own. This is inconsistent with the concept of “illegal residents”, since these are persons who entered Kuwait illegally and concealed the documents indicating their original nationalities owing to their aspiration to acquire Kuwaiti citizenship and its associated benefits.’⁶⁰

9.1.3 The USSD report for covering events in 2023, published in April 2024 stated that ‘The government alleged most Bidoon residents concealed their “true” nationalities and were not stateless. Central Agency officials offered incentives to Bidoon who declared an alternate nationality, including priority employment and the ability to obtain a driver’s license.’⁶¹

9.1.4 The October 2023 FCDO briefing paper on Bidoons ([Annex A](#)) in relation to proposed laws regarding Bidoons and Kuwaiti nationality stated:

‘In 2020, the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim proposed a law that would incentivise the Bidoon to abandon long-standing claims to Kuwaiti nationality in exchange for short-term economic gain. However, it was not passed. The draft would have given the Bidoon community one year to register with the Central Agency and correct their legal status before they would be treated as “foreigners in violation of the law” and declared ineligible for future acquisition of nationality, placing severe pressure on Bidoon to ‘admit’ to holding a non-Kuwaiti nationality and surrender their claim to

⁶⁰ Kuwait, ‘[Concluding observations on the 3rd periodic report of Kuwait...](#)’, (Page 2,4), 27 April 2017

⁶¹ USSD, ‘[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

Kuwaiti nationality. The Bidoon community were extremely hostile to this law, and questioned whether those who accepted a non-Kuwaiti nationality would face deportation following a proposed 15-year grace period which they would be afforded 'privileged resident' status in addition to having access to free healthcare, education and subsidised food, among other benefits. The proposal did not pass in the National Assembly.

'... A second proposal by the Kuwaiti Lawyers' Association sought to address issue in a more humane manner and redefine the Bidoon as "Residents whose nationality has not been recognised", rather than "Illegal Residents" enabling those coerced into "recognising" their non-Kuwaiti nationality to return to their previous legal status. The proposal outlined access to education & healthcare and the abolishment of the Central Agency. Though this law would not have granted nationality to all stateless persons in Kuwait, and not a comprehensive solution, it laid out a plan for naturalisation that would have benefited many of the Bidoon and granted all other stateless persons in Kuwait permanent residence and access to essential services. This proposal also failed to gain enough support to pass.'⁶²

[Back to Contents](#)

10. State apparatus regarding Bidoons

10.1 Overview

10.1.1 The SDHR report published in October 2020, citing various sources⁶³, stated:

'After the war [between Kuwait and Iraq] a series of committees were established to register the population, ostensibly to get a clearer view of the country's demographics, for example the 1991 Committee to Register Foreigners... A specific process was then initiated with regards to the Bidoon. In 1993 the Central Committee... was set up tasked with studying the situation of the Bidoon in Kuwait.

'...This committee was in turn replaced in 1996 by the Executive Committee for the Affairs of Illegal Residents... with the aim of implementing decisions on the basis of the findings of the 1993 committee. It demanded the Bidoon to register their claims of nationality between 1996-2000. Those who registered were given a 'review card' [see [Review Card](#)]... , which was only valid for transactions between the Bidoon card holder and Kuwaiti authorities. As with the nationality registrations in 1959-1965, some Bidoon did not or were again unable to register with the committee. The Kuwaiti government itself released information that 12,000 individuals had not opened files with the Kuwaiti authorities.

'... Even so, many Bidoon did register; according to the Kuwaiti authorities' own figures some 106,000 had registered in the four-year period from 1996. However, the Kuwaiti Supreme Court of Higher Planning determined that of these 106,000 registrations, only 34,000 were potentially eligible for citizenship, 68,000 had other origins (42,000 "already Iraqis" and 26,000

⁶² FCDO, '[Bidoon briefing paper](#)', (Paragraph 16-17), October 2023

⁶³ SDHR, '[The Bidoon in Kuwait, History at a Glance](#)' (Page 15-16), 24 October 2020

“Other” known origins), and the remaining 4,000 were “unknown”. Many Bidoon dispute these official “findings”, especially as in some cases members of the same family have been “found” to have different national origins.

‘... There is no appeals process to deal with such issues, which essentially bar the registered Bidoon from being considered for nationality. In other cases, many who have registered have found a “security restriction”... on their file, preventing them from being considered for nationality or even requesting basic documents or services that, in principle, should be granted [to] Bidoon who have registered with the authorities.

‘In 2010 a third special committee was established that would continue processing these registrations. The Central System for Remediating the Status of Illegal Residents... remains the body which deals with Bidoon matters and, ostensibly, investigates the origins of the registered Bidoons.’⁶⁴

10.1.2 Dr Claire Beaugrand stated in April 2024:

‘[S]ince 1993 a special government unit under the Ministry of the Interior has been in charge of dealing specifically with the files of the biduns. From 1993 to 1996, the Central Committee (Lajnat markaziyya) was tasked with registering, regularising and overseeing bidun affairs. Established in 1996 by the Ministry of the Interior and based in ‘Ardiyya, the Executive Committee for the Affairs of Illegal Residents (Lajnat tanfiziyya li shu’un al muqimin bi-sura ghayrqanuniyya) – shortened as Executive Committee, took over from the Central Committee.’ Since that time, the Kuwaiti authorities keep data on the majority of the Bidoons residing on its territory.’⁶⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

10.2 Central Agency for Remediating Illegal Residents’ Status (CARIRS)

10.2.1 The Central Agency/System is referred to by a number of different names in the sources below. It is also abbreviated to CARIRS (The Central Agency for the Remedy of the Situation of Illegal Residents).

10.2.2 On 24 August 2020 Landinfo, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, published a query response, citing various sources⁶⁶, entitled ‘Kuwait: The Bidun’s review cards’ which stated:

‘The current committee, the Central System – Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents’ Status – has more extensive powers than its predecessors. Referred to as “a state within the state”, the Central System regulates the Biduns’ access to documents and formal rights in an arbitrary and non-transparent manner. Biduns do not have insight into the basis of the committee’s decisions, nor can they contest the decisions. In practice, the courts also lack authority to rule on the status of stateless persons.

‘According to the Central System itself, the Bidun files are categorised in three groups (Central Agency 2017):

‘1. Illegal residents whose status need to be adjusted.

⁶⁴ SDHR, ‘[The Bidoon in Kuwait, History at a Glance](#)’, (Page 10-11), 24 October 2020

⁶⁵ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

⁶⁶ Landinfo, ‘[Kuwait: The Bidun’s review cards](#)’ (Page 9-11), 24 August 2020

'2. Illegal residents who might be considered for naturalization.

'3. Illegal residents for whom residency permits are issued after remedying their status (i.e. after declaring their original nationality).

'Biduns registered with the Central System are to be issued with a card confirming their registration, a so-called review card (also known as a security card) [see [Review card](#)]. The card contains the holder's personal data and a case number but is not a regular ID card.'⁶⁷

10.2.3 A previous iteration of the USSD report that covered events in 2022 and was published in March 2023 stated:

'The Central Agency for Illegal Residents oversees Bidoon resident affairs. In 2021, the Council of Ministers issued two resolutions that extended the agency's expired term by two additional years and reappointed the head of the agency. Bidoon residents, Bidoon rights advocates, members of parliament, and human rights activists protested the decision, arguing that the agency had not been effective in resolving matters pertaining to the Bidoon, and that conditions for Bidoon residents had dramatically deteriorated under the agency's leadership... The Central Agency received tens of thousands of citizenship requests by Bidoon residents for review since its establishment in 2010. Data on the number of requests accepted by the Central Agency was unavailable.'⁶⁸

10.2.4 The same source additionally stated:

'In February [2022], the Central Agency announced that 18,217 Bidoon "revealed" their true nationalities from 2011 to 2021. The Central Agency indicated that of these individuals, 8,068 persons claimed Iraqi nationality, 6,583 claimed Saudi nationality, 309 claimed to Iranian nationality, 115 claimed Jordanian nationality, and 2,009 claimed other nationalities. The Central Agency stated it was currently following up on 9,090 additional cases for which it had identified other nationalities.'⁶⁹

10.2.5 The October 2023 FCDO briefing paper on Bidoons ([Annex A](#)) stated:

'In 2010, the Government created an agency tasked with resolving the Bidoon issue: CARIRS [The Central Agency for the Remedy of the Situation of Illegal Residents]. However, it has been criticised for creating more roadblocks and hardships for Bidoon rather than improving their situation. In October 2022, the Agency released figures stating that between 2011 and 2022, 18,227 individuals had completed the process of obtaining nationality. However, we understand that none were given Kuwaiti nationality, and there is little explanation of how nationalities were allocated. There have been no guarantees that these new nationalities would be validated by the corresponding country, and no clarity on the changes in rights and status for these individuals in Kuwait.'⁷⁰

10.2.6 Further information on the number of Review cards issued by the Kuwaiti authorities could not be found in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

⁶⁷ Landinfo, '[Kuwait: The Bidun's review cards](#)' (Page 4), 24 August 2020

⁶⁸ USSD, '[2022 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 2G), 20 March 2023

⁶⁹ USSD, '[2022 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 2G), 20 March 2023

⁷⁰ FCDO, '[Bidoon briefing paper](#)' (Paragraph 6), October 2023

10.3 Revocation of (and difficulties faced when attempting to obtain) citizenship.

10.3.1 The MRG profile on Bidoons stated:

‘Many Bidoon opted to purchase fake foreign passports from offices that sprung up all over the country in the 1990s [in order to regularize their status and qualify for legal work permits], a process that appears to have taken place with the knowledge and even the encouragement of the Kuwaiti government. Many found that their possession of a foreign passport, even an illegitimate one, was later used to undermine their claims for Kuwaiti nationality.’⁷¹

10.3.2 Dr Susan Kennedy Nour Al Deen’s Doctoral thesis from 2016, stated the following regarding a Bidoon interviewee who had been granted citizenship:

‘In the case of the interviewee granted citizenship, his whole family unit was subjected to exploitative treatment during the administrative processes required to change his identity from “non-Kuwaiti” to “Kuwaiti”. The process took many years to complete and involved the isolation and interrogation of different sections of the family. The strategy of intimidation appeared to be deployed in an attempt to coerce the family into giving up on the process before each member had their citizenship grant finalised.’⁷²

10.3.3 The same source additionally that ‘Another part of the [the Central System] program was developed within the Ministry of Defence, which involved thousands of Bedoun servicemen, who were forced to sign affidavits claiming they were nationals of other countries. They had previously held Kuwaiti national passports, issued to them because they performed their military roles in Kuwait and overseas.’⁷³

CPIT could not find any information on Bidoon members of the armed services having held Kuwaiti passports within the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)), it can be presumed the author is referring to [Article 17 travel documents](#).

10.3.4 The European Network on Statelessness (ENS) and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (INS) published a paper in May 2019 citing various sources⁷⁴ which stated:

‘The grounds on which an individual may be deprived of Kuwaiti nationality differ between those who are naturalised citizens (Article 13) and those who are citizens by birth (Article 14). They include grounds relating to fraud, loyalty and other forms of behaviour, including some broadly formulated powers such as where a person “disseminated opinions which may tend seriously to undermine the economic or social structure of the state”.

‘... Since 2011 there has been increased denationalisation in Kuwait, because of a crackdown on dissent after the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ which led to increased protest. There are no comprehensive figures on how many people have been stripped of their nationality, but the number is believed to

⁷¹ MRG, ‘[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon](#)’, no date

⁷² Dr Susan Kennedy Nour Al Deen, ‘[The Stateless Bedoun in Kuwait...](#)’ (Page 127), October 2016

⁷³ Dr Susan Kennedy Nour al Deen, ‘[The Stateless Bedoun in Kuwait...](#)’ (Page 188), October 2016

⁷⁴ ENS & INS, ‘[Statelessness in Kuwait; Country Position Paper](#)’ (Page 12-13), May 2019

be in the hundreds. The US State Department reported that: “A Council of Ministers committee created in 2017 to review citizenship revocations since 1991, received 200 appeals and sent their recommendations for 70 of those to the Council of Ministers. Seven families had their citizenship restored, while the other 63 were rejected”. It has been reported that Kuwaiti children have had their nationality revoked as a consequence of their parents having their nationality revoked.’⁷⁵

10.3.5 Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI), a social change non-profit foundation⁷⁶ in their 2022 Country report for Kuwait, published 23 February 2022 stated that ‘As a consequence of growing social contestation following the Arab upheavals in 2011, the government has frequently stripped critics of their citizenship. This form of repression – meant to silence dissidents – peaked in 2014 but has decreased since then.’⁷⁷ [see [Bidoon protests and treatment of activists](#)]

10.3.6 A previous iteration of the USSD report for 2022, published March 2023, said ‘By law the government is prohibited from revoking the citizenship of those born a citizen unless an individual takes a second nationality. The government can revoke the citizenship of naturalized citizens for cause and can subsequently deport them. Justifications for such revocations include felony conviction for “honor-related and honesty-related crimes,” obtaining citizenship dishonestly, and threatening to “undermine the economic or social structure of the country.”

‘... On occasion the government revokes citizenship. The Supreme Committee for the Verification of Kuwaiti Citizenship reported that as of October, it had naturalized 12 persons and revoked the citizenship of six citizens. If a person loses citizenship, all family members whose status was derived from that person also lose their citizenship and all associated rights. Absent holding another nationality, those impacted would become stateless. Authorities can seize the passports and civil identification cards of persons who lose their citizenship and enter a “block” on their names in government databases. This “block” prevents former citizens from traveling with Kuwaiti passports, accessing free health care, or using other government services reserved for citizens... The government may deny a citizenship application based on security or criminal violations committed by the individual’s family members.’⁷⁸

10.3.7 The USSD report for 2023, published April 2024 stated:

‘Bidoon leaders alleged that when some members of the Bidoon community attempted to obtain government services from the Central Agency, officials required Bidoon individuals to sign a blank piece of paper to receive the necessary paperwork. Later, Bidoon activists reported the agency would write a letter on the signed paper purportedly stating they held another nationality.

‘The Central Agency operated an electronic renewal service for security cards on its website, as well as online services including health insurance,

⁷⁵ ENS & INS, ‘[Statelessness in Kuwait; Country Position Paper](#)’ (Page 5-6), May 2019

⁷⁶ BTI, ‘[About us](#)’, no date

⁷⁷ BTI, ‘[2022 Country Report: Kuwait](#)’, (Page 8), 23 February 2022

⁷⁸ USSD, ‘[2022 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’ (Section 2D), 20 March 2023

marriage, divorce, and inheritance certificates. Bidoon reported that while they were able to obtain an electronic security card, the Central Agency still required them to sign a blank paper prior to receiving the card.⁷⁹

10.3.8 In March 2024, Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen stated:

‘Security restrictions may include participating in unauthorized demonstrations or criticizing the government on social media, as well as using fake passports to acquire five-year resident visas to work in Kuwait. Another common reason for rejection is the suspicion that the Bidoon has a foreign nationality; here, too, there are reports that individual applicants may be affected by family members who have acquired (voluntarily or otherwise) another nationality, and themselves be deemed to be foreign. It is not clear how many applications are approved or denied or that any such data is made public and/or accessible.

‘... If Bidoons accept another nationality and present a passport from another state, they can usually obtain a five-year residence visa to work in Kuwait, but a problem many face is that the passports they obtain are fake and non-renewable, which makes it difficult (if not impossible) to renew the visas.’⁸⁰

10.3.9 In April 2024, following a request for information by CPIT regarding Bidoons, Dr Claire Beaugrand stated:

‘I never came across a Bidoon being deported recently. I documented the case of Ahmed al Muhri in 1979 whose father was de-naturalised and as a consequence the 19 members of the family deported to Iran but this has not happened in the case of the 2014 denaturalisations (later reversed).

‘My understanding is that the foreign nationalities written on the cards of the Bidoons are not recognised by the other state of which the Bidoon is said to be a national.’⁸¹

10.3.10 In April 2024, the FCDO, when asked how likely it is that a Bidoon renewing a review card would be pressured into accepting a nationality other than Kuwaiti, stated that: ‘Review cards are essentially doing that by default. The review card states clearly the holder is non-Kuwaiti, either undefined or named other nationality (but not officially recognised by the ‘home country’).’⁸²

[Back to Contents](#)

10.4 Appealing denied Kuwaiti citizenship.

10.4.1 The USSD report covering events in 2022 stated ‘The Court of Cassation has ruled that decisions issued by the Central Agency for Illegal Residents fall under the jurisdiction of the judiciary and as a result, are challengeable in the courts, excluding those related to citizenship status.’⁸³

10.4.2 Amnesty International’s (AI) report entitled “‘I don’t have a future’’: Stateless

⁷⁹ USSD, ‘[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

⁸⁰ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, March 2024 - available upon request

⁸¹ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

⁸² FCDO, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

⁸³ USSD, ‘[2022 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 2G), 20 March 2023

Kuwaitis and the right to education’ from 17 August 2023 stated ‘In April 2022, Kuwait’s Court of Cassation ruled that courts may not consider questions of nationality at all, as these are solely the province of the executive branch. With this decision, Bidun residents have been decisively blocked from seeking to redress their statelessness and acquire Kuwaiti nationality through the judicial system, just as they have been blocked by executive policy for decades’⁸⁴

10.4.3 The October 2023 FCDO briefing paper on Bidoons ([Annex A](#)) stated that ‘In April 2022, the Court of Cassation – Kuwait’s highest judicial non-constitutional authority – ruled that all matters of nationality fall exclusively under executive jurisdiction, leaving no alternative pathway to naturalisation.’⁸⁵

10.4.4 The USSD report covering events in 2023, published in April 2024 stated that ‘The law did not provide stateless persons, including Bidoon, a clear path to acquire citizenship. The law did not give the judicial system authority to rule on the status of Bidoon, leaving Bidoon with no avenue to present evidence and plead their case for citizenship.’⁸⁶

10.4.5 In April 2024, Dr Claire Beaugrand stated ‘My understanding is that Bidoons, as illegal residents, have an extremely limited access to the judiciary. Because of their vulnerable situation they would need to be backed by powerful Kuwaiti nationals. This is certainly the case when they appeal against decisions that regard them.’

‘...My experience is that holders of files for naturalisation (for instance children of widowed or divorced Kuwaiti women, legally eligible to nationality) wait for years until the Supreme Committee and Cabinet approve their demand. The absolute sovereignty of the executive in nationality matters is particularly applicable with respect to the *Bidoons*’ claim to nationality⁸⁷

[Back to Contents](#)

11. Documentation

11.1 Review card

11.1.1 Although commonly referred to as ‘security card’, the Kuwaiti government refers to these documents as ‘review cards’. The sources referenced in this section present conflicting accounts regarding review cards. Discrepancies include the colours of these cards, what each colour card means or entitles the holder to and their validity periods. However, among these sources, yellow emerges as the most frequently cited colour for these cards.

11.1.2 In an undated response to a letter from HRW in May 2011 the Kuwaiti Government stated:

‘Firstly, the term used in your report - “security card” - is not accurate. The proper official term is “review card.” Under Decree 482/1996, amended by Decree 49/2010, a card is issued to every person over the age of five who has a file with the Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents’ Status. The

⁸⁴ AI, ‘[...Stateless Kuwaitis and the right to education](#)’ (Page 5), 17 August 2023

⁸⁵ FCDO, ‘[Bidoon briefing paper](#)’ (Paragraph 9), October 2023

⁸⁶ USSD, ‘[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

⁸⁷ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

review card contains a personal photo, place of residence, civil number, file number, date of birth, date of its issuance, and an expiration date. There are two types:

'The first type: Its duration is two years and it is issued to those registered in the 1965 census or those who have proof of long-term residence in the country from that year or prior to it.

'The second type: Its duration is one year and is issued to the remaining groups who are not registered in the 1965 census and do not have proof of long-term residence from that year or prior to it.'⁸⁸

CPIT could not find further current information on the two types of review card and this source may be referring to the old form of review card issued pre- 2012

11.1.3 In June 2017, Lifos, the Swedish Migration Agency's institution for legal and country of origin information, published an article entitled "'Bidooner" I Kuwait'. The report contained an interview with the Regional Immigration Liaison Manager at the British Embassy in Doha, Qatar on the 26 April 2017 who stated the following regarding different types of review card (the information below has been translated from Swedish using Google translate. As such, 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed - translation available upon request):

'1. Yellow card (with yellow strip at the top) - issued to the majority of the Bidoons.

'2. Blue card - issued to people where the central system was located documentation indicating that they basically have a different nationality, for example Iraqi, Iranian, Saudi or Syrian (usually referring to found documentation regarding ancestors). This category are said to be able to legalize their status if they apply for documents at basis of the nationality that emerged. The validity period is six months, and can be extended for another six months in the meantime the nationality is processed and possibly determined. To encourage this procedure provides the person in question with certain benefits and the possibility of "sponsoring" oneself for a five-year residence permit. Blue cards are also issued to children of a Kuwaiti mother.

'3. Green card - issued (theoretically) to persons covered by 1965 year's census and whose dossier was ready for decision on Kuwaiti citizenship. Reportedly, these cards never have issued.

'4. Red card – issued (theoretically) to people appearing in criminal record or with security restrictions. Reportedly have nor were these cards issued.'⁸⁹

CPIT has been unable to find any further information on blue review cards in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

11.1.4 The OFPRA paper stated (the information below has been translated from French using Google translate. As such, 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed - translation available upon request)

'[E]ach person who registers with the agency responsible for resolving the

⁸⁸ Kuwait Government via HRW, '[...Response to its Questions and Inquiries](#)', (Page 7), no date

⁸⁹ Lifos, '["Bidooner" I Kuwait](#)', (Page 11-12), 27 June 2017

status of illegal residents is assigned an identification card (in English, “review card”). These cards are colour coded. A green card means that its holder is eligible for naturalization. A yellow card means that its holder can obtain regularisation under another nationality that he holds or for which he is eligible. A red identification card means that its holder is excluded from the naturalization process because of his criminal record or because he does not have proof of his residence in Kuwait before 1980.

‘According to statistical information collected by Claire Beaugrand with the agency in charge of resolving the status of illegal residents [in 2018], among the 105,702 files identified, 34,000 [32%] people were designated eligible to obtain a nationality, 900 [0.8%] people were excluded from the naturalization process in because of their criminal record and 8,000 [7.5%] because they do not have proof of residence in Kuwait before 1980. The rest of the applicants (around 62,800 [59%] files) are not, according to the agency, stateless, but in reality holders or eligible for a nationality other than Kuwaiti nationality. They are therefore invited to regularize their situation on the basis of their other nationality.’⁹⁰

- 11.1.5 However, there is conflicting information on the renewal period of review cards and Landinfo query response from 24 August 2020 stated that: ‘A well-informed source informs to have seen yellow cards valid for one year in 2014 and has never seen green cards issued after 2011...In the opinion of the well-informed source, the colour-coded card system no longer seems relevant. Most cards issued now are reportedly yellow, showing that the holder is asked to regularise his/her basis for residence...’⁹¹
- 11.1.6 The following is an image from Claire Beaugrand’s paper ‘The Absurd Injunction to Not Belong and the Bidūn in Kuwait’ from December 2020 translated using google translate.



- 11.1.7 Dr Susan Kennedy Nour Al Deen’s Doctoral thesis from 2016, included the following image (front and back) of the old form of review card (pre-2012):

⁹⁰ OFPRA, ‘[Les Bidoun](#)’, (Page 10), 6 September 2019

⁹¹ Landinfo, ‘[Kuwait: The Bidoun’s review cards](#)’ (Page 4), 24 August 2020

⁹² Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘[The Absurd Injunction to Not Belong and the Bidūn...](#)’, 23 December 2020



93

11.1.8 Roswitha Badry from the University of Freiburg Germany⁹⁴ in her article 'When the Subalterns find their Voice - The Example of Kuwait's Bidun' from 2021 noted:

'The introduction of colour-coded "reference (review) cards"... in 2012 presented a new stigmatizing and discriminating effort and was accompanied by a governmental framing of Bidun as enemies of the state, playing the card of sectarianization and securitization. The coloured cards reflect the holders' legal status and are not valid as identity cards, but essential for getting access to basic services; they are often referred to as "security cards" because the holders' legal status is fluid. These cards do not cover unregistered Bidun (about 12,000 persons, or circa 10%, according to official sources).'⁹⁵

It is not clear what official sources Roswitha Badry refers to that references this statistic.

11.1.9 The same source stated:

'... The majority of Bidun have a yellow card, which means their status is "under review". The holders of a green card (34,000 persons according to official data) are said to have the best chances to be naturalized, while those with the red card have none, either due to the lack of the required documents or a criminal record. Since the Bidun protests started, the

⁹³ Dr Susan Kennedy Nour al Deen, '[The Stateless Bedoun...volume II](#)', (page 81) October 2016

⁹⁴ Prof. Roswitha Badry, '[Islamic studies- University of Freiburg](#)', no date

⁹⁵ Prof. Roswitha Badry, '[When the Subalterns find their Voice...](#)', (Page 102), 2021

number of Bidun individuals with “security blocks” against them has greatly increased.’⁹⁶

11.1.10 The Diplomatic Service of the European Union (EEAS) in their EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2022 Country updates, published 31 July 2023 stated:

‘The stateless “Bidoons” continued to face significant challenges in securing identification documents (“security card”), indispensable to access basic services in healthcare and education. The “Central Agency for the Remedy of the Situation of Illegal Residents” was often accused by “Bidoon” activists of forcing them to claim a third nationality, without actual connection to the country, in order to issue/renew security cards.’⁹⁷ (see [Revocation of \(and difficulties faced when attempting to obtain\) citizenship](#))

11.1.11 AI’s 2023 report stated:

‘The Civil Identity card bearing the Civil Identity Number is a primary form of identification in Kuwait and, unless a special exception is made, is required by law for government transactions, bank services, employment, school and university registration and membership in organizations.

‘... The Review Card can be obtained by those who have the finalized Ministry of Health birth certificate and Civil Identity Number, but not by those who have only the simple hospital report of the birth.

‘... The frequent changes in the kinds of documentation required of Bidun and to government rules affecting their access to education and other public services, create significant socio-economic instability and hardship for Bidun people in Kuwait.

‘... The existence of so many different kinds of identity document, statuses and categories, subject to frequent change, and the lack of transparency about entitlements to state services, the rules of which also change frequently, creates uncertainty and socio-economic anxiety in the Bidun community. “Lack of stability” is the greatest challenge of being stateless.’⁹⁸

11.1.12 The same source additionally stated:

‘Bidun persons have their legal existence registered at different levels of formality and official recognition, which vary according to personal and family circumstances. The requirements for Bidun people to have the highest level of personal legal documentation are that:

- their parents were regarded as legally present “illegal residents” at the time of their birth;
- they have applied for the Central System Review Card and renewed it every time it expired (the periods vary – Amnesty International has seen cards with both a six-month and a one-year validity); and
- they have a finalized birth certificate issued by the Ministry of Health, a Civil Identity Number and a currently valid Review Card (without any

⁹⁶ Prof. Roswitha Badry, ‘[When the Subalterns find their Voice...](#)’, (Page 102), 2021

⁹⁷ EEAS, ‘[EU... Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2022...](#)’, (Page 183), 31 July 2023

⁹⁸ AI, ‘[... Stateless Kuwaitis and the right to education](#)’ (Page 5,15-16), 17 August 2023

recorded “reservations” or assigned nationality).

‘Certain classes of Bidun are granted exceptional higher privileges than the Bidun population at large. These are primarily Bidun children whose mothers are Kuwaiti nationals, and Bidun families with fathers or grandfathers who served or are serving in the military or police (without having been dismissed, as many were, at the end of the 1990–1991 Gulf War).

‘The level below, in terms of identity documentation and entitlements, comprises Bidun who obtained a Central System Review Card at some point after 2010, but whose card has expired either because the person refused to sign for receipt of a card that includes Central System-imposed changes to their nationality status, or because they are afraid the Central System will make such changes if they renew their card and so do not apply. The Central System card (when currently valid), like previous kinds of identity documents issued by other agencies before 2010, also grants the bearer status as legally present in the country, despite the government’s overall labelling of the Bidun population as “illegal residents”.

‘The next level below includes those who have never held a Review Card, either because they never registered with the Central System or because they are children born to parents with expired Review Cards. At a lower level, a Bidun person may only have a report of their birth from the hospital in Kuwait where they were born.’⁹⁹

11.1.13 In March 2024, Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen stated:

‘A Kuwaiti birth certificate and Civil Identity Number is required to obtain a review card - a hospital report of birth is not by itself sufficient.’

‘There have been reports in the past of a colour code system, but it is not clear whether this in fact was instituted (a decade ago), still less maintained. There are conflicting accounts of whether the colour coding was related to the length of validity of the card (green for 5 years, yellow for 3 years, red for 1 year) or to status and eligibility (green for eligible for naturalisation, yellow for requests to regularise status, and red for disqualification from eligibility for naturalization based on having a criminal record). It appears that whereas the cards were green in colour until 2012, they are now yellow.’¹⁰⁰

11.1.14 In April 2024, Dr Claire Beaugrand stated:

‘In 2011, when the Kuwait authorities announced 11 facilities, they announced a scheme where there will be three different types of cards with a colour code (red/yellow/green). Yet until now, I have only seen “yellow” cards. The cards have a yellow band at its top with the logo of the Central System on the left, that of the state of Kuwait on the right and the words in Arabic “the Central System for the Remedy of the Situations of the Illegal Residents” in the middle. Overleaf, on the yellow band is the “civil number” and the mention: this card is not considered an ID and [should be] used only for its intended purpose. I have seen this mentioned at the bottom of cards as well.’¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ AI, ‘[... Stateless Kuwaitis and the right to education](#)’ (Page 15), 17 August 2023

¹⁰⁰ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, March 2024 - available upon request

¹⁰¹ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

11.1.15 In April 2024, the USCIS stated:

‘The color code system for Bidoon Review cards started in 2012. The Review Card colors are as follows:

- Red: For applicants who must settle their status within a year of issuing the card; issued for those within the 1980 census or later. Holders of this card are eligible for only two government services: Public education and healthcare.
- Green: For those whose status may be prioritized for review of citizenship eligibility. The card is valid for 5 years. The individuals must prove they were part of the 1965 census.
- Yellow of 2012: For individuals permitted legal residency for up to 3 years. For individuals who can show they were present between the years 1966 to 1979. They are excluded from citizenship consideration.
- Yellow of 2015: Valid for only 3 months and is issued for those who have criminal records or security concerns, or to those who can only prove their presence in Kuwait from 1980 to 1985.
- Blue: For those who settled their status and have forged passports. This card is also called “Service Card”.¹⁰²

CPIT has been unable to find information on blue ‘service’ cards or information on holders of red cards being eligible for public education and healthcare in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))

11.1.16 In April 2024, the FCDO stated: ‘Officially review cards can be issued for individuals from the age of 5, and last for 5 years. But anecdotal evidence shows this varies, 1-2 years is becoming standard.’¹⁰³

[Back to Contents](#)

11.2 Renewal of review cards

11.2.1 The August 2020 Landinfo query response stated: ‘In general... the system is less straightforward than it might seem. The card needs to be renewed frequently, having been issued with an increasingly shorter validity length in recent years. While they were previously valid for one or two years, they are now valid for either three months, six months or a maximum of twelve months. A well-informed source told Landinfo that more and more frequently, the cards are only valid for three months.’¹⁰⁴

11.2.2 The same Landinfo response stated:

‘Precisely how often and on under what conditions Biduns must renew their card, depends on the circumstances of the case. For many, however, the process is arbitrary, non-transparent and difficult. Biduns with “security restrictions” will probably not be able to renew their cards. This may apply to their family members as well. Also, Biduns suspected of having a foreign nationality may face severe difficulties renewing their cards.

¹⁰² USCIS, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 – available upon request

¹⁰³ FCDO, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁰⁴ Landinfo, [‘Kuwait: The Bidun’s review cards’](#), (Page 5), 24 August 2020

‘... Sources report that the Central System uses dubious methods to get as many Biduns as possible to declare their “true nationality” and renounce their claim on Kuwaiti citizenship. This occurs when Biduns are trying to renew their review cards or obtain other necessary permits to access public services. The practice includes various forms of administrative hurdles and means of pressure, such as:

- Repeated postponements of permissions to access services and requests for additional documentation.
- Shortening the validity of the review cards (down to three months), requesting the holder to “regularise his/her basis of residence”.
- Pressure to sign various types of documents in exchange for a renewed card or other services. This includes declarations renouncing their claim to citizenship, confirmations of information not revealed to them, and signing blank pieces of paper. Subsequently, the Biduns’ signatures could be used as a confession of having another nationality.
- Arbitrary and unjustified attribution of presumed nationality, which then appears both on the renewed review card and in the database records system. A well-informed source says this practice is becoming increasingly current and irrational. It could be based on irrelevant information, such as having an uncle who is a citizen of a neighbouring country.

‘... As a consequence of this practice, some registered Biduns will not have valid review cards. Landinfo has been informed that many Biduns resist the kind of pressure describe [sic] above, and thus may be unable to renew their cards. A well-informed source adds that the increasing practice of attributing another nationality and noting it on the cards, causes some Bidun to refrain from trying to renew them. For others, it may be cumbersome bureaucratic processes that prevent renewal.’¹⁰⁵

11.2.3 The Times Kuwait, a weekly English language newspaper in Kuwait¹⁰⁶, reported in their July 2023 article ‘CARIRS issues 32,767 new review cards for Bidoons’ stated that:

“The Central Agency for Resolving Illegal Residents’ Status has issued 32,767 new review cards for undocumented residents during the first half of 2023, Al-Jarida newspaper reported. Tariq Al-Baijan, director of card management at the agency, stated that the cards were issued from January to June 2023.

‘He explained that the agency has successfully launched an electronic service for renewing review cards since November 2022. According to the report, the website has seen a growing number of users, and the process of renewing cards electronically takes 4 to 5 days at most, which is done to facilitate the process for reviewers.

‘In addition, [Tariq] Al-Baijan [director of card management at the Central Agency] said that the electronic card renewal service was launched to

¹⁰⁵ Landinfo, ‘[Kuwait: The Bidun’s review cards](#)’, (Page 5-6), 24 August 2020

¹⁰⁶ The Times Kuwait, ‘[About us](#)’, no date

facilitate the transactions of undocumented residents and speed up the issuance of documents. He also urged those wishing to renew their cards or issue certificates and documents electronically to visit the agency's website...¹⁰⁷

It should be noted that whilst the Times Kuwait quotes 32,767 new review cards, it can be assumed that a large portion of this would be for the children of Bidoons who also require documentation. CPIT has been unable to find information to certify this assumption as demographic data is not available.

11.2.4 CPIT was unable to find any more up to date information on the numbers of review cards issued by the CARIRS in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

11.2.5 When asked about the length of the renewal process for review cards the FCDO stated: '[There is] No set timeline by CARIRS. Anecdotal evidence indicates case by case basis and can be used to pressure, punish individuals.'¹⁰⁸

11.2.6 In March 2024, Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen stated:

'The process of renewing a review card is described as arbitrary, difficult, and non-transparent.

'... Permission to access government services or request official documents (such as birth certificates) is often haphazard, cumbersome, and a lengthy process that can last for more than a year.

'... I am not aware of any significant change in the process of obtaining or renewing a review card in the past two years, save that it appears that the length of validity of the cards may be getting shorter (often for less than a year). Anecdotal reports suggest that officials at the Central System place pressure on applicants to disclose an alternate (or "reveal") an alternate nationality, such as Iraq, Saudi, Jordanian, or Iranian, and that pressure has also been applied on Bidoon members of the military to obtain cards which assign them another nationality on the threat of suspending bank accounts and withdrawing driver's licenses if these "new" cards are not accepted by Bidoon.

'... The card must be reviewed annually although there is some evidence that it may be valid for shorter timeframes of three and/or six months.

'...The electronic service for renewing review cards appears to have been in operation since November 2022 and that the process of renewing cards electronically takes 4-5 days.'¹⁰⁹

11.2.7 In April 2024, Dr Claire Beaugrand stated:

'My understanding is that the Bidoons are required to go to the office of the Central System in Ardiyya to submit their applications/files as well as to collect their card from there when ready.

'...The cards I have seen were valid for one year. I came across one card

¹⁰⁷ The Times Kuwait, '[CARIRS issues 32,767 new review cards for Bidoons](#)', 14 July 2023

¹⁰⁸ FCDO, 'Response to CPIT questions', April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁰⁹ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, 'Response to CPIT questions', March 2024 - available upon request

that was valid for a duration of 3 months.

'...[T]he practice of "wasta" [the use of connections and influence to garner favors'¹¹⁰] is widespread in Kuwait for administrative procedures and is not limited to Bidoons while the latter might be more vulnerable to a practice that basically circumvents the rules or the rule of law and make decisions more discretionary.

'Upon collection, Bidoons' cards may be filled with a presumed foreign nationality - attributed on the basis of undisclosed research made by the Central System. Some Bidoons contest this nationality and as a consequence may have trouble renewing their ID.'¹¹¹

11.2.8 In an April 2024 response to CPITs information request to the IGC, the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) stated:

'The Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) has no updated information indicating changes in the processes concerning issuances of Review Cards in the past two years. However, sources the SMA spoke to during a fact-finding mission to Kuwait in February 2023, maintained that the Central System (CS) in charge of the Bidoons (al-Jihaz al-markazi) has not conducted any new registrations of previously unregistered [Bidoons] since 2010. Those who have since tried to register have received so called insurance cards.

'...[T]hose who actually did approach the Jihaz al-Markasi since then, allegedly did in fact (at least in some cases) receive some sort of "insurance card", according to our sources in Kuwait, meaning that they would in fact be registered in the system in some way and thus might get access to some basic services.'¹¹²

11.2.9 The SMA may be referring to health insurance cards for Bidoons without valid ID to access health care¹¹³, issued by Zakat House (a Kuwaiti Islamic Charity¹¹⁴), however CPIT has been unable to find any further information on whether these are still being issued in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

11.2.10 The April 2024 USCIS response stated:

'No information was found on whether the process officially changed in the past two years. Similarly [sic], we found no pertinent [sic] new laws or regulations. However, since November 2022, the Kuwaiti government announced that Bidoon Review Cards may be renewed online for the first time.

'...The Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents, the administrative body in charge of Bidun affairs, has been issuing temporary ID cards that often state the cardholder possesses Iraqi, Saudi, Iranian, or other citizenship. It is unclear how the agency determined this, and no due process procedures appear to be available for Bidun to challenge the

¹¹⁰ Carnegie Middle East Center, '[Another Invasion of Kuwait](#)', 11 August 2020

¹¹¹ Dr Claire Beaugrand, 'Response to CPIT questions', April 2024 - available upon request

¹¹² SMA, 'IGC - Response to CPIT questions', April 2024 - available upon request

¹¹³ Gulf News, '[Kuwait takes new steps to address bidoon issue](#)', 23 March 2011

¹¹⁴ Zakat House, '[About us](#)', no date

determinations.¹¹⁵

11.2.11 The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services reported in the Inter-Governmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC)¹¹⁶ request for information (available upon request), initiated by CPIT in April 2024 that:

‘The Kuwaiti government has increased its scrutiny of Bidun applications for government services. In August 2022, The Kuwaiti Council of Ministers instructed all government departments to deny all Bidun applications without a valid Review Card.¹¹⁷ While the government reversed its treatment of Bidun children with expired Review Cards (see above), it is unclear whether the prohibitions against using expired cards remain in effect in procuring other government services.’¹¹⁸

11.2.12 In April 2024 when asked the reasons for an individual’s application to obtain/renew a review card being rejected, the FCDO stated ‘Reasons vary, mostly around “security concerns”, criminal record or “strong evidence” of other nationality.’¹¹⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

11.3 Driving licenses, birth, marriage, and death certificates

11.3.1 The August 2020 LandInfo query response stated:

‘... Group29, a Kuwaiti human rights organisation, reported on this topic in 2012. Apparently, obtaining birth certificates for children over the age of six, was particularly cumbersome. Group29 describes a very bureaucratic process of 23 steps, taking at least 15 months, where the parents must prove that the child is theirs. The case is processed by departments for genealogy and forensic evidence before a court decides on the matter. The court decision must then be approved by the Central System before a birth certificate can be issued.

‘... In principle, children of registered Biduns are supposed to get registered. From the age of five, they are entitled to have their own review card. However, Landinfo has no information indicating that this occurs automatically.

‘... In order to get civil documents for their children, parents must have valid review cards. As mentioned above, this is not necessarily the case for all registered Biduns. Even those who have valid cards may be put under pressure to resolve their status before getting access to documents and services that they are entitled to.’¹²⁰

11.3.2 In a joint July 2020 submission to the UN Committee for Rights of the Child, Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, Rights Realisation Centre, MENA Rights Group, Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI) stated:

¹¹⁵ USCIS, ‘IGC - Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹¹⁶ IOM, ‘[IGC](#)’, no date

¹¹⁷ Al-Qabas News, ‘...[Bidun Transactions ...](#)’, translated by the U.S, 31 August 2022

¹¹⁸ US Citizenship and Immigration service GC RFI available upon request April 2024

¹¹⁹ FCDO, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹²⁰ Landinfo, ‘[Kuwait: The Bidun’s review cards](#)’, (Page 7), 24 August 2020

‘According to the Ministry of Interior, Bidoon parents have to provide an official document from the Central System for the Remedy of Situations of “Illegal Residents” (Central System), before receiving birth certificates for new-born children. This process requires the parents to confirm that whatever information stipulated in their new IDs is true, in order to obtain the necessary papers to secure birth registration for their children. They are often not afforded the opportunity to read and validate this information. Therefore, many Bidoon parents have no choice but to affirm that information put forward by the Central System – claiming they are nationals of another State – is true.

‘... If they refuse to be coerced by the system, then they are inevitably depriving their child of the rights that flow from legal recognition.’¹²¹

11.3.3 A previous iteration of the USSD Human Rights report for Kuwait, covering events in 2022, published in March 2023 stated (not included in the latest (2023) report): ‘Bidoon parents, and in a few cases citizen women married to Bidoon or foreigners, were sometimes unable to obtain birth certificates for their children even after completing extensive administrative procedures. Lack of a birth certificate prevented Bidoon children from obtaining security cards and accessing public services such as education and health care.’¹²²

11.3.4 AI’s 2023 report stated:

‘When there are births in Bidun families that do not have legal residence status, the hospital issues a simple report of the birth, of which the family receives a carbon copy, but they will not be able to obtain a fully finalized birth certificate from the Ministry of Health. Only the Ministry of Health is authorized to report birth data to the Public Authority for Civil Information, which in turn is the only government agency authorized to issue a Civil Identity Number.’¹²³

11.3.5 In March 2024, Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen stated: ‘A birth certificate is needed to obtain a Civil Identity Number which is essential to receive public services in Kuwait, including accessing the public healthcare system, opening a bank account, purchasing real estate or cars, and enrolling in schools and universities.’¹²⁴

11.3.6 In April 2024, Dr Claire Beaugrand stated: ‘On the driving licenses, I saw the mention “non-Kuwaiti” to fill the nationality line on driving licenses and birth certificates. This expression “non-Kuwaiti” is widespread on administrative documents until the authorities in charge of Bidoons started to attribute other presumed nationalities to fill this line.’¹²⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

11.4 Article 17 travel documents

11.4.1 The USSD stated in a previous iteration of its Country Report covering events in 2019, published in March 2020 (information not included in the latest 2023 report) stated that:

¹²¹ SHDR, RRC, MENA, GCENR, ISI, ‘[Joint submission to the UNCRC](#)’, (Page 5), July 2020

¹²² USSD, ‘[2022 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 6), 20 March 2023

¹²³ AI, ‘[...Stateless Kuwaitis and the right to education](#)’ (Page 15), 17 August 2023

¹²⁴ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, March 2024 - available upon request

¹²⁵ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

‘The Ministry of Interior has not issued “Article 17” passports (temporary travel documents that do not confer nationality) to Bidoon except on humanitarian grounds since 2014. In August [2019] the Ministry of Interior said it would indefinitely suspend the issuance of “Article 17” passports.’¹²⁶

‘In November [2020] the Ministry of Defense announced that it was requiring all Bidoon military personnel to turn in their passports by the end of the month. Those who wish to reapply for a passport would need to provide a justification for travel, identity documentation, and pass a medical exam. Press reports estimated the number of Bidoon residents in the military to be 3,500.’¹²⁷

11.4.2 The October 2023 FCDO briefing paper on Bidoons ([Annex A](#)) stated:

‘Travel documents are tied to identification cards and are therefore not routinely issued to Bidoon, stranding them in Kuwait. However, some Bidoon have been given temporary travel documents under Article 17 of the Kuwaiti Nationality Law, which allows the issuance of a Kuwaiti travel document to any person deemed to require one - those working in the public sector and traveling abroad on official business etc.

‘... According to the Department of Nationality and Travel Documents (DNTD), Article 17 documents may also be issued to the Bidoon for medical treatment outside of Kuwait; for study overseas; Hajj; or for amendment of a Bidoon’s legal status in Kuwait, as they do not confer nationality onto the holder.

‘... As of July 2023, the issuance of these passports is due to resume but limited to specific cases (children of Kuwaiti mothers, overseas students, armed forces etc.). The DNTD confirmed that this will not be extended to any Bidoon that does not fit these criteria.’¹²⁸

11.4.3 In July 2024 FCDO provided an update on the issuance of Article 17 passports via email (see [Annex C](#)). It stated:

‘On 11 July, the Interior Minister (and First DPM), Sheikh Fahad al Yousef al Sabah instructed that all temporary travel documents provided to Bidoon according to Article 17 of the citizenship law (‘Bidoon passports’) are now null and void. All humanitarian cases (students / patients) requiring overseas travel should report to the Ministry of Interior office in Adan (near the airport). Official reason given: ‘To allow further deliberations by relevant authorities.’ An exemption was granted on July 25 to the voiding Article 17 passports for Bidoon athletes, allowing them to travel overseas.’¹²⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

12. Access to services and basic rights

12.1 General overview of access to services and basic rights

12.1.1 In an undated response to a May 2011 letter from HRW, the Kuwait government (KG) stated (in a translation commissioned by HRW):

¹²⁶ USSD, [‘2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Kuwait’](#) (Section 2D), 11 March 2020

¹²⁷ USSD, [‘2020 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait’](#), (Exec summary) 30 March 2021

¹²⁸ FCDO, [‘Bidoon briefing paper’](#) (Paragraphs 13, 14), October 2023

¹²⁹ FCDO, [Annex C](#), 30 July 2024

'Royal Decree 467/2010, issued on November 9, 2010, created the Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents' Status, which granted civil, social, and humanitarian rights to illegal residents registered with the Central System within the framework of previous Cabinet and other decrees on aid, services, and benefits offered to this class, which include the following:

- (i) Free treatment for illegal residents through the Charitable Fund for Health Care for Needy Residents of Kuwait.
- (ii) Free education for the children of illegal residents through the Charitable Fund for the Education of Needy Children in Kuwait.
- (iii) The issuance of birth certificates for the children of illegal residents that includes the term "non-Kuwaiti" in the slot for citizenship.
- (iv) The issuance of death certificates for illegal residents that includes the term "non-Kuwaiti" in the slot for citizenship.
- (v) The issuance of marriage contracts for illegal residents that includes the term "non-Kuwaiti" in the slot for citizenship.
- (vi) The issuance of divorce certificates for illegal residents that includes the term "non-Kuwaiti" in the slot for citizenship.
- (vii) The issuance of driver's licenses that includes the term "non-Kuwaiti" in the slot for citizenship.
- (viii) Disabled illegal residents have access to the services offered by the Supreme Council for the Disabled in accordance with existing conditions.
- (ix) Eligibility to obtain all types of authorizations from the Department of Authentication.
- (x) Enabling the employment of illegal residents in the government and private sectors according to the need for work.
- (xi) The granting of provision cards to eligible illegal residents.¹³⁰

12.1.2 The August 2020 LandInfo query response stated:

'Security restrictions have been imposed [on Bidoons] for a number of reasons, and it is difficult to form a clear picture of the motives behind [them]. Sources say the system appears to be arbitrary. Initially, security restrictions were imposed on Biduns who had joined Saddam Hussein's Popular Army during the Iraqi invasion in 1990. Security restrictions may also be imposed on families who have acquired fake foreign passports to get five-year work visas. Upon expiration of these passports, the families are not able to restore their former status as registered Biduns and fall into the category of unregistered Biduns.'¹³¹

12.1.3 BTI's 2022 Country report stated:

'They [the Bidoon] often live in relative poverty and work in the informal economy while constituting the bulk of Kuwait's armed forces. Even though Bidoons have often lived all their lives in Kuwait, full citizenship rights (e.g.,

¹³⁰ Kuwait Government via HRW, '[...Response to its Questions and Inquiries](#)' (Page 3-4), no date

¹³¹ LandInfo, '[Kuwait: The Bidun's review cards](#)', (Page 5), 24 August 2020

access to social welfare, favorable employment and voting rights) have been denied. In the period under review [1 February 2019 – 31 January 2021], however, the government has continued its efforts toward the reconciliation of their status, such as opening employment in the military, issuing national IDs and finally allowing access to the state welfare system.¹³²

- 12.1.4 The European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR), a non-profit organisation that seeks to promote human rights and democracy in the MENA region¹³³, stated in their article ‘The Status of Kuwait’s Stateless Bidoon’ from April 2022 that:

‘The 1954 Convention [relating to the Status of Stateless Persons] guarantees a minimum set of human rights for stateless people, including the right to education, employment, housing, and the right to identity and travel documents... Similarly, the 1961 Convention [on the Reduction of Statelessness] was created with the specific aim of preventing and reducing statelessness through establishing an international framework which ensures the universal right to a nationality. While both Conventions have been ratified by 96 and 77 states respectively, Kuwait has ratified neither.

‘... Kuwait is a state party to 7 other international treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Under these treaties Kuwait has several obligations but, according to independent observers, it has failed to wholly uphold them especially in its treatment of the Bidoon.’¹³⁴

- 12.1.5 In October 2022, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), a pro-democracy and human rights NGO in Bahrain and the rest of the MENA region¹³⁵, submitted a written statement to the 51st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council which stated:

‘Kuwaiti authorities’ systematic discrimination against the Bidoon violates Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as Article 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Kuwait acceded to in 1994. Further, given the exceptionally high rates of statelessness among children that are a direct result of Kuwait’s laws on nationality, particularly as it concerns the Bidoon, Kuwait has consistently neglected to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it ratified in 1991.’¹³⁶

- 12.1.6 The Diplomatic Service of the European Union (EEAS) in their report entitled ‘EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2022 Country updates’, published 31 July 2023, stated that: ‘The stateless “Bidoons” continued to face significant challenges in securing identification documents (“security card”), indispensable to access basic services in healthcare and education... [S]tateless children are still faced with discriminatory provisions in the Kuwaiti legislation. In particular, the stateless

¹³² BTI, ‘[2022 Country Report: Kuwait](#)’, (Page 36), 23 February 2022

¹³³ ECDHR, ‘[About us](#)’, no date

¹³⁴ ECDHR, ‘[The Status of Kuwait’s Stateless Bidoon](#)’, 11 April 2022

¹³⁵ ADHRB, ‘[About us](#)’, no date

¹³⁶ ADHRB, ‘[Written statement to the UN HRC 51st General Assembly](#)’, 6 October 2022

“Bidoon” children continue being discriminated in their access to essential social services.¹³⁷

12.1.7 On 22 November 2023, the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHCR) published a report entitled ‘Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Kuwait’ which stated:

‘The Committee remains concerned about the discriminatory measures and practices against stateless Bidoon people (referred to as “illegal residents” by the State party) and about the discrimination they endure. The Committee is concerned by reports indicating that Bidoon people do not have access to nationality and identity documents, or face difficulties renewing them. The Committee is alarmed by allegations received about the falsification of documents, by the central system for the remedy of the situation of illegal residents, to arbitrarily change the legal status of stateless persons; cases of Bidoon people being classified under foreign nationalities when requesting identity papers; and Bidoon university students being required to register for identity documents that would force them to accept a false nationality. The Committee is concerned about reports concerning the arbitrary arrest of, online attacks against and ill-treatment of Bidoon activists and human rights defenders and on limitations on access to justice. The Committee is also concerned by reports of discrimination in access to health services, particularly during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, unstable and poorly remunerated employment and unequal access to socioeconomic support, which result from the precarious legal status of Bidoon people.’¹³⁸

12.1.8 In March 2024, Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen stated: “[W]asta” [nepotism or personal “clout”- using one's connections and/or influence to get one's way] remains prevalent throughout Kuwait (and has been the subject of continuing periodic political scandals, which suggest that the practice of using intermediaries and personal connections remains widespread). For Bidoons without review cards, it appears that personal connections are often the only way they can access public services, such as health and education, or gain personal documents.¹³⁹

12.1.9 Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen additionally stated:

‘Personal connections and “wasta” may be able to access some services but in an arbitrary and irregular manner. It appears that public services cannot (in theory) be accessed without a review card, which itself requires the Civil Identity Number needed to access the services.

‘... Anecdotally, it is likely that Bidoons with review cards would still encounter issues accessing services, but it has been difficult to come by figures for how prevalent or widespread this is in practice’¹⁴⁰

12.1.10 The USSD report for 2023, published in April 2024 stated:

‘The government considered Bidoon illegal residents and refused to issue them security cards, which impeded their access to education, medical

¹³⁷ EEAS, ‘[EU ...Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2022...](#)’, (Page 183-184), 31 July 2023

¹³⁸ UNHCR, ‘[...observations on the fourth periodic report of Kuwait](#)’, (Page 3), 22 November 2023

¹³⁹ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, March 2024 - available upon request

¹⁴⁰ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, March 2024 - available upon request

services, legal employment, and travel documents.

‘Although Bidoon residents were by law entitled to government benefits - including free health care, education, and ration cards - community members alleged it was often difficult for them to access those services due to bureaucratic requirements. Bidoon residents and international NGOs reported the government did not uniformly provide government services and benefits to Bidoon residents. Some activists alleged they or their family members were denied access to education, health care, and jobs for advocating on behalf of the Bidoon.’¹⁴¹

12.1.11 In April 2024, Dr Claire Beaugrand when asked what services a review card guarantee access to stated: ‘Legal access to employment, education (private) and health services.’¹⁴²

12.1.12 Dr Claire Beaugrand additionally stated: ‘The review card is the equivalent of an ID for other residents. A valid identification card is needed for almost all the transactions (for instance, renting a car, buying a SIM card, keeping a bank account -some of which are frozen for want of renewed IDs).’¹⁴³

12.1.13 Dr Claire Beaugrand when asked about Bidoons having difficulties accessing services stated:

‘Here it is worth noting that the vulnerability and stigmatisation of Bidoons within the Kuwaiti society and the impunity of wrongdoers when dealing with Bidoons in general can create issue for them to access services. Since anyway it is difficult for them to lodge complaints against those misbehaving or denying them rights wrongly.

‘I was told informally by a Kuwaiti health practitioner that some colleagues did not like to treat Bidoons and would say they had no available appointments for them. I cannot tell if this anecdote relates to Bidoons with or without valid review cards - and if it is representative, but it gives an idea of the extent of the prejudice against Bidoons that is hard to document with evidence.’¹⁴⁴

12.1.14 In April 2024, the FCDO when asked what specific services a review card guaranteed access to stated ‘Education - Medical treatment (including for the disabled) - driving licences - official certificates (birth/death/marriage etc.) - employment opportunities - food ration cards (subsidies).’¹⁴⁵

12.1.15 The FCDO, when asked if these services can be accessed by anything other than a review card, stated: ‘For Bidoon, it is either through Review Cards or obtaining another nationality (expat/migrant worker).’¹⁴⁶

12.1.16 The FCDO, when asked if there are any services that can be access without a review card, stated: ‘Legally, all services require a form of ID to access. Illegal opportunities do exist at risk and at a cost.’¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ USSD, ‘[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

¹⁴² Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁴³ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁴⁴ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁴⁵ FCDO, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request 2024

¹⁴⁶ FCDO, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁴⁷ FCDO, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

12.2 Employment, pay and banking

12.2.1 The MRG profile on Bidoons stated:

'Bidoon face discrimination in employment by virtue of their "illegal" status. Although many government ministries hire Bidoon, this is generally on the basis of "remuneration for work" contracts which offer little job security and none of the benefits provided by law to citizens and expatriate workers, such as paid sick leave, annual leave, and pensions. Moreover, in both the public and private sectors, salaries offered to Bidoon are generally lower than those offered to citizens and expatriate workers. In reality, many Bidoon are forced to earn a living in the informal sector, such as by selling fruits and vegetables on the street. However, since they cannot obtain commercial licenses or own property, they are at constant risk of being arrested or having their goods confiscated for operating businesses illegally.'¹⁴⁸

12.2.2 Gulf news, an English language news paper in UAE¹⁴⁹, in their article 'Kuwait's Bidoons allowed to join army' from March 2018 stated that 'Kuwait's parliament has voted to allow stateless people (Bidoon) to join the army [...] Lawmaker Fihad Al Enezi said that more than 25,000 bidoons had signed up to join the army in one week.'¹⁵⁰

12.2.3 The New Arab, an English-language news and current affairs website for the MENA region¹⁵¹, in their article 'Kuwait allows stateless 'Bidoons' to serve in armed forces' from March 2018 stated that 'Since independence, Bidoons have formed the backbone of Kuwait's military and police forces, however, over the past decade the military has eliminated many Bidoons from service.'¹⁵²

12.2.4 'Hundreds from Kuwait's stateless "Bidoon" community lose bank accounts' from October 2021 stated that 'Authorities have intensified pressure on the bidoon community and refusing to renew residency cards of bidoons unless they admit to having other nationality. Banks are demanding valid identification that they cant [sic] provide, resulting in having bank accounts suspending [sic] and freezing access to salary and savings.'¹⁵³

12.2.5 The FCDO briefing paper from October 2023 stated that 'In February 2022, local media claimed that Bidoon members of the army were pressured to obtain ID cards from the Central Agency, which subsequently assigned them random nationalities. Reports alleged that about 2,000 Bidoon members of the army who did not accept an ID card with a non-Kuwaiti nationality had their bank accounts suspended and driver's licenses withdrawn.'¹⁵⁴

CPIT has been unable to find figures of the number of Bidoon serving in the Kuwait army but considering the reports alleged 2000 bidoon had lost access to bank accounts this would amount to around 2% of the

¹⁴⁸ MRG, '[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon](#)', no date

¹⁴⁹ Gulf News, '[About](#)', no date

¹⁵⁰ Gulf News, '[Kuwait's Bidoons allowed to join army](#)', 7 March 2018

¹⁵¹ New Arab, '[About us](#)', no date

¹⁵² New Arab, '[Kuwait allows stateless 'Bidoons' to serve in armed forces](#)' 6 March 2018

¹⁵³ New Arab, '[Hundreds from Kuwait's stateless 'Bidoon' community lose bank...](#)' 14 October 2021

¹⁵⁴ FCDO, '[Bidoon briefing paper](#)' (Paragraph 10), October 2023

approximated 100,000 Bidoon. Also considering around a quarter of Bidoon signed up to join the army once the ban was lifted in 2018 it could be considered a large proportion of Bidoon are employed in the Kuwait army.

12.2.6 The USSD report for 2023, published in April 2024 stated: ‘The government allowed the Bidoon sons of soldiers who were either killed, missing in action, or served in the military for 30 years to be eligible to join the military. No information was available on the number of Bidoon in the Kuwaiti military.’¹⁵⁵

12.2.7 The October 2023 FCDO briefing paper on Bidoons ([Annex A](#)) stated that: ‘Government agencies do employ some Bidoon, on lower wages with no job security or benefits, however the majority work in the informal sector, such as selling produce on the street, putting them at increased risk of arrest for operating illegal businesses.

‘... Bidoon sons of soldiers who were KIA [killed in action], MIA [missing in action] or served in the military for at least 30 years, are allowed to join the military. This is only officially legal pathway for employment recognised by Kuwait for the Bidoon community, which would enable them access to some state benefits and amenities. However, no information is available on the current number of Bidoon in the Kuwaiti military.’¹⁵⁶

[Back to Contents](#)

12.3 Education

12.3.1 The MRG profile on Bidoons stated: ‘Bidoon families may send girls to school every other year in order to afford to send a male sibling every year. Although this arrangement is certainly an improvement upon the situation of the late 1980s and 1990s, when many Bidoon children, especially girls, were excluded from education entirely, it remains the case that girls are more likely to miss out on education than boys.’¹⁵⁷

12.3.2 The USSD report for 2023, published in April 2024 stated (repeated from the previous years report):

‘Since citizen children were given priority to attend public school, only a small minority of Bidoon children whose families could afford it enrolled in substandard for-fee private schools. Charitable organizations offered tuition support to some but not all of these students. During the year, the Central Agency announced in a press statement that 34,266 Bidoon students had enrolled in public and private schools for the academic year, with expenses paid through a government charitable fund. Citizen mothers married to Bidoon husbands and Bidoon mothers alike reported they were unable to access medical care easily or reliably for their children.’¹⁵⁸

12.3.3 HRW stated in their annual world report, published in January 2023, covering events in Kuwait in 2022: ‘Except for those whose fathers or grandfathers occupy certain public sector jobs, such as in the military and Ministry of Health or Education, and those whose mothers have Kuwaiti nationality, Bidun children are barred from free public schools. While certain

¹⁵⁵ USSD, [‘2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait’](#), (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

¹⁵⁶ FCDO, [‘Bidoon briefing paper’](#) (Paragraphs 10,11), October 2023

¹⁵⁷ MRG, [‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon’](#), no date

¹⁵⁸ USSD, [‘2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait’](#), (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

charitable funds help with expenses, they do not cover all costs.¹⁵⁹

12.3.4 AI's 2023 report stated:

'The default rule for the Bidun is that their children are excluded from the free government school system. Some specially privileged categories, such as Bidun children of fathers or paternal grandfathers who served in the army or police, are allowed to attend government schools. However, children who cannot claim membership of such a privileged class are not guaranteed a free education, even at the primary level. Their alternative is to seek education at private schools, which vary in quality according to what the family can pay.

'... Assuming a Bidun person accepts the risk of being assigned a non-Kuwaiti nationality by signing for receipt of a Review Card, the card does not guarantee respect for their children's right to education or access to other public services. The entitlements available to cardholders are not defined under any published law. Decisions relating to Bidun access to education and other entitlements have been made by the cabinet, the Central System and the Ministry of Education. Although cabinet and ministerial decisions are sometimes published in Kuwait's official gazette, essential decisions relating to Bidun entitlements remain unpublished.¹⁶⁰

The same report published a diagram of the different levels of legal documentation and how they affect access to education (see [Annex B](#)).

12.3.5 The USSD report for 2023, published in April 2024 stated: 'In June [2023], the Central Agency instructed the Ministry of Education to halt the waiver that had previously allowed Bidoon with expired security cards to register their children for school.'¹⁶¹

[Back to Contents](#)

12.4 Healthcare

12.4.1 The MRG profile on Bidoons stated:

'In terms of healthcare, Bidoon can purchase low-cost insurance plans from the government that allow them to be treated in public hospitals. However, these health plans exclude many types of tests, medications and operations. Moreover, Bidoon without reference cards [review cards] can be refused care altogether at government hospitals. The only other option for undocumented Bidoon is to attend one of the private hospitals, which are prohibitively expensive for many.'¹⁶²

12.4.2 ECDHR in their article 'Poverty amongst the Bidoon community in the State of Kuwait' from 16 August 2021 reported:

'Whereas healthcare is free for Kuwait citizens, Bidoon residents have access to some medical insurances, which however offer very limited protection. The situation is even more serious for undocumented Bidoon, who have been denied a security card, as they can only attend expensive

¹⁵⁹ HRW, '[World report: Kuwait 2022](#)', 12 January 2023

¹⁶⁰ AI, '[...Stateless Kuwaitis and the right to education](#)' (Page 5,11), 17 August 2023

¹⁶¹ USSD, '[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

¹⁶² MRG, '[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon](#)', no date

private hospitals. The consequences can therefore be very dramatic, as undocumented Bidoon women face for instance greater risk of dying due to pregnancy.¹⁶³

- 12.4.3 The USSD report for 2023, published in March 2024 (repeated from the previous year's report) stated that 'Citizen mothers married to Bidoon husbands, and Bidoon mothers alike, report that they are unable to access medical care easily or reliably for their children.'¹⁶⁴
- 12.4.4 In March 2024, Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen stated: 'There are reports that expired cards may be used to access primary healthcare in the public system (and that this is the result of unpublished internal instructions issued and periodically renewed by the Ministry of Health).'¹⁶⁵
- 12.4.5 CPIT has been unable to find further evidence of healthcare being accessed with expired review cards within the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))

[Back to Contents](#)

12.5 Housing

- 12.5.1 ADHRB in their article entitled 'Human Rights Violations in Kuwait of the Bidoon, stateless' published June 2021 stated that: 'There is a clear policy by the Kuwaiti government to legally punish landlords who sign any rental agreement with any Bidoon family, making [it] much more difficult for a Bidoon family to find adequate housing.'¹⁶⁶
- 12.5.2 The USSD report covering events in 2022, published in March 2023 stated that 'Like other noncitizens, Bidoon did not have the right to own property. Children of citizen women married to noncitizen men, including Bidoon, could not inherit their mother's property, including a family home.'¹⁶⁷
- 12.5.3 Freedom House stated in July 2023 that 'Kuwaiti law allows citizens and foreign nationals, but not bidoon, to own private property.'¹⁶⁸
- 12.5.4 AI's 2023 report stated 'The different standards of living between Kuwaiti nationals and the Bidun can be seen visually in the adjacent neighbourhoods of Taima (Bidun) and al-Naeem (Kuwaiti national) in al-Jahra governorate: the Bidun homes are small, one-storey, closely packed units constructed mostly of sheet metal; the recognized Kuwaiti nationals live in modern, multi-storey apartment buildings with courtyards.'¹⁶⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

12.6 Freedom of movement

- 12.6.1 The USSD report for 2023, published in April 2024 stated (repeated from the previous year's report):

'Bidoon residents and noncitizen workers faced problems with and restrictions on foreign travel. The government generally did not issue travel

¹⁶³ ECDHR, '[Poverty amongst the Bidoon community in the State of Kuwait](#)', 16 August 2021

¹⁶⁴ USSD, '[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

¹⁶⁵ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, 'Response to CPIT questions', March 2024 - available upon request

¹⁶⁶ ADHRB, '[Human Rights Violations in Kuwait of the Bidoon, stateless](#)', 25 June 2021

¹⁶⁷ USSD, '[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 2G), 23 April 2024

¹⁶⁸ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2023 – Kuwait](#)' (Section G2), 7 July 2023

¹⁶⁹ AI, '[...Stateless Kuwaitis and the right to education](#)' (Page 5), 17 August 2023

documents to Bidoon residents, although it permitted some Bidoon residents to travel overseas for medical treatment, education, or to visit Saudi Arabia for the Hajj. The Ministry of Interior issued Article 17 passports [see [Article 17 travel documents](#)], temporary documents that did not confer nationality, to some Bidoon for these purposes if the applicants held valid security cards issued by the Central Agency and did not have security restrictions in their file.

‘... The law permitted authorities to impose travel bans on citizens and noncitizens accused or suspected of violating the law, including for debt nonpayment, and allowed citizens to petition authorities to impose a travel ban on others.’¹⁷⁰

[Back to Contents](#)

12.7 Arbitrary arrest and detention

12.7.1 The USSD report covering events in 2022, published in March 2023 stated (repeated from the previous year’s report): ‘Arbitrary and lengthy pretrial detention sometimes occurred. Authorities held some detainees beyond the maximum pretrial detention period of six months... Numerous activists representing Bidoon – reported mistreatment at the hands of authorities while in detention. There continued to be allegations from individuals that they were subjected to unlawful detention and physical and verbal abuse in police centers and State Security detention centers.’¹⁷¹

12.7.2 Freedom House stated in July 2023 that detained Bidoons have been known to experience torture and beatings while in custody.’¹⁷²Freedom House however did not give an indication of the scale of alleged incidents or how widespread the issue is.

12.7.3 For more information on the detention of activists see [Treatment of Activists](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

12.8 Civil and political rights

12.8.1 The MRG profile on Bidoons stated:

‘As is often the case in marginalized communities, Bidoon girls and women have been particularly vulnerable to discrimination and abuse. They have faced sexual harassment from government officials while applying for documentation.

‘... [T]he government has failed to protect Bidoon women, whose marriages are often unregistered, for instance in obtaining their legal rights upon divorce.

‘... In the first few decades after Kuwait’s independence, being Bidoon carried relatively few disadvantages... However, Bidoon were not allowed to vote. (Under the 1959 Nationality Act, even naturalized citizens are required to hold Kuwaiti citizenship for 30 years before they can vote).’¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ USSD, ‘[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 2D), 23 April 2024

¹⁷¹ USSD, ‘[2022 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)’, (Section 1C), 20 March 2023

¹⁷² Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2022 – Kuwait](#)’ (Section F3), 7 July 2023

¹⁷³ MRG, ‘[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kuwait Bidoon](#)’, no date

MRG did not provide any further detail regarding the scale and extent of any discrimination, abuse and sexual harassment faced by Bidoon women.

- 12.8.2 The USSD report for 2023 published in April 2024 stated (repeated from the previous year's report): 'Noncitizens and Bidoon were prohibited from demonstrating. Bidoon activists reported that if they tried to assemble peacefully or organize campaigns advocating for equal rights, authorities harassed them. Some Bidoon activists said authorities detained them for questioning every time they planned campaigns or protests.'¹⁷⁴
- 12.8.3 Freedom House stated in July 2023 that 'The electorate consists of men and women over age 21 who have been citizens for at least 20 years and have a Kuwaiti father... About 70 percent of the country's residents are noncitizens... who have no right to vote even if they are lifelong residents.'¹⁷⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

13. Bidoon protests and treatment of activists

- 13.1.1 The AI report entitled 'Kuwait: Heavy prison sentences of activists demanding rights of citizenship' from January 2020 said:
- 'A Kuwaiti criminal court today handed prison sentences between life and 10 years in prison to three men from the stateless Bidun community, including one in his absence for their peaceful activism.
- '... Their trial started on 10 September 2019 and included prominent human rights defender Abdulhakim al-Fadhli and another activist living in the UK, Mohamed Waly Mutlaq (also known as Mohamed al-Badry "al-Enezi"), who was tried in absentia.
- '... They are also charged with joining a proscribed organization, the "Kuwaiti Biduns Foundation Council", which is an online initiative begun by Mohamed Waly Mutlaq (a former Bidun from Kuwait who now lives in the UK, where he has obtained citizenship. Al-Enezi, who is also charged as a defendant in the trial, advocates for secession of the Bidun to form a separate state if Kuwait will not grant them nationality.'¹⁷⁶
- 13.1.2 The New Arab in their article 'Kuwait's stateless Bidoon community faces rising human costs' from July 2021 stated: 'Social media users in Kuwait took to Twitter [now known as X] using the hashtag "al bidoon awaliyya" or "the Bidoon are a priority" to express their dismay at the ongoing neglect of their government to address the absence of citizenship and rights that they believe is a direct cause for a growing number of deaths of the Bidoon people.'¹⁷⁷
- CPIT could not find further information on the treatment of those who posted on X (twitter) within the sources (see [Bibliography](#))
- 13.1.3 On 11 August 2021, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), a Turkish public broadcaster¹⁷⁸ published an article entitled 'Aliens in their own

¹⁷⁴ USSD, '[2022 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 2B), 20 March 2023

¹⁷⁵ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2023 – Kuwait](#)' (Section B4), 7 July 2023

¹⁷⁶ AI, '[Kuwait: Heavy prison sentences of activists demanding rights of citizenship](#)', 28 January 2020

¹⁷⁷ The New Arab, '[Kuwait's stateless Bidoon community faces rising human costs](#)', 6 July 2021

¹⁷⁸ TRT, '[About us](#)', no date

land: Kuwait's stateless Bidoons persist on the margins' which stated:

"There are many freelancers working on Bidoon cases in Kuwait," Hadeel Buqrais, a Kuwaiti human rights defender, tells TRT World. But many of them have received "direct and indirect threats to drop their case or walk away from it because it is seen as a national security issue, not a humanitarian issue."

'... Those who expose human rights violations against the Bidoon are frequently smeared as being anti-Kuwait.'¹⁷⁹

13.1.4 Roswitha Badry from the University of Freiburg, Germany¹⁸⁰ in her article 'When the Subalterns find their Voice - The Example of Kuwait's Bidun' from 2021 stated 'The new Cybercrime law, which came into effect in January 2016, ...[which] limited the space of action for Bidun and civil society organizations, although even before, websites had been shut down, bloggers arrested, intimidated and threatened by exploiting the broad national security laws or vague and ambiguous provisions in other laws.'¹⁸¹

13.1.5 An AI article entitled 'Kuwait: Authorities must stop targeting pro-Bidun protesters as elections loom' published in September 2022 stated:

'Kuwaiti authorities have arrested 18 people in Kuwait, including three candidates for upcoming parliamentary elections, for taking part in a peaceful demonstration in support of Kuwait's stateless Bidun community.

'... The 18 individuals face prosecution under Kuwait's Law on Public Meetings and Gatherings for participating in an unauthorized demonstration and failing to disperse from the gathering after being ordered to do so. These two charges carry a sentence of up to nine months in prison.

'... The demonstration in the Taima area of al-Jahra province, west of Kuwait City, was organized by Bidun activists calling for the dissolution of the government agency which regulates Bidun affairs, [the Central System], which Bidun activists accuse of perpetuating their statelessness.'¹⁸²

13.1.6 The USSD report covering events in 2022, published in March 2023 stated:

'Several Bidoon launched a sit-in campaign in early August [2022] to advocate for Bidoon rights and the abolition of the Central Agency. On the twenty-second day of the sit-in, several hundred Bidoon and Kuwaiti activists gathered in Freedom Square. Several days after the gathering, 14 Bidoon and seven Kuwaiti activists were summoned for questioning. Media claimed the Public Prosecutor's Office ordered the detention of all 21 activists, then released the seven Kuwaitis on bail and banned them from travel. The 14 Bidoon residents were ordered to pretrial detention for 21 days and referred to the Central Prison on charges of participating in an unlicensed gathering. Three days later, a judge ordered the release of the Bidoon detainees on bail of approximately 300 Kuwaiti dinars [£771¹⁸³].'¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ TRT, '[Aliens in their own land: Kuwait's stateless Bidoons persist on the margins](#)', 11 August 2021

¹⁸⁰ Prof. Roswitha Badry, '[Islamic studies- University of Freiburg](#)', no date

¹⁸¹ Prof. Roswitha Badry, '[When the Subalterns find their Voice...](#)', (Page 102), 2021

¹⁸² AI, '[Kuwait: Authorities must stop targeting pro-Bidun protesters..](#)', 1 September 2022

¹⁸³ XE, '[KWD to GBP](#)', 17 June 2024

¹⁸⁴ USSD, '[2023 Country report on human rights practices- Kuwait](#)', (Section 2B), 23 April 2024

13.1.7 Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights (MPDHR), an Egyptian Human Rights organisation¹⁸⁵, in a report submitted to the Human Rights Committee regarding Kuwait, published 31 August 2023, stated:

'In addition to receiving reports indicating that the Kuwaiti authorities are attempting to restrict the right to peaceful assembly of Bidun; Where the Kuwaiti authorities arrested 18 people, including three candidates running for the upcoming parliamentary elections, for their participation in a peaceful demonstration in support of the stateless Bidun community in Kuwait, and on August 31, 2022, the Public Prosecution summoned them for interrogation on charges that may carry a penalty of up to nine months in prison, and ordered their detention pending further investigations, which contradicts the articles of the Covenant, especially Article (21), which stipulates guaranteeing the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.'¹⁸⁶

13.1.8 In October 2023, the FCDO stated:

'Political activity by Bidoon is heavily limited. Political activism by any non-Kuwaiti is at risk. Advocacy for the Bidoon cause (by Bidoon and others, including Kuwaitis) has led to arrests under the unauthorized demonstration law.

'... Treatment of Kuwaiti nationals differ hugely from all non-Kuwaitis. Tiered treatment ingrained in the system. Bidoon judicial treatment is much more severe than for Kuwaitis.'¹⁸⁷

13.1.9 The FCDO briefing paper further stated:

'While the Kuwaiti constitution allows for peaceful assembly and association for citizens, this is not extended to any non-citizens. Bidoon activists have reported regular harassment from the authorities when attempting to organise a protest or campaign, with further reports of detainment for questioning. More grievous accusations of torture, ill-treatment and sexual abuse while in police custody have also been reported. In 2011, inspired by the Arab Spring, thousands of Bidoon took to the streets to protest their rights. They were met with smoke bombs and water cannons by security forces. Since then, Bidoon activists and their supporters have been closely monitored by the security forces and have been called in for questioning by the MOI [Ministry of Interior].'¹⁸⁸

13.1.10 In March 2024, Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen stated: 'Reports suggest that Bidoon feel specially targeted by the authorities and the security services when they seek to assemble peacefully or organize campaigns in support of equal rights, whereupon they are questioned and/or detained or otherwise harassed. There have been reports of torture and use of excessive force against Bidoon, but similar reports of mistreatment have been made by relatives of detained Kuwaiti citizens as well.'¹⁸⁹

Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen has not given an indication of how many reports

¹⁸⁵ MPDHR, '[About us](#)', no date

¹⁸⁶ MPDHR, '[... Report to the Human Rights Committee regarding Kuwait](#)', 31 August 2023

¹⁸⁷ FCDO, '[Response to CPIT questions](#)', April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁸⁸ FCDO, '[Bidoon briefing paper](#)' (Paragraph 12), October 2023

¹⁸⁹ Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, '[Response to CPIT questions](#)', March 2024 - available upon request

of torture or excessive force there have been.

13.1.11 In April 2024, Dr Claire Beaugrand stated:

‘Bidoon human rights defenders are being monitored. They also are being intimidated and harassed.

‘...Bidoons who speak out are likely to be subject to adverse attention, at any level. At the level of administrative interaction, a Bidoon who complains at the Central System’s office, would have his name identified - and can face vexatious measures. I came to hear about Bidoon contesting the decision of the Central System while at the Central System itself and dealt with harshly. A communication with a Bidoon who was granted asylum in Europe concurred with the fact that the Central System keeps record of Bidoons complaining or expressing their discontent with the data held in their files, which ultimately fragilizes further their situation in the country.

‘... When it comes to denouncing Bidoons’ plight and their lack of rights, any Bidoon trying to organise as a group would see their actions monitored closely and possibly sued.’¹⁹⁰

13.1.12 In April 2024, Dr Claire Beaugrand stated: ‘Since the beginning of the Bidoon mobilisation movement in 2011, emerging Bidoon leading activists have been targeted and arrested, leading to serious allegation of ill treatment in detention.’¹⁹¹

Dr Claire Beaugrand did not give any specific examples of ill treatment in detention or an indication on how widespread the issue was.

13.1.13 In April 2024, Dr Claire Beaugrand stated:

‘On the 12 July 2019 Kuwait’s Criminal Investigation and State Security agencies arrested fifteen prominent Bidoon activists who organized a peaceful sit-in in Jahra, at their homes.

‘... On 22 August [2019], they started a hunger strike - which lasted 12 days, in protest at their detention for only expressing their opinion peacefully. On 28 January 2020, a Criminal court handed prison sentences to three of them (one in absentia handed to a long-time opponent abroad and the other two sentenced to ten years in prison with labour) and acquitted thirteen of them, released on bail while confiscated their means of communication.’¹⁹²

13.1.14 Dr Claire Beaugrand also stated that ‘The former members of Bidoon organisations, like former Muwatin, are said to have ceased their activities because of the surveillance that targeted them. The new organisations that emerged with the same aim of defending Bidoon’s rights, like the National Bloc of Kuwaiti Bidoon are similarly targeted’¹⁹³

13.1.15 The following table was compiled using data obtained from ACLED’s [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project] data dashboard. The table shows protests involving Bidoons that took place between May 2021 and May 2024

¹⁹⁰ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁹¹ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁹² Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

¹⁹³ Dr Claire Beaugrand, ‘Response to CPIT questions’, April 2024 - available upon request

across Kuwait¹⁹⁴. See the [ACLED website](#) for information regarding the methodology ACLED used to obtain this data.

| Date | Details of protest | Location | Participants |
|----------|---|--|-------------------|
| 03/06/21 | Al Erada Square in Kuwait City (Al Asimah) to express dissatisfaction with the current government and its handling of a number of issues, including the spread of the coronavirus. The protesters also called for political reforms, passing the Amnesty Law, and amending the Press and Publications Law, along with the Cybercrime Law. Some protesters also raised banners calling for the naturalization of the Bidoon residents. | Kuwait City, Al Erada square | Dozens |
| 28/12/21 | Around two hundred protesters, including stateless Bidoon people, demonstrated in Al Erada Square in Kuwait City (Al Asimah) demanding more rights for the Bidoon group. | Kuwait City, Al Erada square | Around 200 |
| 01/02/22 | Protesters of the Bidoon group demonstrated in Freedom Square in Tayma (Al Jahra) demanding their complete civil rights including citizenship and the lifting all of all security restrictions. | Tayma (Al Jahra), Freedom square | No data available |
| 04/02/22 | Protesters of the Bidoon group demonstrated in Freedom Square in Tayma (Al Jahra) demanding their complete civil rights including citizenship and the lifting all of all security restrictions. | Tayma (Al Jahra), Freedom square | No date available |
| 11/02/22 | Protesters of the Bidoon group demonstrated in Freedom Square in Tayma (Al Jahra) demanding their complete civil rights including citizenship and the lifting all of all security restrictions. | Tayma (Al Jahra), Freedom square | No data available |
| 28/03/22 | Six Bidoon activists staged a protest marking the start of an open-ended hunger strike in front of As Sulaybiyah police station (Al Jahra). They demanded that members of the Bidoon community are granted civil | Al Jahra, As Sulaybiyah police station | 6 |

¹⁹⁴ ACLED, '[Data Kuwait Protests May 2021- May 2024](#)', 23 May 2024

| | | | |
|----------|--|------------------|-------------------|
| | rights and citizenship. They voluntarily ended their hunger strike on 14 April 2022 after an agreement with the various Kuwaiti political forces to hold an inclusive national conference. | | |
| 10/08/22 | Bidoon activists protested at a square in Tayma (Al Jahra) to join a sit-in organized by two Bidoon activists since 4 August. They demanded the dissolution of the Central Agency for the Remedy of Situation of Illegal Residents for its role in 'oppressing' Kuwaiti Bidoons by treating them as illegal residents and demanded that they be granted civil rights and citizenship. | Tayma (Al Jahra) | No data available |
| 26/08/22 | Hundreds of Kuwaitis and Bidoon activists protested at a square in Tayma (Al Jahra) to join a sit-in organized by two Bidoon activists since 4 August. They demanded the dissolution of the Central Agency for the Remedy of Situation of Illegal Residents for its role in 'oppressing' Kuwaiti Bidoons by treating them as illegal residents and demanded that they be granted civil rights and citizenship. | Tayma (Al Jahra) | Hundreds |

[Back to Contents](#)

Annex A: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Bidoon briefing paper

Updated October 2023

Statelessness in Kuwait

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Background

1. The term Bidoon stems from the Arabic phrase 'bidoon jinsiya' ('without nationality'). It should not be confused with the word Bedouin, which refers to people from nomadic tribal backgrounds, although some individuals are both Bidoon and Bedouin.
2. Citizenship can only be inherited through the male line. Therefore, children of Kuwaiti mothers and Bidoon fathers are themselves Bidoon, whereas the children of Bidoon mothers and Kuwaiti fathers are considered Kuwaiti citizens.
3. According to Kuwait official estimates, there were, at a peak pre-1990, c. 220,000 in country, and around 85,000 as of 2018. These figures remain contested by Amnesty International, who claim there are approximately 100,000 Bidoon currently in Kuwait.
4. For supporters of the Bidoon cause, most are seen as Kuwaitis whose ancestors failed to apply for or successfully obtain citizenship following independence from Britain in the early 1960s. It is likely that many were not sufficiently literate to navigate the registration process, or simply did not see the value in applying for citizenship at the time. For opponents, Bidoon are

neither Kuwaitis nor stateless. They argue that their ancestors were nationals of neighbouring countries (mainly Iraq) who chose to hide this fact and attempt to claim Kuwaiti citizenship to reap the associated benefits.

5. In 1985, an assassination attempt of the then-Amir was a turning point as, despite Islamic Jihad Organisation taking responsibility for the attempt, Kuwait blamed a faction of the Bidoon community. The following Amiri Decree 41/1987 officially reclassified Bidoon from 'Bedouins of Kuwait' to 'Illegal Residents', stripping them of previous access to state services and benefits of any kind. Because of its links to an assassination attempt of the Head of State, the Bidoon issue remains a highly polarising topic across both political and social spheres.

The Central Agency for the Remediating of Illegal Residents Status (CARIRS)

6. In 2010, the Government created an agency tasked with resolving the Bidoon issue: **CARIRS**. However, it has been criticised for creating more roadblocks and hardships for Bidoon rather than improving their situation. In October 2022, the Agency released figures stating that between 2011 and 2022, 18,227 individuals had completed the process of obtaining nationality. However, we understand that none were given Kuwaiti nationality, and there is little explanation of how nationalities were allocated. There have been no guarantees that these new nationalities would be validated by the corresponding country, and no clarity on the changes in rights and status for these individuals in Kuwait.
7. Bidoon leaders allege that when attempting to obtain ID cards, individuals were required to sign blank documents which were subsequently rewritten to state that the signatory held a non-Kuwaiti nationality. These unverified reports fuelled a tough choice between accepting an ID with a likely false, non-Kuwaiti nationality to access basic services (such as birth or death certificates, marriage documents and driver's licenses), or living undocumented which prevents them from receiving any Government services and benefits (such as education, employment, medical care, and the issuance of civil documents, such as birth, marriage, and death certificates). These restrictions extend to private services, as many places such as banks require valid identification before opening accounts.

Alternative pathways for recognition

8. The citizenship awards process set out in the **Nationality Law of 1959** is as unclear as CARIRS's as it does not allow the Bidoon to provide any evidence to support their case for naturalisation. The provisions of the law - that authorises executive naturalisation (after birth) - requires the individual to be proposed for citizenship, on a discretionary basis, by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and cannot exceed the legal quota 4,000-naturalisation p.a.
9. In April 2022, the Court of Cassation – Kuwait's highest judicial non-constitutional authority – ruled that all matters of nationality fall exclusively under executive jurisdiction, leaving no alternative pathway to naturalisation.

10. Bidoon sons of soldiers who were KIA, MIA or served in the military for at least 30 years, are allowed to join the military. This is only officially legal pathway for employment recognised by Kuwait for the Bidoon community, which would enable them access to some state benefits and amenities. However, no information is available on the current number of Bidoon in the Kuwaiti military. In February 2022, local media claimed that Bidoon members of the army were pressured to obtain ID cards from the Central Agency, which subsequently assigned them random nationalities. Reports alleged that about 2,000 Bidoon members of the army who did not accept an ID card with a non-Kuwaiti nationality had their bank accounts suspended and driver's licenses withdrawn.

Treatment, freedoms and impact

11. Under Kuwaiti law, residency, employment and access to healthcare, education etc. are tied to legally recognised residents (expats) or citizens of Kuwait. As the Bidoon do not fall under either of these categories, they face continued discrimination from governmental policies and practises which contribute to the community's ongoing social segregation, lower standards of living, as well as restrictions on employment, travel and education. Government agencies do employ some Bidoon, on lower wages with no job security or benefits, however the majority work in the informal sector, such as selling produce on the street, putting them at increased risk of arrest for operating illegal businesses.

12. The Bidoon have increasingly been targeted by authorities through mass arrests, detention, and general societal persecution. While the Kuwaiti constitution allows for peaceful assembly and association for citizens, this is not extended to any non-citizens. Bidoon activists have reported regular harassment from the authorities when attempting to organise a protest or campaign, with further reports of detainment for questioning. More grievous accusations of torture, ill-treatment and sexual abuse while in police custody have also been reported. In 2011, inspired by the Arab Spring, thousands of Bidoon took to the streets to protest their rights. They were met with smoke bombs and water cannons by security forces. Since then, Bidoon activists and their supporters have been closely monitored by the security forces and have been called in for questioning by the MOI.

13. Travel documents are tied to identification cards and are therefore not routinely issued to Bidoon, stranding them in Kuwait. However, some Bidoon have been given temporary travel documents under Article 17 of the Kuwaiti Nationality Law, which allows the issuance of a Kuwaiti travel document to any person deemed to require one - those working in the public sector and traveling abroad on official business etc.

14. According to the Department of Nationality and Travel Documents (DNTD), Article 17 documents may also be issued to the Bidoon for medical treatment outside of Kuwait; for study overseas; Hajj; or for amendment of a Bidoon's legal status in Kuwait, as they do not confer nationality onto the holder. However, according to the USSD report of March 2020, the MOI hasn't issued

Article 17 passports to the Bidoon since 2014 - except on humanitarian grounds - and were fully suspended in August 2019. As of July 2023, the issuance of these passports is due to resume but limited to specific cases (children of Kuwaiti mothers, overseas students, armed forces etc.). The DNTD confirmed that this will not be extended to any Bidoon that does not fit these criteria.

15. Activists from the Bidoon community attribute the high suicide rate among young Bidoon men to their current hardships and a low expectation of any positive reform occurring. The Government has not taken any tangible steps to address the ongoing issue and there is no appetite across all political spheres to take action.

Previously proposed laws in the National Assembly

16. In 2020, the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim proposed a law that would incentivise the Bidoon to abandon long-standing claims to Kuwaiti nationality in exchange for short-term economic gain. However, it was not passed. The draft would have given the Bidoon community one year to register with the Central Agency and correct their legal status before they would be treated as “foreigners in violation of the law” and declared ineligible for future acquisition of nationality, placing severe pressure on Bidoon to ‘admit’ to holding a non-Kuwaiti nationality and surrender their claim to Kuwaiti nationality. The Bidoon community were extremely hostile to this law, and questioned whether those who accepted a non-Kuwaiti nationality would face deportation following a proposed 15-year grace period which they would be afforded ‘privileged resident’ status in addition to having access to free healthcare, education and subsidised food, among other benefits. The proposal did not pass in the National Assembly.
17. A second proposal by the Kuwaiti Lawyers’ Association sought to address issue in a more humane manner and redefine the Bidoon as ‘Residents whose nationality has not been recognised’, rather than ‘Illegal Residents’ enabling those coerced into ‘recognising’ their non-Kuwaiti nationality to return to their previous legal status. The proposal outlined access to education & healthcare and the abolishment of the Central Agency. Though this law would not have granted nationality to all stateless persons in Kuwait, and not a comprehensive solution, it laid out a plan for naturalisation that would have benefited many of the Bidoon and granted all other stateless persons in Kuwait permanent residence and access to essential services. This proposal also failed to gain enough support to pass.

International Response and Potential Entry Points

18. The issue poses a continuous reputational threat for the Government of Kuwait, as it increasingly receives criticism on its policies in international forums. The situation has been called a humanitarian crisis and was referred to the UPR at the UN. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have periodical monitoring and reporting on the continued human rights violations and have called, on the Government (along with other international

organisations and countries), to address the issue several times. However, Kuwait describes the matter as an internal sovereign concern and not to be interfered in by external powers.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

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[Back to Contents](#)

Annex B: Amnesty International diagram of access to Education

Figure 1. Different levels of legal documentation and how they affect access to education

| | Children can go to a government school | Children can be registered in private schools | Support from Charity Fund for children in private schools | Eligible to apply to Kuwait University | Can attend private university if able to pay |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| Ministry of Health birth certificate + Civil Identity Number + currently valid Central System Review Card + specially privileged category | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ministry of Health birth certificate + Civil Identity Number + currently valid Central System Review Card | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ministry of Health birth certificate + Civil Identity Number + expired Central System Review Card | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| Ministry of Health birth certificate + Civil Identity Number but no Central System Review Card at all | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ |
| Hospital birth report only / no documentation of identity | ✗ | ✗* | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |

* Since 2012, the General Director of Private Education in the Ministry of Education may make a special individual exception to allow a child with only a hospital report of birth to be registered for private school, subject to certification by the Committee for Attribution of Parentage and Correction of Names in the Ministry of Justice that the family has a file pending before that Committee.⁸³ No Bidun family interviewed by Amnesty International had obtained this possible exception, and only one interviewee – a Bidun activist who follows administrative procedures affecting the Bidun very closely – was aware of its existence.⁸⁴

195

¹⁹⁵ AI, '[...Stateless Kuwaitis and the right to education](#)' (Page 5,11), 17 August 2023

Annex C: Email from FCDO on Article 17 Passports

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@fcdo.gov.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, July 30, 2024 7:37 AM
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@fcdo.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
<[REDACTED]@homeoffice.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Bidoons CPIN

Do you trust this email? This email originated from outside the [Home Office](#), or came from a Home Office system that has not been certified. Please exercise caution before opening attachments or clicking on links within this email or any suspicious email, particularly from unknown senders.

Just to add as well that on 25 July the cancellation of Article 17 passports saw an exemption be applied for athletes. This allows Bidoon to continue to train overseas during the summer. Some football clubs in Kuwait have their summer training camps in Egypt, so they will be able to go, it also impacts the Kuwaiti National Football team that has several Bidoon on its line-up.

May be worth adding a line to my previous commentary for the CPIN:

'On 11 July, the Interior Minister (and First DPM), Sheikh Fahad al Yousef al Sabah instructed that all temporary travel documents provided to Bidoon according to Article 17 of the citizenship law ('Bidoon passports') are now null and void. All humanitarian cases (students / patients) requiring overseas travel should report to the Ministry of Interior office in Adan (near the airport). Official reason given: 'To allow further deliberations by relevant authorities.' An exemption was granted on July 25 to the voiding Article 17 passports for Bidoon athletes, allowing them to travel overseas.

[REDACTED]

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal Context
 - Nationality Law
 - Implementation of the law
 - Revocation of citizenship
 - Appealing denied citizenship
- Bidoons
 - History
 - Population
 - Documentation renewal
 - State attitudes
- Access to services
 - Protests and civil rights movements
 - Treatment of activists.

[Back to Contents](#)

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[Back to Contents](#)

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[Back to Contents](#)

Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **4.0**
- valid from **13 August 2024**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

Changes from last version of this note

Updated COI and assessment following the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information- commissioned review of February 2023, executive summary added.

[Back to Contents](#)

Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information
Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration
1st Floor
Clive House
70 Petty France
London
SW1H 9EX
Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

[Back to Contents](#)