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## **Kuwait: Ill-treatment of Bedoon minority rights defender Abdullah Al-Fadhli.**

On 29 July 2019, human rights defender Abdullah Al-Fadhli was transferred to the Kuwaiti central prison, after 17 days of solitary confinement and ill-treatment at the State Security prison. His court hearing is scheduled for 14 August 2019. On 12 July 2019, Abdullah Al-Fadhli was arrested by Kuwaiti State Security forces from his family house in Jahra in connection to his participation in the sit-ins and protests denouncing violations of the rights of members of the Bedoon community in Kuwait.

Abdullah Al-Fadhli is a Bedoon minority rights defender. The term Bedoon, meaning 'without' in Arabic, refers to the community of stateless persons, native to Kuwait, who are prohibited from obtaining any official state documents such as birth, death or marriage certificates. As a consequence, they face difficulties in finding employment, and accessing healthcare, education, and other social services provided to Kuwaiti citizens. Abdullah Al-Fadhli has been promoting human rights since 2011; he is a social media activist and one of the organisers of demonstrations demanding human rights for the Bedoon minority. He was previously arrested for his work defending human rights in 2012 and released on bail after few days.

On 12 July 2019, four cars of the Kuwaiti security forces were waiting for Abdullah Al-Fadhli outside his family house in Jahra, forced him into one of their cars and took him to an unknown destination. He was interrogated for three days and held in solitary confinement. He is prohibited from receiving family visits and was only able to see his brother for five minutes 11 days after his arrest, in the presence of the public prosecutor. The human rights defender was only allowed to see his lawyer during the interrogations. On a daily basis, Abdullah Al-Fadhli was being blindfolded and dragged from state custody to the public prosecution, even though his interrogations had already been concluded. The State Security refused to release him on bail and only transferred him to the Central Prison on 29 July 2019.

A series of arrests occurred after several demonstrations following the suicide of the Bedooni teenager Ayed Hamad Med'ath. At least 17 Bedoon rights defenders were arrested, including **Bader Al-Tamimi** and **Khalifa Al-Anzi**, arrested on 24 July 2019, and **Reda Al-Fadhli** who was arrested on 25 July 2019. The arrests were carried out without any judicial warrants.

The Bedoon human rights defenders are facing several charges related to national security, such as "overthrowing the regime", "having foreign links", and "illegal gathering". The exact charges against Abdullah Al-Fadhli are still unknown.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the ongoing crackdown against Bedoon human rights defenders and condemns their arbitrary detention, and the ill-treatment which Abdullah Al-Fadhli and other Bedoon activists have been facing.

## **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Kuwait to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Abdullah Al-Fadhli and the other Bedoon human rights defenders as Front Line Defenders believes that they have been targeted as a result of his legitimate human rights work.
2. Drop all charges against Abdullah Al-Fadhli and the other Bedoon human rights defenders as it is believed that they are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights.
3. Ensure that the treatment of Abdullah Al-Fadhli and the other Bedoon human rights defenders while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the *'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment'*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988.
4. Permit the detained Bedoon rights defenders immediate and unfettered access to their families and lawyers.
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Kuwait are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.