



BRIEFING NOTE: The New 'Bidoon Bill' in Kuwait - Background and Implications if Passed

Background on the Bidoon: The word 'Bidoon' literally means 'without (nationality)' in Arabic and refers to a social category that emerged in Kuwait after the country's independence from Britain in 1961, when a particular section of Kuwait's indigenous population was excluded from citizenship rights in the modern state and thus made stateless.¹ The community's problems were exacerbated in 1986 when a new policy converted them into 'illegal residents'². Currently, a new bill is being pushed by political representatives of the ruling classes in Kuwait to reconstruct the Bidoon (around 100,000) as 'deportable aliens'.

The ongoing transformation of the Bidoon in Kuwait



The New 'Bidoon Bill' was put forward on 31 October 2019 by the speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and is backed by a group of MPs: Youssef Saleh Al-Fadhlah, Ahmed Nabil Al-Fadhel, Abdullah Youssef Al-Roumi, Safaa Abdulrahman Al-Hashem, Rakan Youssef Al-Nesef and Omar Abdul Mohsen Al-Tabtabai.

Article 6 of the bill **presumes that all Bidoon are nationals of other countries** and instructs them to 'reveal their original nationalities'. If they do not do so within one year, they will then be **treated as foreigners in violation of the State's residency law**.

Where did the bill come from? Why is it proposed now? The bill in effect fast-tracks the task of the government agency (the Central Apparatus for Remedying the Status of the

¹ Amnesty International (2019) 'Kuwait: Rising Signs of Despair among Bidun Highlight Cruelty of Draft Law' [Online]. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1713622019ENGLISH.pdf>

² *ibid*