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## Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in Kuwait

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# Demography, Migration, and Labour Market in Kuwait\*

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**Abstract:** As of December 2018, 70 per cent of residents in Kuwait were expatriates. Most came from Asia and especially from India (31 per cent of all foreign residents) as well as from Egypt (21 per cent of all foreign residents). Eighty-six per cent of expatriates aged 15 and more were economically active. They accounted for 85 per cent of the total active population and 96 per cent of the private sector's workforce. Asians are mainly involved in the services and craft sectors, while Arabs more often fill managerial posts. Recent flows suggest a shift in recruitment policies towards upgrading expatriates' level of qualifications and occupations, while policies aim to correct the country's "demographic imbalance" and nationalise the labour force. Kuwait also has a sizeable population of stateless residents (the *Biduns*), who are considered illegal residents.

**Keywords:** Kuwait; Foreign Population; National Population; Statelessness; Foreign Labour; Migration Policy; Statistics; Amnesty; Deportation; Irregular Migration; Kuwaitisation; India; Egypt; Ethiopia; Syria; Refugees.

Kuwait oil fields were discovered in the 1930s; by 1952, the country had become the largest exporter of oil in the Gulf region. From the onset of the country's development process sustained by oil wealth, labour immigrants were called upon to build the national economy and infrastructure. The first immigrants originated from Europe, North America and the Asian subcontinent, yet Arabs became the largest foreign community: 50 to 65 per cent of expatriates between 1965 and 1989.<sup>1</sup> Foreign residents outnumbered Kuwaiti citizens as early as 1960.

In spite of their stake in Kuwait's developmental process, most foreigners were hired as contract workers and, therefore, not entitled to any social and political rights or to naturalisation. Nonetheless,

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before the first Gulf War (1990-1991), some migrants had been settled in Kuwait for decades. Among these long-term migrants were, first, Palestinians<sup>2</sup> who accounted for half of the Arab resident population in the late 1980s. Mostly involved in the development of the education and health care sectors, some had arrived in Kuwait in the 1950s when the country opened up to migrant labourers, forced out of their homeland by the creation of Israel in 1948; others came after 1950 when Jordan annexed the West Bank. The latter thus carried Jordanian nationality. The Palestinians who found refuge in Syria and Lebanon had UN travel documents. A new wave of migrants went to Kuwait and other oil-producing countries after the 1973 oil boom.

Another category of non-nationals were the *Biduns* (i.e., “without” in Arabic), who are stateless persons originating from three broad categories: 1) the descendants of nomadic Bedouin populations, whose ancestors failed to apply for Kuwaiti nationality at the time the 1959 Nationality Law<sup>3</sup> came into force;<sup>4</sup> 2) those recruited to work in Kuwait’s army or police force during the 1960s, who settled in Kuwait, along with their families. Many in this category originally came from Iraq, Jordan and Syria; 3) the children of Kuwaiti mothers and stateless or foreign fathers. Nationality in Kuwait being transmitted by patrilineal descent, the children of a Kuwaiti mother and non-Kuwaiti father (with specific nationality) inherit the father’s nationality. They are stateless if the father is stateless.<sup>5</sup> Yet, “[i]nitially, from the early 1960s to 1986 the State of Kuwait tolerated the grey area between nationals and foreigners, as a legacy of tribal nomadic practices but also as a convenient way to staff its security forces.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Kuwait’s *Biduns* shared a number of socio-economic privileges with Kuwaiti citizens, such as employment on par with nationals and access to free health and education in the governmental sector, for instance. *Biduns* were also exempted from the obligation of seeking sponsorship and holding a residency permit. They were aggregated to the Kuwaiti population in statistics. It was estimated that *Biduns* residing in Kuwait in the mid-1980s numbered around 250,000.

However, amidst a deepening economic crisis due to falling oil prices, the emergence of regional and domestic political tensions after 1985 due to the Iran-Iraq war and as well as deteriorating ties with Iraq led to drastic changes in migration policies and dynamics. First, Asian labourers started replacing Arabs in the workforce, as the latter were deemed too politically active. Second, accused of collusion with political foes in the region (chiefly Iraq), Kuwait’s *Biduns* were suddenly made illegal residents, and hence placed under threat of deportation, as the provisions of the 1959 Nationality Law were applied to them. After 1986, *Biduns* were progressively deprived of all the socio-economic privileges they had shared with Kuwaiti citizens until then and dismissed from their posts in the security services and public sector.<sup>7</sup> Stripped of any source of income or access to public infrastructure, their fate thus became one of forced exile abroad or poverty-stricken life under threat of deportation. The *Biduns* who fled the country during the invasion by Iraqi troops were later barred from re-entering the country. This policy of conditioning exit from the country to accepting a stamp stating “no re-entry into Kuwait” on one’s travel document lasted throughout the 1990s.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the first Gulf War which broke out in August 1990 following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi troops forced many Kuwaitis and expatriates to seek refuge abroad. Among them were some 400,000 Arab foreign residents. As Jordan and Palestine were accused by Gulf countries to be supporters of

Saddam Hussein's regime, 350,000 Jordanians and Palestinians were compelled to leave. Only very few Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin re-entered Kuwait before the early 2000s.

Following the oil price rise during the 2000s, Kuwait resumed hiring vast numbers of foreign manpower. Since the end of the decade, financial and oil prices fluctuations have led the country into launching ambitious development plans to diversify its economy, gradually moving it away from oil to become a competitive financial hub for the Gulf region, and develop the country's human capital.<sup>9</sup> Large-scale infrastructural development is also underway, which is expected to support investments in many sectors including tourism, hospitality, logistics and ICT, as well as international trade. Kuwait, moreover, foresees itself as a global hub for the petrochemical industry, as it retains 6 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves and 1 per cent of its natural gas. Despite economic ups and downs, the country had an estimated GDP per capita of \$71,943 in power purchasing parity terms in 2017, the eighth-highest value worldwide, according to the World Bank.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, after 2011, security concerns gained prominence following the "Arab Spring" uprisings and several public demonstrations by the *Biduns* against discrimination aimed at them. Tensions also rose over slow economic growth despite large oil revenues, the emergence of youth unemployment (23.3 per cent among the 15-24 age group in 2010),<sup>11</sup> and traffic and facilities' congestion, for which migrant workers were deemed responsible. More generally, the expanding numbers of non-nationals among residents, or "demographic imbalance" making Kuwaitis a minority in their country, became a matter of growing concern for many nationals.

As a consequence, the three issues of the *Biduns*, the "demographic imbalance" between Kuwaitis and foreign residents, as well as the necessity to create employment opportunities for young unemployed nationals were addressed head-on during the 2010s.

Taking over from the establishment of the Central Committee to Resolve the Status of Illegal Residents (1993-1996), the Executive Committee for Illegal Residents' Affairs operated during the 2000s to deal with the *Biduns* remaining in Kuwait, designated as "illegal residents" by the authorities. One of the Committee's tasks was to "collect proof and presumption of origin so as to attribute to the *Bidun* a foreign nationality",<sup>12</sup> which authorities claim was *Bidun* families' original citizenship. Deprived of the civil identification cards issued to citizens and legal non-Kuwaiti residents, *Biduns* received security cards from the Committee. These were distributed to some 106,000 of them, who were registered as stateless residents until 2000 with claims to Kuwaiti nationality. These cards were a protection against deportation; yet, holding such a card de facto invalidated these persons' claims for a Kuwaiti citizenship. In any case, the number of naturalisations allowed annually in Kuwait is only 2,000, and this quota was never reached. Moreover, some stateless persons were refused such cards and thus remain unaccounted for in *Biduns*' and total population figures.<sup>13</sup>

The demonstrations held in 2011 prompted the adoption of a governmental decree<sup>14</sup> aimed at expanding *Biduns*' formal and social rights. A separate government agency, the Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents, was set up and made "the sole official reference empowered to regularise the situation of illegal residents."<sup>15</sup> Among the Central System's responsibilities is the issuing of "review cards" of various durations (one year or two years), depending on whether the holder has a

proof of residence in Kuwait before the year 1965, or not.<sup>16</sup> Registration with the Central System grants some basic rights to card holders.<sup>17</sup> The Central System's function is also to liaise with other government departments in order to retrieve documentary evidence of recorded *Biduns*' "original" nationalities. *Biduns* who go through this procedure, hence renouncing claims to Kuwaiti citizenship, are promised incentives such as the free delivery of a five-year residency card for the now-foreign national and his family members as well as access to public services.<sup>18</sup>

In 2014, it was revealed that the government had been in talks since 2008 with the government of Comoros to provide Comorian passports to *Biduns* in exchange for aid packages and Kuwaiti investments in the country. It does not seem that this programme of "economic citizenship" went through with Kuwait.<sup>19</sup> In May 2016, Parliament had approved a draft law that would grant Kuwaiti citizenship to up to 4,000 *Biduns*.<sup>20</sup> In March 2018, a law was passed that allows *Biduns* to join the military.<sup>21</sup>

Efforts to curb the expansion of the "demographic imbalance" since 2011 has taken several forms, in a context of socio-political and economic uncertainties. Among these are the large-scale, repeated campaigns of arrests and deportations conducted against foreign residents in irregular administrative situation (visa overstayers, undocumented migrants) as well as lawbreakers and nationals from specific countries.

Kuwait held a major amnesty campaign for migrants in irregular situations from March 1 to June 30, 2011.<sup>22</sup> Crackdowns on remaining migrants in irregular situation were conducted after the expiry of the grace period, leading to more than 30,000 deportations. For 2012, a statement by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour said that over 67,000 migrants had been stripped of their residencies during the year, due to overstays abroad and deportations of those found in irregular situations.<sup>23</sup> Kuwait launched another campaign against illegal expats in 2013 and deported those working without proper documentation or those who had switched jobs without official permission.<sup>24</sup> From April to July 2013, an additional 2,000 migrants were deported from Kuwait due to traffic violations.<sup>25</sup> In May 2014, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior had to issue an order to halt immigration raids because police stations and prisons were no longer able to accommodate the large numbers of people being arrested for residency violations.<sup>26</sup> Domestic workers, and among them Ethiopians, were particularly targeted during the raids,<sup>27</sup> which resulted in the deportation of 13,000 Ethiopian domestic workers.<sup>28</sup> Several months later, in January 2015, the government launched another ambitious crackdown on "illegal residents," expected to lead to the arrest of more than 100,000 people,<sup>29</sup> which was the estimated number of residents in irregular administrative situation in Kuwait at the time. Following various operations, the first nine months of 2018 saw a further 13,000 foreign residents being deported for a variety of reasons, including poor health conditions and labour law violations, or after criminal charges were brought against them.<sup>30</sup>

Besides reducing the number of foreign residents in Kuwait, measures were also taken to decrease the inflow of labourers. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour announced in 2012 a policy of reducing the flow of foreigners coming to Kuwait by 100,000 every year for the coming decade, mainly by cutting down on low-skilled and service workers entering the country.<sup>31</sup> The government went even further as of late 2018 and expressed intentions to reduce the number of expats by at least 1.5 million by 2025 in order to achieve a demographic balance between nationals and expatriates. In this context, the setting up of a

national committee for the organisation and management of the demographic structure was advocated for by the government's legal body.<sup>32</sup>

These radical measures also aim to shift employment opportunities towards young Kuwaitis. Former sectoral Kuwaitisation quotas set in 2015<sup>33</sup> were revised, and Kuwait introduced a \$830 fee for companies employing too many foreign workers at the end of 2017.<sup>34</sup> Mid-2018, the chairman of the Civil Services Commission (CSC) indicated the government's intention to stop recruiting expatriates in the public sector and fully Kuwaitise government jobs by 2022.<sup>35</sup> An estimated 44,500 foreign employees in the government sector are set to be replaced by citizens in the coming years. Of these, 3,140 foreign workers had been made redundant under mandated cuts for the 2017-2018 period at ministries, departments and other bodies.<sup>36</sup> The private sector also aims to nationalise its workforce: Kuwait's banks, for instance, were to cut 17,000 foreign workers from their staff, eyeing an 80 per cent Kuwaitisation of employment by the end of 2018. Foreign labourers are to be limited to training positions only.<sup>37</sup>

Various measures were also taken to put more constraints on the hiring of foreign labourers: Kuwait's government decided to start assessing the validity of expatriates' university degree certificates before issuing or renewing residency documents.<sup>38</sup> The government also planned to end hiring expatriates under age 30 with college degrees after July 2018<sup>39</sup> to promote the employment of young Kuwaiti graduates.

The social rights of expatriates currently in the country have also been targeted, as Kuwait stopped issuing visas for expats' parents.<sup>40</sup> The government also significantly raised healthcare fees for foreign residents.<sup>41</sup> Expats in Kuwait are to be banned from public hospitals within three years,<sup>42</sup> and those suffering from some chronic illnesses could face difficulties when trying to obtain residency in the country.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, Kuwait was also the first and only GCC country to set a minimum wage of KD60 (US\$200) for domestic workers in 2016.<sup>44</sup> The Parliament passed a law in June 2015 that, for the first time, gave migrant domestic workers labour rights including one day of rest per week, a 12-hour working day with rest, and annual paid leave.<sup>45</sup> However, implementation and control mechanisms such as inspections are not included in the measure.<sup>46</sup> In 2015, too, Kuwait issued a new standard contract for migrant workers, and a 2016 administrative decision allowed some foreign labourers to transfer their sponsorship to a new employer after three years of work, without their employer's consent. However, these reforms do not extend to migrant domestic workers.<sup>47</sup> Bilateral agreements, such as the new agreement passed with the Philippines at the end of 2018 to solve an employment ban enacted by the sending country, may improve conditions for some expatriate nationals, including domestic labourers.<sup>48</sup>

These many measures are bound to significantly affect the size, structure and dynamics of future inflows of expatriates to Kuwait. However, the most affected among all expatriates may be the two largest national groups, the Indians and the Egyptians.

## OUTWARD MIGRATION

### Stocks

Drawing a picture of Kuwaiti nationals or Kuwait-born residing abroad is a difficult task. First, Kuwaiti statistics are scarce regarding expatriate nationals.<sup>49</sup> Also, neighbouring countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) do not publish data on foreign residents disaggregated by country of citizenship, or by country of birth.

Some data is only available from OECD countries (Table 1):

**Table 1: Stocks of emigrants from Kuwait in OECD countries (2017)**

	Born in Kuwait	Kuwaiti Nationals
<b>E.U. + Switzerland + Norway</b>	<b>23,989</b>	<b>11,201</b>
<i>of which the U.K. (2017)</i>	<i>13,000</i>	<i>6,000</i>
<i>Sweden</i>	<i>2,729</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Germany</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>3,845</i>
<b>Other OECD countries</b>	<b>56,170</b>	<b>18,974</b>
<i>of which the U.S.A.</i>	<i>36,659</i>	<i>18,710</i>
<i>Canada (2011)</i>	<i>12,855</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
<i>Australia</i>	<i>6,050</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>80,159</b>	<b>30,175</b>

Sources: Receiving OECD countries' national statistics, International Migration Database (<http://stats.oecd.org/>) and UK National Office for Statistics. Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality: individual country data (2017).

"Other OECD countries" are: Canada, U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Chile, Israel, Turkey, Japan and Korea.

The discrepancy between the figures of those born in Kuwait and Kuwaiti nationals (not holding the nationality of the host state) in Table 1 suggests that those born in Kuwait:

1. tend to be naturalised in the countries where they most often settled (Canada; the US and Australia). Immigrants to those countries may therefore be long-term migrants, or have no intention or possibility to return to Kuwait. Mid-2017, UNHCR data indicated, for instance, that 1,051 persons originally

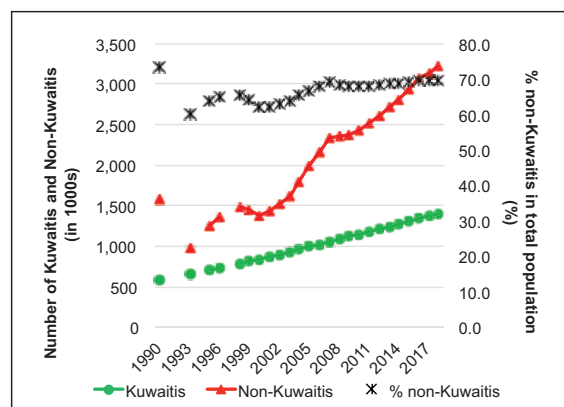
## INWARD MIGRATION

### Stocks

In December 2018, Kuwait's population numbered 4,621,638. Non-Kuwaitis accounted for 70 per cent of the total resident population, or 3,218,525 persons. After the First Gulf War of 1990-1991, the number of foreign expatriates went down markedly, from 1,573,169 before the war to below one million (988,134) in 1993. The pre-war number of expatriates was not reached again before 2002-2003 (Figure 5).

As a consequence, the share of foreigners in the total population dropped from 73 per cent to 60 per cent in 1993. Since then, the rate has remained relatively stable, ranging between 60 and 70 per cent of the total resident population.<sup>79</sup>

**Figure 5: Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis in total resident population (end of the year estimates, 1990-2018)**



Source: Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI).

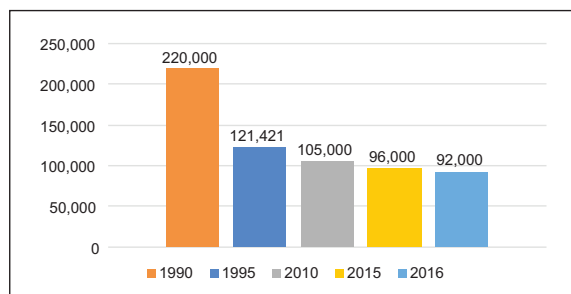
At the end of 2018, 2,398,063 foreign residents were economically active, making up 86 per cent of the 2,811,015 expatriates aged 15 and above and 85 per cent of the total workforce. Of these, 2,393,335 were employed. As opposed to Kuwaiti nationals, mostly enrolled in the government sector (84 per cent), the bulk of non-Kuwaiti manpower was employed in the



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<p>from Kuwait were registered as refugees with the Agency, while another 774 were classified as asylum seekers.<sup>50</sup></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="209 510 778 824">2. The bulk of those born in Kuwait may not be Kuwaiti nationals. They could rather be stemming from those long-term Arab migrants, found quasi-settled in the country when Gulf War I broke out in August 1990. A share of those born in Kuwait and resettled in North America, for instance, may well be of Palestinian descent.<sup>51</sup></li> <li data-bbox="209 846 778 958">3. Emigrants born in Kuwait and residing in OECD countries may also be originally from the <i>Bidun</i> community.</li> </ol> <p>As a matter of fact, the number of <i>Biduns</i> (i.e., registered as “illegal residents” with the Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents) has gone down since the mid-1990s, from an estimated 220,000 in 1990, before the First Gulf War, to around 92,000 as of the end of 2016 (Figure 1).<sup>52</sup> Based on their numbers in 1990 and on natural increase only (excess of births over deaths), in the absence of movements across borders, the number of <i>Biduns</i> in 2016 would have been above 500,000 persons,<sup>53</sup> however. The fall in the numbers of <i>Biduns</i> officially acknowledged is thus due to a combination of factors: emigration outside Kuwait, naturalisations as Kuwaiti national or other nationality, and under-recording.</p>	<p>private and domestic labour sectors: respectively, 68 per cent and 27 per cent of the non-national employed population. Among employed foreign women alone, 45 per cent were working in the domestic sector.</p> <p>Foreign labourers made up as much as 96 per cent of the private sector’s workforce in December 2018. In terms of activity, the bulk of foreign labourers worked in the private household sector (27.4 per cent, and 63.3 per cent of all employed foreign females), wholesale and retail trade sector (17 per cent), construction (18 per cent, and 21 per cent of all foreign men) and in manufacturing (6.2 per cent).</p> <p>As of 2018, the general profile of the foreign population is that of a predominantly male (70 per cent), low-educated (72 per cent of the total population and 81 per cent of the employed population held below secondary level education) and relatively young population (mean age is 34 years). The expatriate population in Kuwait is also demographically distorted by the overrepresentation of working age groups in its age structure: those aged 15 to 60 years make up 84 per cent of the non-nationals as a whole, and 88 per cent of all male expatriates.<sup>80</sup></p> <p>The resident foreign population displays great demographic and socio-economic diversity. Most foreign nationals in Kuwait came from Asia (1.9 million, or 58 per cent of the total), while Arab expatriates made up 39 per cent of all foreign nationals with 1.3 million. African countries’ nationals numbered 47,000 (1.5 per cent of all foreign residents), a marked drop since a few years ago. In 2012, for instance, African countries’ nationals numbered almost 100,000 (92,324). This indicates the targeting of some African nationalities, especially Ethiopians, who made up 84 per cent of all African countries’</p>

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**Figure 1. Evolution of the number of registered “illegal residents” or “Biduns” in Kuwait (selected years, 1990-2016)**



Source: The Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents. Setup and Achievements, 2017, pp. 84-85.

The sharp decrease in the numbers of *Biduns* between 1990 and 1995 (almost 100,000 registrations) confirms, first, that *Biduns* who had fled to Iraq during the First Gulf War were prevented from returning after the end of the conflict.<sup>54</sup> These were estimated to number around 140,000.<sup>55</sup> Others (in the range of 10,000) were deported<sup>56</sup> after accusations of collaboration with the Iraqi occupation forces.

Data on migration flows also confirm the likelihood of some *Biduns'* emigration and settlement abroad, including in non-Arab countries.

### Flows

Data on arrivals and departures across Kuwait's borders are missing for the years 1990 to 1994 in Kuwaiti statistics. However, the *Bidun* population can also be spotted in Saudi data, from the year 1996 to 2007.<sup>57</sup> Over this period, net migration flows of those categorised as “Kuwaiti–no nationality” to Saudi Arabia are always positive (i.e., more entries to Saudi Arabia than exits), reaching up to 4,500 persons for the year 1998.

This is consistent with the negative net migration flows of *Bidun* from Kuwait during

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nationals in 2012,<sup>81</sup> during the several raids conducted against unwanted foreign residents since 2011. Westerners (Europeans, North and South Americans and Oceanians) are present in much smaller numbers in Kuwait and each make up less than 1 per cent of the total (Table 3).

**Table 3: Total foreign resident population in Kuwait, by region and selected country of origin, relation to labour force, sex and age category (2018)**

Country/ Region of citizenship	Total	% in Total	% Female	Relation to labour force (%)		
				In l.f.	Out of l. f.	< 15 years
<b>Arab countries</b>	<b>1,261,062</b>	<b>39.2</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>of which Egypt</i>	670,524	20.8	20.7	74	10	17
<i>Syria</i>	160,120	5.0	40.2	39	29	32
<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	127,604	4.0	47.7	18	50	32
<b>Asia</b>	<b>1,868,208</b>	<b>58.0</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>of which India</i>	1,012,104	31.4	19.8	88	5	7
<i>Bangladesh</i>	281,131	8.7	3.4	97	2	1
<i>Philippines</i>	213,989	6.6	80.4	95	2	3
<i>Pakistan</i>	109,427	3.4	16.5	77	12	11
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	93,749	2.9	62.8	92	4	3
<i>Nepal</i>	70,378	2.2	28.3	99	1	1
<b>Africa</b>	<b>47,227</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>79.4</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Other regions</b>	<b>42,028</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,218,525</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>

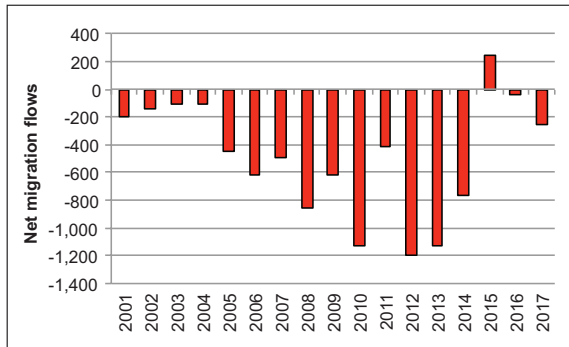
Source: PACI data and author's calculations using PACI data.

PACI publishes the distribution of foreign residents by country of citizenship for a selection of sending countries. This indicates that Indians alone made up 31.4 per cent of all non-Kuwaitis in December 2018, with over 1 million nationals. A half (54 per cent) of all citizens of non-Arab Asian states in Kuwait were thus Indian citizens. Among nationals from Arab countries, Egyptians were the vast majority (53 per cent, and 21 per cent of all foreigners). Egyptians were the second most numerous nationality in Kuwait, while Syrians occupied the fifth place, with some 160,000 legal residents. Syrians numbered 135,000 in December 2012<sup>82</sup> and 155,000 mid-2015. Their numerical expansion as well as the large share of non-active<sup>83</sup> and young residents (below 15 years of age)

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the 2000s and 2010s.<sup>58</sup> These remained limited in size, but were more pronounced during the years 2008 to 2014.

**Figure 2: Net migration flows of “non-Kuwaitis” from Kuwait (2001-2017)**



Source: Ministry of Interior, Kuwait.

*Biduns'* lack of identification documents is said to prevent their mobility outside the country, and there is no evidence for deportations of *Biduns* from Kuwait during the period. Therefore, the circumstances of *Bidun* residents' departures from Kuwait are unclear, as are their primary destinations. Nonetheless, one of the tasks of the Central Agency is to coordinate with UNHCR on the possibilities for resettlement of *Biduns* and their families abroad, as well as issuing temporary passports to facilitate their exit from the country.<sup>59</sup> Following these few years of sustained exits from Kuwait, an increase in the numbers of asylum applications emanating from migrants originating from Kuwait can be noticed: from a low of around 240 in the early 2010s, the number of asylum seekers from Kuwait increased after 2015 and eventually reached 1,013 at the end of 2017.<sup>60</sup>

After 1985, *Bidun* residents in Kuwait were made illegal residents and had no citizenship documents. Another reason for the drop in the number of *Biduns* in Kuwait is their adjusting their status in Kuwait by recovering their “original” citizenship.

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suggests that Kuwait did facilitate family reunion for these nationals and refrained from deporting expired residency and visit visa overstayers since the Syrian conflict broke out in 2011.<sup>84</sup>

Data in Table 3 point to the diversity of these nationalities' demographic and socio-economic profiles. While Arab and Asian populations in general display relatively similar shares of females among them, Arab residents are more often made of families (22 per cent of children aged below 15 and 25 per cent out of the labour force) than Asians (only 6 per cent are below 15 and 5 per cent are inactive). Asian populations are indeed overwhelmingly made up of workers: 99 per cent in the extreme case of the Nepalese and above 90 per cent for most of Asian national populations. By contrast, around a half of “other” (Western) and Arab nationals are either inactive (out of the labour force) or aged below 15. Egyptians, due to their vast numbers, display a profile closer to that of Indian and Pakistani residents. Syrians and Saudis have the most sizable share of non-active and minors (below 15) (Table 3).

Indeed, the income level (a minimum of KD450 monthly for those employed by the government and at least KD650 for those employed in the private sector) determines the ability of the (male) worker to sponsor his family members for residency in Kuwait.<sup>85</sup>

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**Table 2: Nationalities recovered by *Biduns* (1986-2016)**

	1986-2011	2011-2016	1986-2016
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	54,806	5,704	<b>60,510</b>
<b>Iraq</b>	11,552	981	<b>12,533</b>
<b>Syria</b>	7,291	802	<b>8,093</b>
<b>Iran</b>	1,855	98	<b>1,953</b>
<b>Jordan</b>	504	49	<b>553</b>
<b>Other countries</b>	6,153	748	<b>6,901</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,161</b>	<b>8,382</b>	<b>90,543</b>

Source: Beaugrand, C. *Stateless in the Gulf: Migration, Nationality and Society in Kuwait*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017, table 1.2, Chapter 1;

The Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents. *Setup and Achievements*, 2017, pp. 84-85.

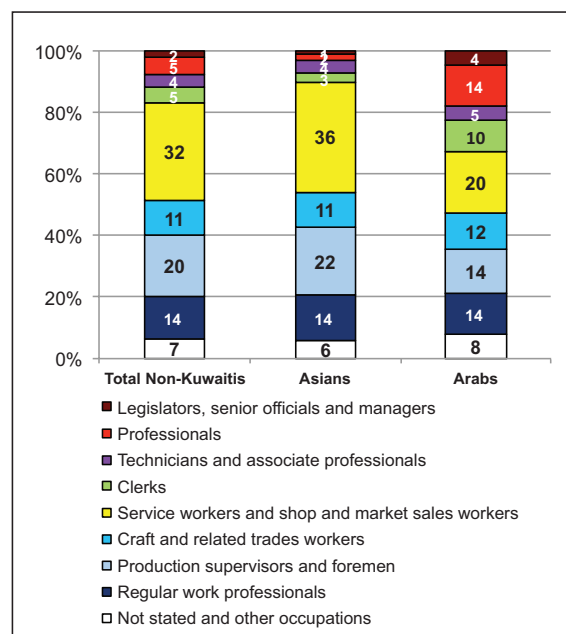
Data in Table 2 only reflect the numbers of *Biduns* who were registered with the Central System and other bodies dedicated to the *Biduns* issue since the mid-1980s. No explanation could be found to the dominance of Saudi Arabia as a (true or assigned) country of origin of those having recovered their “original” nationality, and it is impossible to imply from these data that most *Bidun* families would be originally Saudis.<sup>61</sup>

The Central System authorities claim that as of today, around 34,000 *Biduns* only would qualify for Kuwaiti naturalisation (i.e., be able to prove the presence of their ancestors in Kuwait before 1965). During the twenty-four years between 1992 and 2016, 16,377 *Biduns* were naturalised as Kuwaiti nationals.<sup>62</sup>

Besides emigration and naturalisation, the changes in the number of registered *Biduns* also stem from the movements of administrative inclusion and exclusion of cases to and from the Central Agency’s records. Last, it should be mentioned that a number of *Biduns* are not registered with the Agency. Some activists claim that the real number of *Biduns* is significantly

## INWARD MIGRATION

**Figure 6: Employed non-Kuwaitis by occupation and nationality group (Total, Asians, Arabs), 2018**



Source: PACI data.

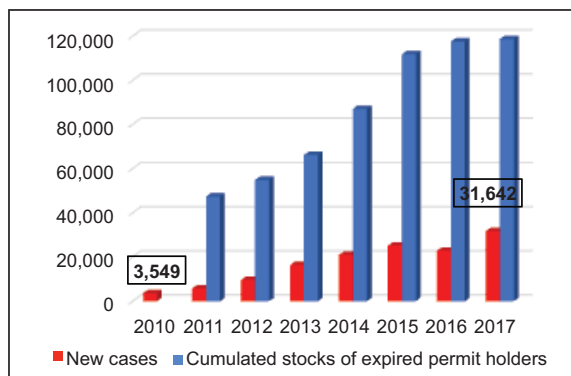
As indicated by Figure 6, foreign labourers in general, and among them Asians, are more often employed in services and “blue collar” occupations than in “highly-skilled” professions.<sup>66</sup> These involve only 7 per cent of all Asians, which most often means that these nationals cannot meet the required financial conditions for bringing their families over to Kuwait, unless both spouses are employed. Asian labourers are also mostly employed in the private and domestic labour sectors (respectively, 60 and 37 per cent), while 71 per cent of Asian females alone work in the domestic sector.<sup>67</sup> Sixty-two per cent of Indian workers, for instance, are employed in Kuwait’s private sector, while the 307,416 Indian domestic labourers make up 35 per cent of all Indian employed nationals.<sup>68</sup> The 44,000 labourers from African countries are even more concentrated in domestic sector activities, which employs 80 per cent of them, and 92 per cent of females alone.

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higher than the number of registered individuals and could be close to 240,000, as of 2014.<sup>63</sup> Among others, a possible reason for such an under-estimation of the number of *Biduns* in official records is the under-registration of births of *Bidun* children,<sup>64</sup> especially before 2011.

Concerns regarding irregularity have been increasing in Kuwait since 2010, as indicated in the introduction. Despite this, the processing of the administrative records of residency holders by the Ministry of Interior and the Central Statistical Bureau seems to suggest that the number of foreign residents holding expired residency documents has been increasing steadily since 2010 (Figure 3).<sup>65</sup> The number of new cases discovered per year went up from 3,549 in 2010 to 31,642 in 2017, while the cumulated number of residency violators<sup>66</sup> jumped from 47,311 in 2011 to 119,000 in 2017.

**Figure 3: Number of holders of expired residency permits in Kuwait (2010-2017)**



Source: Ministry of Interior, Kuwait.

Considering the tightening of security measures since 2011 in the country, it is likely that such an increase in the numbers of foreign residents in irregular situation results from enhanced monitoring capacities put in place by Kuwait’s authorities, which allowed them

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Arab expatriates, by contrast, display more diversity in their occupations. They often fill highly-skilled positions: 23 per cent of Arab workers are in the three upper categories of professions (Figure 6). Alongside Europeans and others Westerners, Arab labourers are also more often employed in Kuwait’s public sector than Asians (all Arabs: 11 per cent; Egyptians: 9 per cent; Jordanians: 13.3 per cent of these employed nationals, for instance).<sup>89</sup> The domestic sector employs very few Arab citizens.<sup>90</sup> However, Egyptians, in view of their large numbers, may remain more often than other nationals from the region in the lower echelons of the occupational structure. Data also suggest that a few hundred Egyptians may be involved in domestic services.<sup>91</sup>

The occupation and income level being correlated with the presence of family members in Kuwait, it can also explain the discrepancy between Asians and Arabs regarding place of birth. The proportion of Asian residents born in Kuwait is only 6 per cent, while it reaches 33.3 per cent for Arabs.<sup>92</sup> PACI data classifies the *Biduns* with the non-Kuwaitis, which can partly explain this high figure. Yet, it was also often witnessed before the First Gulf War and ensuing exodus of Palestinians from Kuwait, that some expatriates had been able to settle durably in Kuwait, in spite of the region’s migration policies aiming at preventing foreigners’ long-term stay.

**Flows**

As of September 2018, the number of legal residency permit holders was 2,861,380, up from 2,166,275 in December 2011.<sup>93</sup> The number of legal residents, as well as their internal structure by purpose of residency permit (workers/ family dependents and other inactive persons), increased slowly and steadily over the period 2011 to mid-2018: numbering 2,313,511 as of September

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to better track down migrants' administrative status, rather than from an expansion of irregular sojourners in Kuwait over the period. As a matter of fact, the cumulated figures of irregular stayers are administrative figures, estimated from records of entries, permits granted, and exits from the country.<sup>67</sup>

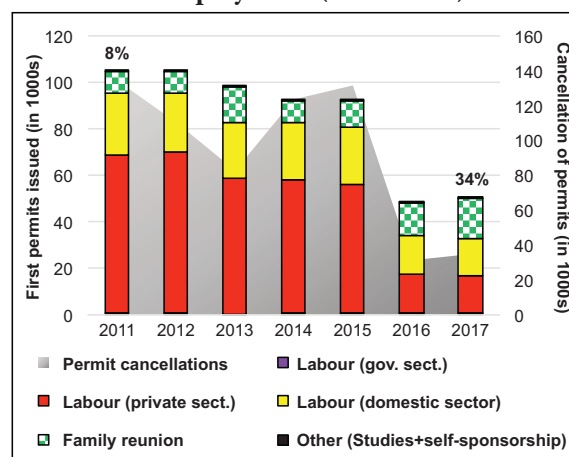
Statistics available on foreign residents' deportations from Kuwait suggest that irregular stay is not the main motive for deportation. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior publishes deportation statistics by category of charges, which include violations in residency laws.<sup>68</sup> However, Figure 4 highlights that the number of deportations for this charge decreased from 15,495 in 2008 to 6,112 in 2017. The share of such forced exits went down markedly, from 73 per cent to 22 per cent of the total of administrative and legal deportations enacted annually during the period. This suggests that regularisations of residency issues may be possible in the country, besides prolonged detention for the purpose of irregular sojourn.<sup>69</sup>

However, the total number of deportations since the late 2000s has been increasing and peaked in 2016 with 31,244 deportations, up from 21,276 in 2008 (Figure 4). As indicated earlier, many motives, criminal and otherwise, including traffic violations, were used to motivate deportations, in line with the several crackdown campaigns conducted in the country since 2011.

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2018, foreign workers<sup>94</sup> have been making up a constant 79-80 per cent of all expatriates holding a residency over these recent years, with only a slight decrease in the relative share of domestic labourers. Family dependents<sup>95</sup> have been making up around 20 per cent of all permit holders over the period.

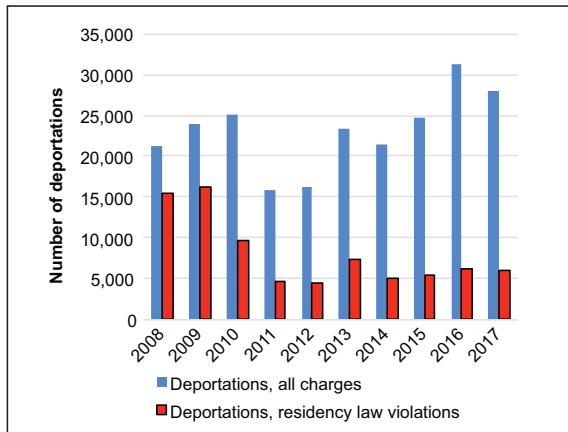
**Figure 7: Residency permits cancelled and first permits issued by purpose of permit and sector of employment (2011-2017)**



Source: Ministry of Interior. The figures do not include temporary permits (no.14) (one-year and less).

As regards residents' inflows (first permits) and outflows (cancellations of permits), the picture is, however, very different. From a high of almost half a million new permits issued in 2003 (496,865 permits), the number of new permits issued has been decreasing constantly, reaching 50,377 in the year 2017.<sup>96</sup> Figure 7 indicates that the disruption of the movements of new entries and exits was especially sharp after 2015. A marked decrease in the number of first-time residencies issued to private sector labourers, from 54,840 in 2015 to 16,184 in 2016, was observed, for instance. Over the period, the permit category no. 22 (family dependent) is the only one to gain in numbers, as well as in relative share vis-à-vis other, labour-bound residencies.

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**Figure 4: Deportations from Kuwait by type of charges (2008-2017)**

Source: Ministry of Interior, Kuwait.

Moreover, statistics on administrative and legal deportations do not seem to include the figures of deportations following the campaigns targeting irregular sojourners, conducted since 2011. For example, deportation statistics only record 4,762 deportations for breaching residency laws in 2011, while the four-month crackdown campaign conducted that same year resulted in 32,036 exits on similar charges. Exits which followed the crackdown operation are categorised as regularisations by departure, not as deportations.<sup>71</sup> This means that the country did step up deportations enacted against several categories of foreign migrants, as was announced in the press and advocated for by Kuwaiti politicians.

According to press sources, deportations conducted during 2018 numbered 17,000.<sup>72</sup> It mostly concerned Filipinos, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Sri Lankans, and Bangladeshis. In 2011, Bangladeshis, Indians, and Sri Lankans were already topping the list of irregular sojourners, according to first-hand information from the Ministry of Interior.<sup>73</sup> Eighty per cent

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When compared to the steady increase in the total number of residency permit holders over the period, the sharp drop in the number of new, first-time residencies issued after 2015 could be a consequence of the several campaigns conducted against residents in irregular administrative situations since the late 2000s. In light of the peak in cancellations of residencies seen in 2015 (Figure 7), the drop in the numbers of first permits granted could indeed signal a policy of better organising the labour market, by retaining and fixing the administrative status of selected categories of legal labourers only, while unwanted ones were terminated or even deported during 2010-2015. The largest share of permit cancellations during 2014-2015 actually targeted the domestic sector, which was also focussed upon during the 2014-2015 raids against foreigners in irregular situation, as explained earlier. In support of this hypothesis is also the sharp fall in the number of temporary residencies<sup>97</sup> issued, from 127,938 in 2015 to only 21,714 in 2016. By contrast, the numbers as well as relative share of first-time residencies issued to family dependents went up, from 8 per cent of all first-time residencies issued in 2011 to 34 per cent in 2017, a share equivalent to that of private and domestic labour-bound first permits delivered that year. This suggests, furthermore, an upgrading of the labour force, since the labourer's income conditions his right to family reunion.

The distribution of first-permits issued by region of origin of holder (Figure 8) illustrates the labour market upheavals experienced in Kuwait since the early 2010s. Asian expatriates used to make up the bulk of the large inflows reaching Kuwait until the late 2000s (75 per cent), while Arab newcomers made up around 20 per cent of these. In 2017, however, 40 per cent of new residency permits issued went to Arab nationals and 56 per cent to Asians. Citizens of African

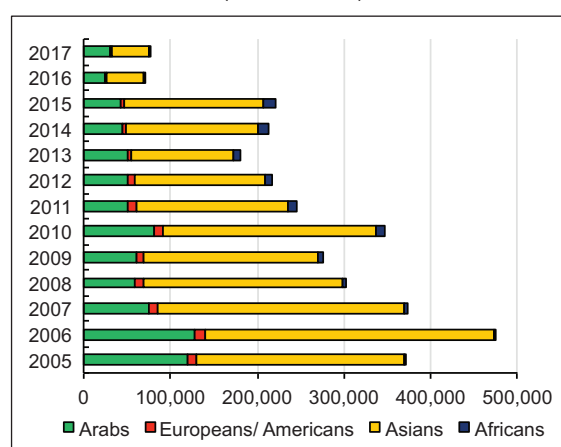
### OUTWARD MIGRATION

of these nationals identified during the 2011 amnesty campaign were deported following their arrests, when other nationalities (Arabs and Westerners) were most often able to regularise their status.<sup>74</sup> Asian nationalities most targeted by deportations, alongside Ethiopian residents who were also campaigned against during 2014 and eventually banned from Kuwait,<sup>75</sup> are often employed as domestic workers. The sector is particularly scrutinised and Kuwaiti authorities estimated in 2018 that “around 60,000 expatriates from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Syria, the Philippines, Pakistan and other nationalities are illegally working as domestic helpers.”<sup>76</sup> It is worth noting that, since 2011, Kuwaiti authorities have not deported Syrian nationals overstaying their residency permits and allowed some Syrian de facto refugees to reside in Kuwait on visit or tourism visas, for they were unable to go back to a country at war.<sup>77</sup> However, since 2018 and amid Kuwait’s recent campaigns to deport illegal residents, lawbreakers and beggars, the fate of Syrians irregularly residing in Kuwait hangs on conflicting reports regarding stability in their home country.<sup>78</sup>

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states were introduced to Kuwait’s labour market from the late 2000s, but their numbers among newcomers fell from 12,765 in 2015 to around 700 for 2016 and 2017. From 6 per cent of new inflows, their share is now below 1 per cent.

**Figure 8: First-time residency permits issued, by nationality group of permit holder (2005-2017)**



Source: Ministry of Interior. Figures include temporary permits (no. 14) (one-year and less).

The ongoing campaign against undocumented migrants, lawbreakers, and beggars in the Emirate may further affect the expatriate populations’ size and dynamics, as well as national and occupational structure. In April 2018, 57,132 illegal residents had reportedly left the country and 20,964 of them had corrected their status and obtained legal residence in the country, following an amnesty period.<sup>98</sup> However, as detailed earlier, rounding up campaigns are part of a more comprehensive and multifaceted policy aiming at Kuwaitising the labour force, especially in the private sector, and more generally, at limiting the Emirate’s “demographic imbalance.” The final results of these many measures aimed at Kuwait’s expatriate community is yet to be seen.



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2. Philippe Gorokhoff, “Les Palestiniens au Koweït” in *Migrations et changements sociaux dans l’Orient arabe* ed. CERMOC (Beirut: CERMOC, 1985), 37-84 ; Laurie Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
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4. Some did not relate to the concept of nationality, other were illiterate or uninformed about the process of naturalisation and its implications. See Human Rights Watch, *Prisoners of the Past. Kuwaiti Bidun and the Burden of Statelessness*, June 2011, p. 12.
5. Human Rights Watch, *Prisoners of the Past*, 2011: 15.
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13. The issue of the *Bidun* communities and the changes affecting their administrative and social status since the mid-1980s are of great importance in the context of the reliability of population data in Kuwait. Prior to 1989, stateless persons were categorised as Kuwaitis in national statistics released by the Ministry of Planning (MoP). When PACI started issuing population statistics, the Authority counted the *Biduns* with the non-Kuwaitis and thus created a discrepancy with MoP population data. After 1989 when they became illegal residents, the *Bidun* are unaccounted for in labour and residency permits' data released by PACI, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, and the Ministry of Interior.
14. Cabinet Resolution 409/2011.
15. The Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents, *Setup and Achievements*, 2017, p. 87.
16. "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 [...]. The 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." Human Rights Watch, *Report on the Human Rights Watch Report and Response to its Questions and Inquiries*, 2011, p. 8.
17. 1. Free treatment for illegal residents through the Charitable Fund for the Health Care of Needy Residents of Kuwait. 2. Free education for the children of illegal residents through the Charitable Fund for the Education of Needy Children of Kuwait. 3. Issuance of birth certificates for the children of illegal residents that list nationality as "non-Kuwaiti." 4. Issuance of death certificates for illegal residents that list nationality as "non-Kuwaiti." 5. Issuance of marriage contracts for illegal residents that list nationality as "non-Kuwaiti." 6. Issuance of divorce certificates for illegal residents that list nationality as "non-Kuwaiti." 7. Issuance of driver's licenses for illegal residents that list nationality as "non-Kuwaiti." 8. Access for disabled illegal residents to services provided by the Supreme Council for the Disabled in accordance with existing conditions. At the same time, this group was and continues to benefit from a set of social, administrative, educational and medical facilities before the issuance of Cabinet Decree 409/2011. They benefit from the services offered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, access to job opportunities in the public and private sectors, and services offered by the Ministry of Health in government hospitals like those offered to nationals. 9. The right to obtain any kind of authorisation from the Department of Authentication. 10. The opportunity for appointment in the government and private sectors was opened to illegal residents according to the need for work. 11. Availability of a provision card for eligible illegal residents. Human Rights Watch, *Report on the Human Rights Watch Report and Response to its Questions and Inquiries*, pp. 3-4.
18. The Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents, *Setup and Achievements*, 2017, p.66.
19. Unlike with the UAE (Beaugrand, *Stateless in the Gulf*, chapters 1 and 4).
20. But it had not been enacted by the end of 2018 (<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1799092019ENGLISH.pdf>).
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Following the announcement in April 2017 that descendants of former *Bidun* soldiers would once again be allowed to enlist in the armed forces, the military received 20,000 applications from the *Bidun* community within the first three days after the announcement alone (<https://minorityrights.org/minorities/bidoon/>).
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51. However, most of those expelled from Kuwait settled in Jordan and Palestine, since most were carrying Jordanian passports.
52. The Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents, *Setup and Achievements*, 2017, pp. 84-85. Data up to the end of 2016, last available data as of February 2019.
53. Applying to the estimated *Bidun* population in 1990 a rate of natural increase of 3.2 per cent per year, which is the average rate of increase of the Kuwaiti national population over the 26 years between 1990 and the end of 2016 (last available data on *Bidun's* registered in the Central System's statistics- see previous endnote).
54. "Prior to 1990 the official number of Bidun resident in Kuwait was around 250,000. However many Bidun who fled the country during the war found themselves stranded outside of Kuwait. Most Bidun could not flee to Saudi Arabia (as many Kuwaitis did), because they lacked passports and could not enter the country. Instead they escaped to villages and other remote areas in Iraq. Iraq did not require travel documents from those arriving from Kuwait, which the Iraqi government considered its newly annexed "nineteenth province." [...] When these Bidun attempted to return to Kuwait following liberation, they were refused entry at the Kuwaiti border.[...]" (Human Rights Watch, *Prisoners of the Past*, 2011: 19).
55. Beaugrand, *Stateless in the Gulf*, chapter 1.
56. <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/bidoon/>.
57. Arrivals and departures by citizenship, Saudi ministry of Interior (<https://gulfmigration.org/arrivals-and-departures-of-non-saudis-by-country-of-nationality-2000-2011-2/> and <https://gulfmigration.org/saudi-arabia-arrivals-and-departures-of-non-saudis-by-country-of-nationality-2012-2013-last-available-data/>). Before 1996, *Biduns* were counted with the Kuwaiti nationals by Saudi border authorities. After 2007, the "Kuwaiti – no nationality" category which designates the stateless *Biduns* in Saudi border-crossing statistics, stopped being used.
58. In Kuwaiti statistics of border movements, they are the populations categorised as "Non-Kuwaitis." Data by citizenship of border-crossers are unavailable before 2001.
59. The Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents, 2017: 65.
60. UNHCR Population Statistics Reference Database ([http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/asylum\\_seekers](http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/asylum_seekers)). Date extracted: 25/02/2019.
61. Beaugrand, *Stateless in the Gulf*, chapter 1.
62. The Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents, 2017: 31.
63. Human Rights Watch. *World Report 2014: Kuwait*, January 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/kuwait>.
64. See in Beaugrand, *Stateless in the Gulf*, chapter 1.
65. Central Statistical Bureau. *Migration Statistics Bulletin*, 2011 to 2017. "Residency violators" are defined as holders of expired residency permits (see "Concepts" section).

66. Cumulated since 1992. Central Statistical Bureau. *Migration Statistics Bulletin* 2017, p. 22.
67. Which means that in some cases, some residents can be unduly charged with overstaying (see, for instance, Global Detention Project, *Kuwait Immigration Detention Profile*, January 2016 update, “Criminalisation” section <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/middle-east/kuwait>).
68. <https://gulfmigration.org/kuwait-deportations-from-kuwait-by-type-all-charges-residence-law-violations-2008-2017/>.
69. Global Detention Project, *Kuwait Immigration Detention Profile*, <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/middle-east/kuwait>.
70. <https://gulfmigration.org/record-of-residency-law-violators-having-benefitted-from-the-amnesty-ministerial-decision-20111054-and-estimation-of-the-residents-remaining-in-irregular-situation-by-country-of-citizenship-0107/>.
71. <http://gulfmigration.eu/record-of-residency-law-violators-having-benefitted-from-the-amnesty-ministerial-decision-20111054-and-estimation-of-the-residents-remaining-in-irregular-situation-by-country-of-citizenship-0107/>.
72. <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/decline-seen-in-deportation-rate/>.
73. <https://gulfmigration.org/record-of-residency-law-violators-having-benefitted-from-the-amnesty-ministerial-decision-20111054-and-estimation-of-the-residents-remaining-in-irregular-situation-by-country-of-citizenship-0107/>.
74. <https://gulfmigration.org/record-of-residency-law-violators-having-benefitted-from-the-amnesty-ministerial-decision-20111054-and-estimation-of-the-residents-remaining-in-irregular-situation-by-country-of-citizenship-0107/>. Data show that other Asian nationals rounded up during the campaigns (namely, Indonesians and Nepalese), were also deported in larger numbers than those regularised.
75. <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2014/03/kuwait-bans-ethiopians-and-deports-13000-domestic-workers/>.
76. <https://gulfnnews.com/world/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-speeds-up-deportation-process-1.2270843>.
77. F. De Bel-Air, “A Note on Syrian Refugees in the Gulf: Attempting to Assess Data and Policies,” Explanatory Note No. 11/2015, Gulf Labour Market and Migration (GLMM) programme of the Migration Policy Center (MPC) and the Gulf Research Center (GRC), <http://gulfmigration.eu>.
78. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180628-kuwait-to-deport-syria-yemen-refugees/>; <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/syrians-yemenis-in-prison-to-be-deported-home-moi/>.
79. The source of data used here is the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), an independent government body in charge of: 1- centralising all population and labour force data in order to manage a fully computerised population register; 2- issuing mandatory civil identification cards (*Bitāqa madaniyya*) to every resident of the country, regardless of age and nationality. The other source of demographic and socioeconomic data on Kuwait is the Central Statistical Office (CSO) in the Planning Ministry. The CSO has conducted ten population and housing censuses since its inception in 1957. However, since 1995, a marked discrepancy was witnessed between the PACI and the CSO population figures. The PACI database is connected electronically with other administrations and bodies registering demographic events and professional or residency issues (births and death; departures and arrivals; end of service, residency and ID deliveries, etc.). The PACI data are thus regularly updated. Therefore, it is likely that residents were undercounted by the CSO during census operations [see N. Shah, *Population of Kuwait. Structure and Dynamics* (Kuwait: Kuwait University Academic Publication Council, 2010), chapter 1].
80. PACI data (population aged 15 and above).

81. <https://gulfmigration.org/non-kuwaiti-population-by-sex-migration-status-and-country-of-citizenship-of-holder-2012/>.
82. <https://gulfmigration.org/non-kuwaiti-population-by-sex-migration-status-and-country-of-citizenship-of-holder-2012/>.
83. Non-active residents are those “out of the labour force.” The distribution of residents by relation to the labour force (for those aged 15 and above, in/ out of the labour force) and age category (below 15 years of age) for each nationality group was calculated using different PACI data (distribution of nationality groups by sex and age group, and distribution of active residents by nationality group and occupation). <https://gulfmigration.org/kuwait-non-kuwaiti-population-by-region-selected-countries-of-origin-and-sex-distributed-by-age-category-and-relation-to-labour-force-2018-3/?print=pdf>.
84. De Bel-Air, “A Note on Syrian Refugees in the Gulf: Attempting to Assess Data and Policies.”
85. Respectively, \$1,480 and \$2,140, or Euros 1,300 and 1,880, as of March 2019. If both man and wife work in Kuwait, they can sponsor their children, but only if their combined salaries are more than KD350 per month. Additionally, a wife can’t sponsor her husband. Sons over 21 years of age cannot be sponsored. Dependent family members are not allowed to work, unless they convert their residency into a work residency (<https://www.visit-kuwait.com/info/family-dependent-visa.aspx>).
86. Such professions correspond to the three upper-level categories of occupations: “Legislators, senior officials and managers”; “Professionals”; and “Technicians and associate professionals.”
87. <https://gulfmigration.org/kuwait-employed-population-aged-15-and-above-by-nationality-group-sex-and-activity-sector-2018/>.
88. PACI website has data on selected nationalities’ demographic profile and employment figures by economic sector (government and private, as well as domestic), <https://www.paci.gov.kw/stat/StatIndicators.aspx>. These were combined with our calculations in Table 3 to come up with these comprehensive activity figures for the selected nationalities.
89. PACI data.
90. 3,420, of whom 3,087 males (PACI data).
91. See previous endnote. First, it can be inferred from Table 3 data that around 496,000 Egyptian nationals are employed in the three sectors. Second, PACI data indicates that 491,125 Egyptians were employed in the government and private sectors as of December 2018.
92. Author’s estimates using PACI data on non-Kuwaitis born in Kuwait and total non-Kuwaiti population, by nationality group, December 31, 2018.
93. Stocks of permit holders’ figures do not include “temporary permits” (no. 14).
94. Those classified as “workers” were the holders of permits no.17 (government sector employment); 18 (private sector employment); 19 (freelancers) and 20 (domestic sector employment).
95. Holders of permits no. 22 (family reunion).
96. These figures do not include holders of temporary permits (no. 14).
97. The temporary residency granted under article 14 of the immigration regulations can be valid for a minimum of 1 month to a year.
98. <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/57132-illegals-leave-kuwait/>.

### About the Author



**Françoise De Bel-Air** (PhD) is a researcher and consultant based in Paris, France. A socio-demographer by training, she specializes in the demography of Arab countries, especially in the Middle East and the Gulf region. She has been a research fellow at the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO) in Amman, Jordan for several years and a part-time Professor at the Migration Policy Centre, EUI. Her research focusses on political demography, as well as on the demographic and socio-political dynamics in the region: youth, intergenerational and gender relationships, family structures, labour and forced migration, migration and population policies. Her recent publications include Chapter 7 “Exclusion, Mobility and Migration” in the Arab Human Development Report 2016 on Youth and “Blocked Youth’: The Politics of Migration from the SEM Countries before and after the Arab Uprisings.” *The International Spectator* (53): 2018.

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