

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2003		33	Kuwait	Yasser al-Habib, writer

Announcement

International PEN and NEAR report that Kuwaiti writer Yasser al-Habib was abducted by security forces on 30 November 2003, probably in connection with an audiocassette recording of a lecture he gave on [unspecified] Islamic historical issues. There are serious concerns for his health. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

P.S.: In 1999 political scientist Ahmad al-Baghdadi and historian Sulaiman al-Badr were criticized because they had written that the Prophet Mohammed had failed to convert unbelievers during his time in Mecca. Al-Badr publicly apologized, but al-Baghdadi was found guilty of blaspheming Islam. After Emir Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah pardoned him, he was released. (See NCH #17.) For other historical news on Kuwait, see NCH #14 and #32.

INTERNATIONAL PEN WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE RAPID ACTION NETWORK RAN 56/03

16 December 2003

KUWAIT: Writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib detained; health concerns.

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN is seriously concerned about the detention of writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib, who was arrested on 30 November 2003 and is believed to be detained in connection with a lecture he had given. Yasser al-Habib is said to have collapsed during one of his interrogation sessions, and there are serious concerns for his health. International PEN fears that journalist Yasser al-Habib may be held solely for the peaceful expression of his views, and if this is the case calls for his immediate and unconditional release. PEN is seriously concerned for Yasser al-Habib's health and well-being, and seeks assurances that he is being well-treated in detention and urges that he is given full access to medical treatment, family visits and legal representation.

According to our information, Yasser al-Habib, who has worked for several Arabic-language newspapers including the monthly al-Menbar (The Pulpit), was abducted on a Kuwait City street on the afternoon of 30 November 2003 by unknown individuals and taken away in an unmarked vehicle. His family was not informed that he had been detained by security forces until the following day. It is thought that al-Habib may be held in connection with an audiocassette recording of a lecture he gave on Islamic historical issues. Yasser al-Habib, aged about thirty, is reported to have collapsed during one of his interrogation sessions due to ill-health, and is said to have been hospitalised. Security forces have announced that he is being held in the al-Niyabah al-Ammah criminal investigation building, and is not allowed visitors. No details of any charges against him have been made known.

International PEN Writers in Prison Committee is seriously concerned about the detention of Kuwaiti writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib, and fears that he may be held solely for the peaceful expression of his opinions and therefore in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Kuwait is a signatory. If this is the case, we call for his immediate and unconditional release.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS:

expressing serious concern about the detention of writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release if held in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Kuwait is a signatory;

expressing concerns for al-Habib's health, and seeking assurances that he is being well-treated in detention and granted full access to medical care, family visits and his lawyer.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah
Emir of the State of Kuwait
Al-Diwan al-Amiri
Al-Safat
Kuwait City
Kuwait.
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For further information please contact Cathy McCann at the Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN, 9/10 Charterhouse Buildings, London EC1M 7AT, United Kingdom. Tel: +44 (0) 207 253 3226 Fax: +44 (0) 207 253 5711 email: <cmccann@wipcpen.org>.