

| Network of Concerned Historians | | | | NCH |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------|---------|-------------------------|
| Campaigns | | | | |
| Year original | Year follow-up | Circular | Country | Names |
| 2003 | | 33 | Kuwait | Yasser al-Habib, writer |
| | 2004 | | | <i>follow-up 1</i> |

Announcement

International PEN reports that Kuwaiti writer Yasser al-Habib, abducted in November 2003 (see NCH #33), is sentenced to one year of imprisonment in connection with an audiocassette recording of a lecture he gave on Islamic historical issues. He is said to have been subjected to orchestrated violent attacks in prison by other inmates. It is hoped that his case may be considered for an amnesty on 25 February, Kuwaiti National Day, when the Emir declares clemency for some prisoners. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeal before that date. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

INTERNATIONAL PEN WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE

9 February 2004—Update #1 to RAN 56/03

KUWAIT: Writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib sentenced to one year in prison; reports of ill-treatment in prison.

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN protests the one-year prison sentence handed down to writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib, who was reportedly convicted on 20 January 2004 of “questioning the conduct and integrity of some of the ‘companions’ of the prophet Muhammad” in a lecture he had delivered. International PEN is seriously concerned at reports that Yasser al-Habib has been subject to orchestrated violent attacks by other inmates whilst in prison, and calls upon the Kuwaiti authorities to investigate these reports so that those responsible are held to account. PEN seeks assurances that Yasser al-Habib is protected from further attack whilst detained, and is provided with all necessary medical care.

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. Al-

Habib was reportedly arrested in connection with an audiocassette recording of a lecture he gave to an audience of 10-20 people in a closed environment on Islamic historical issues. His research is believed to have relied heavily on Wahhabi references and texts, and is said to have angered hard-line Wahhabi groups who have used their influence within the establishment to bring about the maximum punishment against al-Habib. Yasser al-Habib is thought to be appealing his sentence. It is hoped that his case may also be considered for an amnesty on 25 February, Kuwaiti National Day, when the Emir declares clemency for some prisoners.

Yasser al-Habib, aged about thirty, is said to suffer from asthma and stomach problems, and to be in frail health. He has reportedly been subject to several orchestrated violent attacks in prison by Wahhabi inmates.

International PEN Writers in Prison Committee protests the sentence handed down to Kuwaiti writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib, and calls for his immediate and unconditional release in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Kuwait is a signatory.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS (if possible to arrive before 25 February 2004):

protesting the sentence handed down to writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Kuwait is a signatory;

expressing serious concerns about reports that al-Habib has been subject to ill-treatment in prison, and urging that measures are taken to investigate these incidents so that those responsible are held to account;

seeking assurances that he is protected from further attack 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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