



DISPUTE OVER COMMUNITY GARDEN IN SHUWAIKH

RESIDENTS SEEK TO PREVENT BULLDOZING OF TREES, CLAIMS OF WASTA AND INFLUENCE

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: A long running dispute over a community park in Shuwaikh brewed over this week when authorities from Kuwait Municipality sent workers to cut down the trees and bulldoze the area. Local residents, who privately care for the public garden, said that another local resident had used 'wasta' (connections) to try and have the garden demolished.

"The public park is the only park in Shuwaikh area. The land originally belonged to the Ministry of Education but the ministry gave this piece of land to The Public Authority of Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources, and they approved its conversion to a public park after we asked them," explained Abdelaziz Sultan Al-Essa, the spokesman in behalf of residents of the area.

Transformer

"The authority approved to give us charge of the park. Since 2003 the residents of the area started to plant trees and flowers. But when a new resident arrived in 2011, he decided that the power transformer near his house should be



Abdelaziz Al-Essa

instead in the park," Essa told the Kuwait Times yesterday. "He tried several times with the old and the new ministers to bulldoze the trees and move the power transformer. He has a permit from the Ministry of Education but it is not valid anymore because the land does not belong to them now. We are struggling for five years now. They cut off 10 trees and we re-plant them again."

Earlier this week, the contest heated up again when workers from the municipality showed up in the park and began bulldozing trees. In order to prevent further

destruction, local residents reached out to the media and through social media channels to ask for support from the society.

Local activists and supporters gathered yesterday at the garden, known as Coalition Park in block three of residential Shuwaikh. They came out to demonstrate support for the garden and to prevent further destruction by authorities.

No green spaces

Lubna Saif Abbas, a member of 'Alamakin 1746' group noted that the planned destruction was not in the best interest of Kuwait.

"We do not have green spaces in Kuwait and this is a public park. I wish all parks looked like this. We should have people like the residents of Shuwaikh who created a park for everyone," she told Kuwait Times. "Government agencies should start to work together as a team, and not act like each one has his own country! We need them to understand that this is the best for community and we should have people take over public spaces because they have the ability to do things in the local community." Although the weather yesterday was dusty and rainy, residents stayed near the



KUWAIT: The gate of the 'Coalition Park' in Shuwaikh, opened in April 2003.

—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

park to prevent bulldozers if they came. Residents have reported the violations to the environmental police and also wrote a full report about the destruction of the trees and plants in violation of the provisions of Kuwait's environmental law.



ACTING PM STRESSES KEENNESS ON PRESERVING ENVIRONMENT

KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said that Kuwait attaches great importance to the environmental file in consistency with international moves in this regard, pointing to its participation in the UN meetings on Climate Change on April 22.

The Supreme Council for the Environment quoted in a statement issued Monday night Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, also Chairman of the Supreme Council for the environment, as saying that Kuwait participated in the climate change convention in Paris last year, where results of that meeting were fruitful, recalling what has been reached by the international community of understanding and agreement on heated environmental issues. According to the statement, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said Kuwait is keen to follow up on climate change stemming from the noble Amiri guidance and deputization of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to represent the country and sign the agreement in the climate change meeting on April 22.

He added that the international attention on this file reflected on Kuwait, which gives environmental issues international and global priorities, a matter that appeared so clear in its report on human rights. He praised the Environment Public Authority's implementation of environmental law articles that are in the public interest and require hard work by all concerned parties.

Meanwhile, Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said in a similar speech that the EPA does not stand as an impediment to development but also contributes to the application of the sustainable development principle to provide a better environment for ourselves and future generations and to pursue the green economy in the country, with emphasis on diversifying the sources of income in line with the desire of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sheikh Abdullah added that the Supreme Council for the Environment has limited the number of nature reserves in the country to 14, in addition to the competent authorities supervising them. — KUNA

UNSTABLE WEATHER TO LAST TILL END OF WEEK DUST STORM TEMPORARILY HALTS OIL EXPORTS



KUWAIT: Kuwait was affected yesterday by a dust storm and rain that temporarily suspended traffic at its ports, including oil exports. The unstable weather conditions the country is witnessing are expected to last until the end of this week, said the Kuwait Meteorological Center

at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said yesterday.

The country these days is witnessing unstable weather and drastic changes affecting vast areas of the Arabian Peninsula and parts of northern Iraq, said Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, head of Agricultural and Hydrological Forecast at

the center. The low visibility in the country was due to dust, where the wind speed reached more than 60 kilometers per hour and thunderstorm in some areas, Qarawi added. The gradual improvement in the weather conditions will start by the beginning of next Friday. — KUNA

