

Local

PHOTO OF THE DAY



The well-lit Kuwait City seen at night from an aerial view. — Photo by Youself Albatashi / Kuna



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai
muna@kuwaittimes.net

Recently, Kuwait witnessed attacks against women's personal expression and freedom, which is contrary to the human rights and freedom of expression enshrined in the Kuwaiti constitution, which must be respected. This article today will refer to two topics that have been exposed to a lot of needless offensive speech on local and social media, and one woman was exposed to unnecessary abuse.

It is unfortunate that while we are witnessing radical changes and support for women in the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, and fighting racial discrimination, we in Kuwait are confronting an attack against freedom of expression. For example, in a remarkable move in Saudi Arabia, King Salman bin Abdul Aziz appointed Princess Rima bint Bandar bin Sultan as ambassador to the US. This historic decision undoubtedly confirms that Saudi women have a great role, especially in light of her appointment as ambassador in an important country such as the United States of America.

This is undoubtedly a strong and great change and support for the role of women and their importance in society and political sector, but at the same time we see a clear decline and discrimination against Kuwaiti women. An example: Last year, Fareah Al-Saqqaf, Chairwoman of LOYAC, was awarded the title of "Leading Arab Women" for 2018 at a ceremony held at Sheikh

Women of Kuwait

Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. She called on the audience to be devoted to human values that call for love and peace.

But this woman was subjected to an unjust media attack because of her personal opinion on wearing of the veil in a documentary for the organization. She called it "scary", and said its increasing presence in recent decades in the Kuwaiti society was "disturbing". She explained that the niqab completely hides the face except the eyes, so it is different from the burqa, which reveals the face and allows identifying who wears it. This was worn by women in old Kuwait. According to her, the niqab is new in society and obscures the identity of women.

Unfortunately, she was attacked in an abusive manner and her opinion was described as vain, elitist and against religion. It also seemed to be an opportunity to fight the activities of LOYAC, which is run by a group of Kuwaiti women. LOYAC has provided a lot to young people of both sexes in Kuwait without discrimination.

Now, let's look at the subject from a realistic and logical aspect - what she said does not affect religion at all, because in fact, we do not know who is wearing the niqab and who we are dealing with. After all, she just expressed an opinion. I thank Mrs Saqqaf for her courage to express her opinion. I believe that we must stand up to this unjustified attack on personal opinion. And thanks to everyone who tried to support this woman and her view.

In fact, LOYAC is an incubator of young people. They have been performing the role of ministries that are responsible for this generation and providing them with what the ministries do not provide. My personal opinion is that she is a beautiful Kuwaiti woman and we are honored in Kuwait to have such active ladies. She has promoted many beautiful values amongst a large segment of people of Kuwait. It was upsetting to me that this woman,

who is representing an organization such as LOYAC, was being exposed to such an attack! And for what? For her view!

The other subject is what is known as family shisha. A municipal councilmember proposed a ban on shisha offered to families in restaurants and cafes. Firstly, smoking is a personal matter whether it is by a man or a woman, although I am opposed to serving shisha to children and adolescents under the age of 21.

But the term family shisha was understood to be directed against women, which is considered biased against women specifically. If this councilman is keen on public health, it is best to demand that it be prohibited for all men and women, but what happened is that the proposal seemed directed against women, which violates the constitution and public freedoms.

This councilman later explained that he didn't mean only for women, but shisha that is provided in closed places such as cabins in cafes that have become hotbeds of drugs and prostitution, which I think the interior ministry should check. I think that such proposals, which are biased and appear directed against women, whether citizens or expatriates, are unacceptable and must be clarified.

I think the reason for the ban is unclear, because if it is for health causes, everyone is responsible for their own health. The country is full of different nationalities and cultures and they are free as long as they do not violate the law of the country. Some press sources confirmed that some of the members who supported the proposal said it should be amended by directing a letter to the Municipality to implement the decision to remove cabins from cafes and restaurants. I think this is better and is not against women or families.

We, as women, should not stand silent to what might be offensive to women or prejudiced against them.