

Special Report

# Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah to retire after 39 years in service

## Senior official left his fingerprints on various Interior Ministry departments

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

**KUWAIT:** Lt General Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah is a senior Interior Ministry official who committed himself since joining the military service to keep a watchful eye on Kuwait's security and safety, and dedicated all his efforts for this cause. He has been sailing the seas and roaming the land, and still does so to fulfill his promise. Lt General Mohammad Yousuf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Assistant Undersecretary for Borders Security, has been working hard for more than 39 years to protect Kuwait's security.



Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah meets with HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

"This man is in uniform from morning till evening, carrying out his security duties at its best," said HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, describing Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf in words conveyed by the Interior Minister when he decorated him with the rank of Lt General, the highest rank in public service. The following are excerpts from an interview conducted with Sheikh Mohammad, and published jointly with Al-Anbaa daily.

service as a university graduate. I had finished my third year then, and only one year remained. I graduated and joined the military college. The first course had nine university graduates and I passed it on top of the class, then I joined the Interior Ministry as a university graduate, and my wish was fulfilled. I will never forget this for the Late Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah, who wanted me to be an officer with a university degree.

**Nationality and Travel Documents**

**Question:** In 1996, you brought up several security issues and demanded deep rooted solutions, including the unified linking, DNA, uncovering nationality manipulation, and the bedoon (stateless) issue. Today, we see that what you brought up then is on its way to be solved, and some of these issues have already solved. How would you comment on this, being the security nucleus for those issues?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** It is not only because of me, but rather it is the result of the work of my colleagues and superiors. We were a group that worked for Kuwait's security, so I cannot claim personal credit, or say that I work alone because, my principle is always to work as a team, and not to work individually, and the statements you mentioned were the result of joint work. What I did through my position as Director General of Nationality and Travel Documents was to link the nationality, passports, newborns and civil identification divisions. In the past, when someone gets a newborn, he used to go to Hawally to register the newborn, then he gets a paper from the Nationality and Travel Documents Department and goes for the Civil ID, and this was an exhausting process for parents. So I made a proposal and the decision was made to have an office for the nationality and travel documents, and another for the Civil ID to make it easy for citizens to process transactions in a shorter time.

**Question:** It is known that you reject the use of the word "I", and I felt through reading and hearing about you that you are really humble. Yet, I attribute to you that you were the first to say that there is no issue called 'bedoon.' In 1995 you made a press statement while being Director of the Nationality and Travel Documents' Directorate, saying that 90 percent of the bedoon have foreign origins, and this is what we see in reality today and revealed by the Central Agency

the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

**Elderly and disabled**

**Question:** You were the first to activate the decision issued by Lt General Yousuf Al-Kharafi on September 2, 1998 to cooperate and ease the transactions of the disabled and the elderly, and many lauded your actions with this group of people. How do you comment on that?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** Yes, a decision was issued by our mentor Lt General Yousuf Al-Kharafi and I as the Director of Nationality and Travel Documents formed an integrated team to go and help those who cannot come to the directorate such as an elderly person.

**The Media**

**Question:** Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf is known for avoiding media appearances as he prefers to work silently. But despite that, we find you defending anything that is concerned with Kuwait and its security. So why do you keep away from the media?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** Why appear in the media? I am a citizen carrying out my duties, so what is the role of the media in this? Yet, when my department is unjustly treated, I go to the media and defend as long as I believe that I am right. For example, when journalist Adel Al-Zawawi called me to ask about social media reports claiming that members of the Abdaly cell escaped through sea, I told him that the rumors were not true, and if it was proven otherwise, the Kuwaiti people have the right to take me to court.

As part of our duties, most Coast Guard officials spent days at mid sea including Lt Colonel Sheikh Mubarak Al-Ali Al-Sabah and others in vigilance against any attempt for the 14 fugitives to escape. I am not saying that it is not possible for them to escape because we cannot control all 2,900 slipways, and it is not possible to place a policeman at each slipway to register who gets in and out.

Despite that difficulty, my department was sure that they did not leave as our various authorities said there is nothing unofficial that left, and I answered Zawawi due to my confidence in my department and men.

**The environment**

**Question:** We always notice that you call for the protection of the environment be it on land or sea. Kuwait witnessed an oil spill about a month ago, and it was the Coast Guard that discovered it first. How did it start?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** Although the directorate is not equipped for that, the Coast Guard was the first to inform authorities responsible for combatting oil spills. We are a security authority and our job is to inform, and that is what happened. I find it really strange that the Environment Public Authority does not have boats, so we helped them with our boats in order to safeguard Kuwait's security and people's safety. It is really sad to see that the authority responsible for the environment poorly equipped.

**Unforgettable personalities**

**Question:** Who is Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah for Lt General Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** He is a legend as far as I am concerned and I named my son Ali Sabah after him, as he was born three months after his death.

**Question:** What is the story behind the paper that was sent by Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem to you, and you keep it in every office you move to?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** it is an ordinary story, but one that has many meanings and reminds me of the late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem, who I would never forget. He sent me a paper with an employee when I was a Lt Colonel asking me to help solve a problem that the employee was facing. And since then, I framed the paper and it accompanied me where ever I went.

**Question:** Sadness has many forms, but those who saw you at the moment when Sheikh Khalid Al-Yousuf was buried can see the reality of sadness and departure on your face and tears. Does he have your everlasting love?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** My brother Khalid was close to all my brothers and me personally. Khalid was the joy of Yousuf Al-Saud house. I lived with him his illness, and I should mention some of those who were with us including Barrak Al-Ustath as well as Bader Al-Asfour.

**Question:** What does Lt General Abdullah Al-Fares mean to you?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** He is a model in security work, a first class teacher, a total military school on its own. I learned a lot from



KUWAIT: Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah.

him although I did not work with him except in some issues as I was lucky to work under his leadership. I used to go and attend investigations in some complicated crimes to learn from his instructions.

**Question:** What about Sheikh Ali Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** He is a support for me. All my brothers support each other. We



Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah meets with HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

are together and we are kept together by 'Um Mohammad' Sabeeka bint Ahmad Al-Humaidhi and our second mother Bibi Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah.

**A final word**

**Question:** Your service will come to an end in a few days. Do you feel that you carried out all what you wanted to do, especially at the Coast Guard?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** Of course not, as there is a lot that I did not carry out so far.



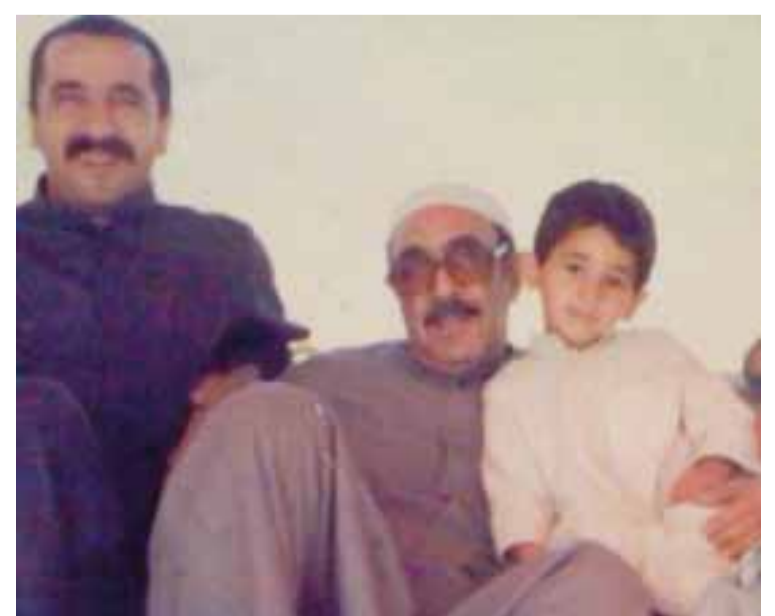
Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah is pictured with his wife Sheikhah Latayef Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah.

**Question:** Like what?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** Many things. For example, I wanted to develop more than I did. I wanted to distinguish the coastguardsmen with more incentives. I believe that any person who has a goal and fulfills it should move on, but I always have new goals, therefore I believe that I did not reach my goals so I cannot say that I fulfilled all what I wished for especially in this security sector.

**Question:** If you were asked to continue service in any form and position after retirement, will you accept?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** Of course I will accept, and I am at the service of Kuwait.



(From left) Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah with his father Sheikh Yousuf Al-Saud Al-Sabah and his son Saud.

### SHEIKH MOHAMMAD'S ACCOLADES

Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah was appointed at the Interior Ministry on September 15, 1987. He served in the following departments and positions:

- Special Forces (VIP Protection)
- Airport Security
- State Security

• Assistant director of outer centers at the directorate general of facilities security.

• in Charge of Radeefa Center in addition to his regular duties.

• Director of Kuwait Nationality Department at the Directorate General of Passports, Nationality and Travel Documents.

• Acting Director General of Nationality and Travel Documents' Directorate.

• Director General of Nationality and Travel Documents.

• Director General of the Planning and Development's Directorate, and Director General of the Training Directorate.

• Director General of Qualifying and training non-commissioned officers.

• Assistant Undersecretary for Backup Services.

• Assistant Undersecretary for Borders Security Affairs.

• Assistant Undersecretary for Legal Affairs.

• Assistant Undersecretary for Borders Security.

**Medals:**

- Service Bronze Medal in 1984.
- Service Silver Medal in 1989.
- Liberation Medal in 1992.
- Gold Service Medal in 1994.
- Military Duty Medal of First Order in 2004.
- National Defense Medal in 2009.
- The American Legion of Merit in 2013.

**His Hobbies:**

Swimming, reading, karate (he has a black belt in this sport), HAM radio and communication with people of several nationalities, and agriculture, particularly planting palm trees.



Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah is pictured with his mother Sabeeka bint Ahmad Al-Humaidhi 'Um Mohammad'.

**Hope and wish**

**Question:** Lt General Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf, what does the date September 15, 1978 mean to you?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** Fulfilling my wish to join the Interior Ministry Military Service.

**Question:** So, that was your Wish?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** Yes that was my wish, and I will tell you a story that few people know. First, I should mention the favor of the Late Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah in fulfilling that wish on scientific and academic basis. I went to him when he was Interior and defense minister to join the interior ministry, which gives the right to the individual to join the Interior Ministry after receiving a diploma and go through a two year military course. I had finished two years at Kuwait University, which could be considered as a diploma and gives me the right to join the military college. Yet, Sheikh Saad kept postponing our meeting, and eventually told me that after two years when I finish my university studies, I can come meet him because he wanted me to join the military

for Remedying Illegal Residents Status?

**Sheikh Mohammad:** It is not an issue because I do not think that there is a person without origins. The statement I made at the time and I still remember that statement I made at the time, and still believe that there is no person who does not have a homeland. If he does not know his origin, he has a father and a grandfather whose origins are known, so there is nothing called 'bedoons.' Bear in mind that my statements did not come out of individual efforts, but rather as a result of joint work.

I will not forget the role of Major General Adel Al-Munayes and his work on this issue at the time, and the work that we carried out is completed now by Saleh Al-Fadhlah (the Director of the Central Agency for Remedying Illegal Residents Status) who made commendable efforts to complete the work on this security and national matter while offering deep rooted solutions, and discover many of those who were claiming that they do not belong to a country. I believe that the state of Kuwait will not let them down when they express good intentions to the state, as Kuwait is always a country of giving to all those who resort to it and a home of humanitarian action under the leadership of the Humanitarian Leader HH

### THE EVER PRESENT DURING THE HEINOUS INVASION

Information Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Information Services and New Media Yousuf Mustafa told us a story that many may not know, and unfortunately history did not document it.

"When broadcast systems were down, we went to the house of Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf in Salwa because we could broadcast from there, as he is known to be a HAM radio hobbyist," Mustafa said. "We remained there for two days before being ordered to leave. The house was burned down soon afterwards."

"My uncle Mohammad Al-Yousuf carried the banner after my late father," Lt Colonel Sheikh Athbi Khalid Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah said. "We went through life with his compassion, love and care for us. He is the strength and example for us."

My uncle Lt General Mohammad Al-Yousuf in an example of sincerity and hard work," Sheikh Athbi added. "He is also an example of the loyal and loving citizen of Kuwait and its people. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf cannot be described by words about his fatherhood and love for us. I pray to Almighty Allah to protect him and keep him for us."