

# Student unions protest over cancellation of coed classes

'Decision contradicts the constitution and violates court's decision'



Al-Mostaqilla students union



KUWAIT: Kuwait University students rally to protest a decision to impose gender segregation, outside the institution's campus on September 18, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Al-Mostaqilla students union organized a protest at Kuwait University on Monday in response to the administration's abrupt decision to cancel coeducation classes shortly before the start of the new academic semester. The demonstration, attended by Taaluf, Al-Wasat Al-Demoqrati, and Al-Etelafeya students unions, showcases the resilience and unity of Kuwait University's student body when facing unexpected challenges to their educational experience.

Dr Ibrahim Al-Hamoud, Head of the Public Law Department at the College of Law and a member of the administrative board of the Faculty Association, emphasized the importance of the university considering the quality of education, student comfort and timely graduation. Increasing the duration of study due to class shortages, especially with the yearly rise in student numbers, is unreasonable, he said.

Hamoud noted that the decision to cancel coeducation is illogical, as there have been no incidents or complaints related to coeducation since 1966. He affirmed that the growing number of students inevitably

necessitates opening more classes. "While law no. 24 of 1969 clearly prohibits mixing of genders, the constitutional court has clarified its constitutionality. Kuwait University has respected the judiciary and the court's ruling by separating male and female students within the classroom, which is considered a proper application of the law," he said.

Hamoud argued that the decision of the minister of education and members of parliament contradicts the constitution and violates the constitutional court's decision, which states that non-mingling can be achieved by separating males and females in the same classroom. He added that if there is a desire to prevent coeducation, a new law establishing separate universities for each gender must be enacted. However, such a law would contradict principles of justice, equality and Islamic law. He affirmed that inappropriate mingling involves lack of respect for boundaries and inappropriate clothing and behaviors, which is not the case.

Dr Sheikhha Al-Jassem, a faculty member at Kuwait University, said the committee for the promotion of values lacks the authority to prohibit gender mixing



Mohammad Al-Qattan

and impersonation at the university. She questioned the decision-making process, as the decision only affected the law faculty while other faculties continue mixed classes. "I think there are some personal, internal matters, and students and employees of the deanship of admissions and registration are the ones who are paying the price," she said.

Mohammad Mishal Al-Qattan, a medical student and the general coordinator of Al-Wasat Al-Demoqrati, placed responsibility on the university dean and director for violating the law guarantee-



Dr Ibrahim Al-Hamoud

ing the university's independence from external interference. He demanded a return to the previous situation of joint education for all.

Sarah Al-Otaibi, an English language student at the College of Arts, found the decision illogical, pointing out that coeducation is a part of life, and even in Makkah, the most sacred place on earth, there is gender mixing. She expressed concerns about delays in graduation and scholarship eligibility due to the decision. Otaibi told Kuwait Times she intends to continue with her master's studies, but there are



Dr Sheikhha Al-Jassem

conditions for scholarship that she should not be over 30, otherwise she will not be eligible for it.

Dr Fatima Dashti, a faculty member at the College of Law, criticized the committee's actions, emphasizing that in her 30 years of teaching experience, she never found an urgent need to separate male and female students in shared classes. She questioned the principle of separation of powers and whether actions at Kuwait University are seen as an assault on legitimacy and customs and traditions by the National Assembly.

## US Embassy, media discussion focuses on regional security

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The US Embassy organized a roundtable discussion on Monday, featuring Lt Gen Alex Grynkeiwich from AFCENT and a group of reporters. The discussion centered on the enduring relationship between the US and Kuwait, emphasizing the importance of regional security. Grynkeiwich began by expressing his fondness for Kuwait, recounting his first deployment to the Middle East in the 1990s, specifically to Kuwait, following the Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm, when he was enforcing a no-fly zone over southern Iraq. During this time, he had experienced tremendous support from the Kuwaiti people and military, creating a lasting impression.

He highlighted the historical ties between Kuwait and the United States, dating back 62 years, with the US being among the first nations to recognize Kuwait's independence. Furthermore, he mentioned the pivotal role the US played 32 years ago during Desert Storm in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion, underscoring the enduring strength of the Kuwait-US relationship. Kuwait continues to host US Air Force personnel, among others, contributing to regional stability. It is also a major non-NATO ally, signifying a significant commitment to Kuwait's security.

Grynkeiwich discussed the purpose of his visit to Kuwait, which involves regular interactions with Kuwaiti Air Force and air defense commanders to address re-

gional security concerns and cooperation, particularly regarding missile defense. He expressed his intention to visit the Ali Al-Salem base to assess the status of US forces stationed in Kuwait.

Regarding US engagement with Kuwaiti authorities on security challenges, Grynkeiwich explained that there is ongoing collaboration, with Kuwaiti officers working closely with US counterparts at the headquarters. He cited examples of recent cooperation, such as joint airlift training and infrastructure improvement at bases like Ali Al-Salem. This includes ensuring the functionality of a cable system for aircraft emergencies, demonstrating continuous cooperation between the two nations.

Grynkeiwich also elaborated on the US' role in supporting the Combined Joint Task Force for Inherent Resolve, focused on defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Ali Al-Salem base serves as a vital hub for airlift and intelligence operations, aiding the resupply of US forces in the region and supporting their mobility. Additionally, he addressed concerns about Iranian vessels in the Arabian Gulf, referencing historical incidents involving Kuwaiti tankers in the 1980s. To deter such activities, the United States deployed additional naval and marine forces, as well as aircraft, near the Straits of Hormuz, leading to a decrease in vessel seizures by Iran.

In terms of the United States' strategy in the Middle East, Grynkeiwich emphasized the importance of expanding beyond military relationships. Recent announcements, such as the India to Mediterranean corridor, demonstrate a concerted effort to enhance diplomatic and economic aspects of the relationship, complementing the military dimension. He concluded by emphasizing the unique nature of the partnership between Kuwait and the US, highlighting the mutual respect and deep relationship that transcends mere transactions, setting it apart from other international relationships.



Lt Gen Alex Grynkeiwich poses for a group photo with journalists and US Airforce Army team.

## Joint program held to ensure workers' rights

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and in the presence of Acting General Director of the Public Authority of Manpower Marzouq Al-Otaibi, PAM arranged a joint educational program on Monday. The program was attended by diplomatic missions in Kuwait, where procedures followed by the authority and the interior ministry to protect migrant workers were explained.

Fahad Ali Murad, Deputy General Manager at the Public Authority of Manpower, began by welcoming the attendees and explained the reason behind holding this program. "We are pleased to inform you through this meeting

about some of the measures taken to protect the workforce in Kuwait. Our aim is to achieve an organized and stable image through effective management. The organization is seeking to launch services to improve housing facilities and establish a dedicated male shelter in collaboration with the International Labor Organization and other organizations. Additionally, procedures for transferring workers from one employer to another are being regulated, and all parties are being involved to safeguard the rights of the workforce in Kuwait," he said.

Col Abdulaziz Al-Kandari explained the role of the general administration of residence affairs investigations. He said the department is responsible for receiving reports from PAM regarding absences in the private sector (article 18). It also receives reports regarding domestic workers (article 20) and conducts investigations related to labor issues, including human trafficking suspicions and others. The role of the administration in receiving absconding reports is after the employer submits

a letter issued by PAM indicating the worker's absence (article 18). As for article 20, the employer should submit a report to the general administration of service centers or the administration of residence affairs investigations indicating the worker's absence.

Upon receiving the report, the administration verifies its accuracy and ensures there is no fraud by discussing the matter with the applicant and providing any necessary evidence if available. The administration's role in investigating human trafficking cases is to receive reports from workers if they approach the administration directly or through government-announced social media platforms such as the Sahel application and the ministry of interior's website. The administration receives investigation orders from the public prosecution regarding complaints and reports submitted by the attorney general. If human trafficking or other offenses are proven, the case is presented to the public prosecution, and further action is taken accordingly.



Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei

(Left to right) Chinese ambassador, Chief of the Diwan Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce Mohammad Al-Aiban and Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah cut the cake during the ceremony. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Embassy marks 'versary of founding of People's Republic of China

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Chinese Embassy held a reception on Sunday on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China at Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Speaking to the press on the sidelines of the ceremony, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban revealed that during HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's upcoming visit to China to attend the opening ceremony of the 2023 Asian Games, numerous significant agreements are set to be signed.

Aiban added such agreements highlight the depth of cooperation between the two countries in areas encompassing infrastructure, industries, housing and labor cities development, emphasizing that such forthcoming high-level visits serve as an initial step toward a productive collaboration in the future. Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei announced China's preparations to receive HH the Crown Prince at the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou. "I wish His Highness' visit to China a great success, injecting strong

impetus to the China-Kuwait strategic partnership. I also wish Kuwaiti athletes good results at the upcoming Asian Games," he said.

The ambassador said his country has remained the largest trading partner of Kuwait for years, with bilateral trade volume exceeding \$31.48 billion last year. "Chinese enterprises have engaged in over 80 major projects in Kuwait. Nowadays, a growing number of Kuwaiti friends have traveled to China. What's more, the first Chinese cultural center in the Gulf region has been completed in Kuwait and held a soft opening ceremony today. It will become an important window for the people of Kuwait to understand Chinese culture and feel the charm of China," he revealed.

Zhang said this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the 5th anniversary of the China-Kuwait strategic partnership, where Kuwait was the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with China, and also the first in the Middle East to sign Belt and Road cooperation documents with China.

He affirmed his country's keenness to continue to work with Kuwait to enhance the synergy of development strategies and advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, in a bid to make cooperation more fruitful and productive. "I hope the Chinese enterprises in Kuwait and our fellow Chinese will continue to make more contributions to China-Kuwait practical cooperation and our people-to-people friendship," Zhang said.



Group picture of representatives and guests of Public Authority of Manpower's educational program. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat