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Kuwait: Trial of woman human rights defender Hadeel Buqrais scheduled

On 29 March 2021, the hearing session of woman human rights defender **Hadeel Buqrais** was scheduled to be held on 30 May 2021. Hadeel Buqrais has been charged with 'the misuse of a phone', 'defamation' and 'verbally abusing and insulting others'. The charges relate to a response the woman human rights defenders made on social media challenging racists tweets.

[Hadeel Buqrais](#) is a woman human rights defender and writer. She works as a freelancer, monitoring and documenting human rights violations by the Kuwaiti government and previously worked for Kuwait Watch, an organisation dedicated to furthering the development of legal protections for people in Kuwait. The woman human rights defender has also been actively involved in the Namshi Laha (“Walking for Her”) campaign which advocates for gender equality in Saudi Arabia.

On 29 March 2021, Hadeel Buqrais received a text message informing her that the hearing for her case was scheduled to be held before the Plenary Court of First Instance on 30 May 2021. The woman human rights defender was formally charged with 'the misuse of a phone', 'defamation' and 'verbally abusing and insulting others' by the public prosecution on 24 December 2020. If convicted, Hadeel Buqrais faces a possible fine of 5000 Kuwaiti Dinars (approx. 14000 Euro).

On 18 November 2020, Hadeel Buqrais was summoned for questioning by the Cybercrimes State Security Agency. The woman human rights defender was interrogated regarding a tweet, in which she mocked the inaccuracy of racist claims being made about the Bedoon minority in Kuwait by some individuals on social media, and criticised the discriminatory naturalisation process in Kuwait and the mistreatment of the Bedoon community. Hadeel Buqrais was also asked about her human rights work and activism with the Bedoon community during the questioning, which her lawyer was not permitted to attend.

Woman human rights defender Hadeel Buqrais has frequently been harassed in relation to her human rights work. In April 2017, Hadeel Buqrais [received](#) a large number of e-mails, phone calls, and messages on social media, threatening her life and her family following her participation in a peaceful march calling for improved women’s rights in Saudi Arabia. In August 2019, the woman human rights defender was the victim of an online defamation campaign.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the charges against Hadeel Burqais which have been levied against her in reprisal for her peaceful and legitimate human rights work, defending the rights of minorities and denouncing racism against them.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Kuwait to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Hadeel Burqais as it is believed that they are solely motivated by her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Kuwait and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.