

The bedouin issue in kuwait argumentative essay examples

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In each country, people are classified through their nationality, and language; especially if they are tourists or immigrants. Official documents are handed to a person proving his or her nationality. However, in some regions like in the Middle East, there are clans and tribes who opt to remain in between country borders and remain stateless. These people are known as the Bedouin. Aside from political and economic issues, the issue of the Bedouin has also reached the attention of various organizations, governments, and the general public over their unique situation and the risks they had to live on. As of today, the Bedouins are scattered in various parts of the Middle East, and are now calling for the establishment of their human rights as they are slowly becoming oppressed by various sects and governments.

The Bedouin or the stateless are ancient Arab people whose roots come from travelling merchants and nomads. Most of the Bedouin clans live in the Arabian and Syrian deserts, others in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, as well as in the Sahara Desert of North Africa. Aside from these clans, several Bedouin communities are also located in Middle Eastern and North African countries. The term Bedouin came from the Arabic term “badawi” meaning desert dwellers. Bedouins live in tents and move in various locations in the desert to locate for food and water, as well as herd their cattle. Like other Middle Eastern communities and groups, the Bedouins are proud of their culture and tradition, especially their history. An Arab historian named Ibn Khaldun has also stated in his study of the Bedouins in the 1300s that the Bedouins could be considered the strongest of all the people he met in his travels in the region. To survive in the harsh desert and in extreme weather conditions, the

Bedouins have crafted several techniques to communicate efficiently with their tribe members while hunting for food. Most Bedouin communities are loyal to each other, enabling them to keep their rich tradition and history alive. The Bedouins do not only concentrate in one location, most of them are scattered in various points and in different tribes. Some of the most notable Bedouin tribes are the Rwala in al-Nafud in the Syrian Desert, the Jebaliya in the Sinai Peninsula, the Sanusi in the Sahara Desert, and the Jahalin in the Negev Desert. The names of these tribes came from important ancestors, selected because of their contribution to the tribe. In tribal celebrations, tribesmen and women would come together and share stories about their ancestor. Bedouin tribes are also divided into smaller groups or clans, made up of several small families and live in a particular section in the camp .

The Kuwaiti Bedouin are located in the outskirts of the Persian Gulf, near the migration routes that connects out to the African region. There are also two tribes of Bedouin in the Kuwaiti region and these are the Adnani and the Qahtani. In Kuwait, the Bedouin are normally referred to as “ Non-Kuwaiti” or “ Undetermined Nationality”. Many noted that the term “ bedoon” or “ bedoon jinsiyya” meaning “ without nationality” should not be confused with Bedouin. However, they mean the same thing. The only difference with the Bedoon is that they lived in the urban areas in Kuwait, and some of them did not live a nomadic life like the Bedouin. The Bedoons were heterogeneous in nature; many of them were born in Kuwait and lived in the country in their entire life. Some of the Kuwaiti Bedoons lack citizenship because their male

ancestor failed to apply for citizenship once citizenship policies were enacted in 1948, and in 1959. The citizenship issue is also repeated in 1961 once Kuwait is prepared to declare its independence.

The issue of citizenship is also denied to children of Kuwaiti mothers if they married stateless fathers. It is also similar if the Kuwaiti father is married to a stateless woman, the children would be considered Bedoons. Aside from these people, tribes located between Kuwait and its neighbours are classified as Bedoons, even if they are located in urban areas in the countries. The government believes that the Bedoon population in the country also contains immigrants from other nations who opt to hide their nationality to stay freely in the country. Due to the presence of these people, the government believes that all Bedoons are these hiding nationals and can be expelled by force when the Kuwaiti government have presented enough justification for their actions. Several government heads have repeatedly stated this position over the Bedoons, even in front of human rights organizations protecting these peoples' rights.

In the official study done by the Human Rights Watch, the population of the Kuwaiti stateless have reached over 260, 000 by the time of the Iraqi invasion. The study has estimated that the numbers would gradually increase to 310, 000 in the next few years. The government had included the Bedoon population to the national census until 1988. They had deducted the number of Bedoons from the official population of the country a year later, adding the number to the number of foreign immigrants and workers.

Despite the tendency of the national government to disregard the population

of the Bedoon and add them in the foreign citizens' population, the Kuwaiti government still acknowledged them in statistics. After the liberation from Iraq, the government failed to estimate completely the number of Bedoons still living in the country considering some have fled outside the country away from the Iraqi soldiers. Despite this lack of recognition from the government, many of these Bedoons have finished a degree and are distinguished professionals. Majority, however, live in poor conditions like their counterparts in other Arab nations as they are not given the same privileges like other rich Bedoons or the normal Kuwaiti citizen. Poor Bedoons are restricted from accessing public services, education, and employment. If they are lucky, some Bedoons were allowed to work in the security force, but they were eventually dismissed after the liberation. Majority of the Bedoons are also located in slums, normally kept close watch by the security services and the police force.

The issue of citizenship for the Bedoons is contested even in the present context. For the Bedoon communities, they believe that they could qualify for citizenship if the government gives them an opportunity to prove their worth as Kuwaiti citizens under the law. These groups also point out that they will be able to satisfy the strict and stringent requirements of full citizenship noted in the first article of the Citizenship Law. Under the said Article " Kuwaitis are those who settled in Kuwait before 1920 and maintained their normal residence in Kuwait until the publication of this Law". If they fail to satisfy this first Article, then they would compete for the second class citizenship, recognizing them as citizens with certain

limitations. In both terms, the main requirement is the uninterrupted residency period in Kuwait no matter what background the applicant has. The Human Rights Watch had been presented by some Bedoons evidences documenting their length of stay in the country. However, the Citizenship requirement has constantly been increased and additional procedures have been added to ensure that Bedoons were denied of their application for citizenship.

There was an instance that Bedoons were given the chance to claim their citizenships. During the Kuwaiti National Assembly on July 1, 1986; the Minister of Interior Shaikh Salem Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah reported that there have been 25, 522 applications from Bedoons who wish to apply for citizenship. These applications stated that they are qualified to pass the citizenship test. 37, 689 applications were from Bedoon applicants who claim they were entitled for the second class citizenship status. The figures given by the Minister of Interior did not include dependents of these Bedoons. If these dependents were added, the application numb3rs would have increased to 200, 000 people. The minister blatantly told the Assembly that he believed that most of these applicants are lying. Before the assembly was held, most of the applications for citizenship for Bedoon applicants were rejected without a given reason. Nevertheless, the Assembly was able to influence the citizenship law on some accounts. As a consequence, most of the applicants were unable to present fully their right as citizens. In normal circumstances, citizenship applications were studied by secret departments inside the Ministry of Interior .

Aside from the citizenship issue, the situation of the stateless Kuwaitis was marred for their close relationship with the Bedouins in Iraq. This is mostly the sentiment of the Kuwaiti government in the time of the Iraqi invasion and after the liberation. Most Bedouins or the stateless were closely related, some of them being of Iraqi descent who came to Kuwait in the early 1960s up to the 1970s. Kuwait in these periods were thriving, especially its economy. However, Kuwaiti's political status in the 1960s to the 1970s was not as robust as it is at present. Since the Iraqis pulled off the invasion of Kuwait in rapid succession, many believed that tribes hailing from Iraqi origin had helped the invaders enter the city. The Shi'a Bedouin were also famous in this time, especially for its pro-Iranian operations in 1980, thus the rumours that these Bedouins had instructed Kuwaiti Bedouins to help the Iraqis. The Shi'a Bedouins are also known to support foreign policy that would be troublesome for other Middle Eastern countries. Regardless of some bedoons denying their involvement in the Iraqi invasion, many Kuwaitis have generalized that they have been a part of the invasion to take revenge against the government .

Kuwaiti Bedouins also have the problem on what they can receive from the government. Aside from their citizenship, Kuwaiti nationals or citizens are entitled to receive government housing and free access to public services. Kuwaiti nationals are entitled to free housing or low mortgage. Bedouins, on the other hand, have the right to work despite their nationality and situation. Houses are provided to them, however the rent and growth of the family makes it impossible for the Bedoons to pay for these housing. Some are

employed by the government to act as part of the security force, but some are given jobs for small activities such as driving vans and menial chores. Kuwaiti Bedouins without any given nationality are deprived of government housing and a right to own one; they are also restricted in being accepted in the entire populace. Nevertheless, the government is slowly trying to make up for the Bedouin populace and allowing them to gain housing.

Nevertheless, they are still included in the foreign community. In some regions in the country, Bedouins are given the right as full citizens and fulfil the role of non-manual working class, like those with nationality .

As of present, the Bedouins or the Bedoons still have the same issues over their rights to become recognized as citizens of Kuwait. In one report, Bedoons are still forbidden and restricted to become citizens. Several Bedouins from Kuwait have moved to various countries, some in Europe, others in Middle Eastern countries allowing Bedouins to apply for citizenship. The government has still not clarified the number of Kuwaiti Bedouins or Bedoons since the liberation and independence. Nevertheless, many of these bedoons have opted not to apply for citizenship, either because they did not think it would matter or they were illiterate to understand the process. Due to their status, some bedoons who wish to apply for citizenship will not be able to produce the requirements needed for citizenship applications. The government also failed to educate the Bedouins after the independence of the country as to how important nationality would mean to them. Bedouins were very close to each other, thus it would be confusing to carry documents and IDs with them. Although some of the Bedouins were given the same

comforts as citizens in the 1980s, the government reverted back to its anti-bedouin/bedoon sentiments by the late 1980s. The government stripped out the rights of Bedoons to study, get a job, and basic necessities from cities. Bedoons were also called in various names since the independence of the country. They were referred as “Kuwaiti from the Desert”, “Bedouins”, “Unspecific Nationality” and lastly “illegal residents”. Bedoons were also banned from returning back to the main country once they fled from the Iraqi occupation.

In addition to the return of the citizenship issue, Bedoons are forced to pay for higher rent should their families increase in size. This problem is prominent in new generation Bedoons who gain their homes from their parents, which are normally low quality two-bedroom units. Renting these small units are roughly KD 120-150 per month or more than \$420-520 per month. Since some of the Bedoons are not allowed to work, this amount is too much for them to handle. However, for those who have work, this problem is still manageable as some occupations in the country pay at least KD600 per month or \$2000. Nevertheless, it is often that most of the Bedoons could not afford paying the rent as they only have the minimum income of only KD200 or \$700, even if they are working. However, these numbers are still contested as the Kuwaiti government is still reluctant to provide accurate numbers of Bedouin rent schemes.

The process of getting documentation and registration is also changed by the Kuwaiti government as it now founded the Executive Committee for Illegal Residents’ Affairs or the ECIRA. The ECIRA handles all affairs of the

stateless people in the country, implying that the Bedoon community is a matter of security rather than being a problem on a social or humanitarian context. The ECIRA is consisted of military and members of the security core, proving that the Kuwaiti government's concern over the security risks involving the Bedoon community. Bedoons would need to pass the security clearance or the Qayed Amni for their naturalization applications, but also to gain access for medical and educational aid. Bedoons also need to pass the Qayed Amni to gain laissez-passers or the Article 17 passport to travel abroad. The ECIRA also controls the issuance of a Reporting or Attendance Card or the Green Card, which handles all the documents of a Bedoon. According to the law, these RCs are not like ID cards issued to the country's citizens, it is only used for the purpose in which the applicant would use it for. Security features are located in these RCs to verify the authenticity of the reporting card. Since the application is strict when it comes to the application of these items, only a few possess the Article 17 passport. The government has also restricted the application of elder Bedoons for applying for the visa especially for the Hajj, medical treatment or education.

Aside from these intricate application proceses and restriction on their documentation, the Bedoon communities are also restricted for applying for civil matters such as marriages, baptism, or change of names. For those who need to get the legal documents for these civil matters, Bedoons would get court rulings to prove their marital status or change in civil status. However, these court rulings can also do very little for the bedoons especially once the document is sent to the Department of Civil Affairs to be acknowledged.

There are some registrations which are denied despite the recommendation of the court. Since the Bedoon couple has married in front of the Sheik or Ma'zoon, they are allowed to live together. However, in the eyes of the government, they are not recognized as husband and wife. Without the recognition of the government, any children born from unrecognized union will be unable to gain a birth certificate from the Ministry of Health. If this happens, married couples can get their marriage certificate by filing a case in court against themselves. By doing this, the applicant could invoke the Islamic Shari'a law which is still recognized in Kuwait as a legal law for family issues. Under the Shari'a law, the individual in question who is suspected of committing rape against a woman must marry the victim or face detention. Winning the case still does not mean it is an official certification; nonetheless it could be used to prove their married status. The Kuwaiti government still believes that the Bedoon population in the country must pass several obstacles before they acknowledge them in some degree.

These issues which have piled up after the invasion of Iraq and the liberation of Kuwait is seen by the Bedoons to be caused by the restrictive and stringent criteria asked by the Kuwaiti government to the Bedoon community. Some of the Bedoons who managed to pass the intricate test are given the same freedoms as the nationals, however others opt to leave the country to claim citizenship. Naturalization in Kuwait is also tedious, thus the immigration of other Bedoons outside the country. It takes about 15 years before an individual to file for naturalization in Kuwait, a figure easily proven by the Bedoons if they were given a chance to prove their residency in the

country. For those who gain citizenship from other countries, they had to find illegal means to gain a passport, bypassing the normal Kuwaiti tests for passport applications. However, Bedoons who gain citizenship from other nations stated that they see Kuwait as an oppressive country for people like them and they would no longer return to the country .

In a personal standpoint, it would not be hard to provide the Bedouin communities in Kuwait to get their rights known by the government given that they would readily accept the changes without violence. What would be hard in this case is the revision of so many policies and programs to accommodate the millions of Bedouins who would be taken into account once the Kuwaiti government acknowledges their presence and allocate livelihood for them. There is also the nature of the situation as Bedouins are strictly loyal to their lifestyle and tribes, opting to stay as a nomad. In this case, it would be prudent for the government to allocate time in incorporating amendments to their constitution to give the rights the Bedouins are requesting, and at the same time, educate them on how they can maintain their close relationship with their tribes while near the country borders or in their urban locations. It would be hard to force everyone to move away from their nomadic lifestyle, however, if given the just attention and acknowledgement, they would eventually integrate back to society. For those living in the city, it is important that the Kuwaiti government acknowledges their rights as most Bedouins take over the menial tasks not normally done by regular Kuwaitis. Without acknowledgement, it is a

possibility that Kuwait's image would be tarnished in other countries because of their treatment to the Bedouins.

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