

13 April 2016

Kuwait – Blasphemy charges against human rights defender Shaikha Binjasim

On 14 April 2016, Kuwaiti human rights defender Ms **Shaikha Binjasim** will appear before the public prosecutor, who has charged her with blasphemy and humiliating the religion of the State for having declared in a television [interview](#) that the constitution of Kuwait is above the Quran and Shari'a.

Ms [Shaikha Binjasim](#) is a Kuwaiti human rights defender, writer and professor of philosophy at Kuwait University. She has been advocating on social media for freedom of conscience and freedom of speech in Kuwait. She is involved in several activities dedicated to the protection of women and minorities in Kuwait. Her writings include topics such as tolerance, democracy and criticism of the lack of rule of law in Kuwait.

On 11 March 2016, several members of the Kuwaiti National Assembly requested that the Minister of Higher Education of Kuwait exclude Shaikha Binjasim from Kuwait University and prevent her from teaching, following statements that she had made during an interview on national television that were deemed to be insulting to Islam. Following the interview, a Kuwaiti lawyer filed a complaint to the public prosecutor over statements made by the human rights defender.

On 8 March 2016, Shaikha Binjasim spoke on the Kuwaiti television channel, Al-Shahed, about the separation of religion from politics, and stated that “anyone who believes that the Quran, or Shari'a, or the interpretations of these religious texts are above the constitution is betraying the state of Kuwait.” She further emphasized that Shari'a is a source of legislation in the constitution, however the source of authority should be exclusively the constitution and placing the Quran above it is considered undemocratic. She also expressed her concern about, inter alia, the use of religious law against women, minorities, and freedom of expression.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the blasphemy charges brought against Shaikha Binjasim, and believes that this solely results from her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of freedom of conscience and freedom of speech in Kuwait.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Kuwait to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Shaikha Binjasim as it is believed that they are solely motivated by her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of freedom of conscience and freedom of speech;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Kuwait are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.



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