

# Government cannot control the Internet: Local bloggers

Nancy Oteifa  
Staff Writer

**KUWAIT:** Blogs have become a way for people to express their ideas and beliefs and avoid the censorship which exists in newspapers, TVs and radios. Bloggers freely express their opinions on blogs without any fear from the government or any other authority, however, in recent events, the government and MPs have proposed to censor and control what is said over these formats of expression. AlWatan Daily met with some bloggers to view their opinion over the issue of censoring blogs.

Mohammed Al-Yousifi, a blogger, told Al Watan Daily, "The idea of controlling the blogs is ridiculous and doesn't match the era we are living in now. It would have been a good idea if we were in the 70's or 80's, but with the rise of the Internet and various satellites it's almost impossible for anyone to fully control the various contents of the Internet." He added, "The person who came up with the idea of censoring the blogs seems unaware that we are living in the year 2010. I am against the censorship of blogs and the application of this idea is impossible, not only in Kuwait, but all over the world."

Talks of censoring blogs started at the time when Abdullah Al-Muhailbi was Minister but nothing was actually achieved."

He said, "People must, first, define the word censorship, what do they mean by censoring the blogs. Is it that they want to control the bloggers or control the people commenting on the blogs or do they just want to censor the blog itself? What exactly do they want to control? What are the limits of this censorship? No one can control the bloggers or the people commenting on the blogs. The government's control is limited to Kuwait only and the internet is not owned by Kuwait."

People offending the government, or even the Amir could be from USA, not even in Kuwait. Some bloggers control the comments on their blogs, while others keep it totally free to the public to express their thoughts and ideas."



A compilation of screenshots of four of Kuwait's most frequently visited blogs, taken Monday, Jan. 4, 2010. (Al Watan)

An anonymous blogger speaking to Al Watan Daily said, "Here in Kuwait, we don't have a system that counts the number of Kuwaiti blogs. The idea of blogs is a person expressing his own ideas and feelings. How will

the government censor the Kuwaiti blogs and how will they know if this blog is Kuwaiti or not. There exists, at the moment, a lot of international blogs that write negatively about Kuwait, how will the Kuwaiti government censor

these international blogs? The Internet is not owned by Kuwait, so Kuwait can't ban or control it. A lot of the MP's that want to censor the blogs are affected by these blogs because they don't agree with what is written about them. So

it's obvious that the MP's want the government to control the contents of these blogs."

He added, "Blogs differ from culture to culture and from country to country. But most of the Kuwaiti bloggers respect Kuwaiti laws and they never offend it. It's a great responsibility to the bloggers to be careful in what they write."

Hassan, who commented to AlWatan Daily about Kuwaiti blogs, said, "We all find the truth about Kuwaiti politics from the blogs. I don't really read the newspaper because they are with the government, but blogs are totally neutral and they tell the truth."

Amal said, "The blogs were created to allow people to talk freely about any desired topic; it was actually started by expatriates who felt offended by some of the happenings in Kuwait and they wanted to express their feelings freely. In a blog we can talk as we like and no one controls us. I don't believe that it's possible for the government to censor the blogs, because it's not like a blog is a website that they can just block, it's a much wider issue that can't be controlled."

Al-Mutairi, one of the Kuwaiti bloggers, said, "Controlling the blogs is something unbelievable; how will the government in Kuwait control the Internet? Blogs became the only way to express our feelings without fear because basically no one knows who you are. The owners of most of the political blogs use nicknames to keep on the safe side."

Al-Otaibi, another blogger, added, "I think as far as the bloggers are not talking about God or the Prophet, we are free to say whatever we want; blogs have become a new way for people to express themselves without any interference from anyone. I believe it's hard for the government to control what's written on the blogs but it isn't hard for them to reach the bloggers themselves."

Heba, who frequently visits and comments on various Kuwaiti blogs, said, "I enjoy posting comments on the blogs, and I really enjoy the topics being discussed on most of the blogs. A lot of my knowledge on Kuwaiti politics comes from the blogs and not from the newspapers or television."

## Media vital in countering terror: Ministry of Interior

**ABU DHABI:** "Media is capable of correcting misconceptions towards terrorism," Kuwait Ministry of Interior's spokesman Colonel Mohammad Al-Sabr said Monday.

"Media is equipped with tools that enable it to raise awareness and correct misconceptions of individuals and society in general," Al-Sabr said on the sidelines of participating in the seminar held in Abu Dhabi on the role of media in countering terror.

Al-Sabr called on utilizing hi-tech media to fight distorted ideas and beliefs that might help generate anti-society and terror-driven individuals, adding that the seminar came as a step aiming at countering terror.

Al-Sabr presented the Minister of Labor and the Chief of National Media Council of the United Arab Emirates with a commemorative plaque and a number of the ministry's publications. -KUNA

## Al-Ifasi hails role of psychological centers, charities



Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr. Mohammed Al-Ifasi (center right) meeting with representatives from the Psychological Consulting Center and Mabarrat Khair Al-Kuwait Charity Organization, Mon. Jan. 4, 2010. (KUNA)

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr. Mohammed Al-Ifasi hailed on Monday the positive role played by psychological consulting centers and charity societies in the country.

In remarks to the media following his meeting with representatives from the Psychological Consulting Center and

Mabarrat Khair Al-Kuwait Charity Organization, the minister said that the two groups have contributed in solving the psychological and social problems that national families face.

The officials of the two groups on their part praised the support received by the ministry to support humanitarian action. -KUNA

## Firmly in support of Palestinian cause: Ambassador to Jordan

**AMMAN:** The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait in Jordan Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Sabah stressed the country's non-wavering support of the Palestinian cause and people, and added the visit by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to Kuwait Monday is of particular importance due to current situation.

"My country, Kuwait, was, and will always be there to support the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people and will help them overcome current difficulties and complications" to do with this dossier.

He said "The Palestinians have the duty of pulling their ranks together to unite as one front which will enable them to stand up to the Israelis as equals and guarantee results in their interest in any negotiations or international efforts aiming to settle the Middle East issue."

The Ambassador added, "Abbas is to meet His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and discuss relations between the two nations."

"The two-day visit," he added, "is part of high-level deliberation and coordination between Kuwait and the Palestinian Authority."

Mahmoud Abbas is currently on a regional visit and is in Jordan, and his tour is to next take him to Kuwait, Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey, with his talks focusing on efforts to reinvigorate the peace talks. -KUNA

## Kuwaiti official heads meeting on development of Arab Economic Council



Finance Ministry Undersecretary Khalifah Msaed Hamadah speaking to the press, Mon. Jan. 4, 2010. (KUNA)

**CAIRO:** The second meeting of the team charged to consider means to develop the Arab Economic and Social Council was held here on Monday presided over by Kuwaiti Finance Ministry Undersecretary Khalifah Msaed Hamadah. The two-day meeting gathers Arab undersecretaries concerned with monetary and economic issues and is also attended by Arab League Deputy Secretary General Ahmad Bin Hilli and assistant secretaries for Economic, Social, and Auditing Affairs.

Assistant Undersecretary for Economic Affairs Ambassador Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Tuwaijri told the media, "The team is to complete debate and discussion on the draft document for upgrading the council's performance."

He added, "The document was a combination of recommendations by the secretariat, Saudi officials, and specialized Arab organizations. Its multiple tracks include the structure of the council, membership in the council and its committees, role of the council and its prerogatives, its relations with ministerial committees and with specialized Arab bodies."

"The document also considers issues of financing, the relationship with the private sector and with the civic community institutions, as well as mechanisms to take decisions and to decide on states' membership and representation."

The first meeting was held in October 2009, at the Arab League Headquarters, presided over by Kuwait with the aim of formulating an all-inclusive vision of council duties and activities.

The team consists of the Kuwaiti presidency, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and the Arab League. Should an undersecretary be absent, the concerned country is not allowed other representation, which was a measure taken to guarantee serious commitment on the part of members. -KUNA

## International Islamic art forum presenting 'remarkable' activities

**ALEXANDRIA, Egypt:** The significance of Kuwait's 4th International Forum of Islamic Art was stressed here on Monday by the Director of BA Media and Special Projects Departments Dr. Khaled Azab, which will be launched in Kuwait today under the patronage of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

He told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the forum will present remarkable cultural activities with the participation of specialists in the Islamic arts. Azab, Director of the Calligraphy Center in the Alexandria Library, expressed pleasure for being chosen as a guest of honor by the forum, pointing out that special pavilions of Arabic calligraphy and Islamic ornamentation would be hosted. The Alexandria library would display a number of its publications including: "Fatimid inscriptions on monuments in Egypt" book, and "History of writing from graphic expression to multimedia" book. A number of the center's publications have received interna-

tional awards, including the "History of Writing" which was granted the award of the best book translated into Arabic, in the field of humanities from Kuwait International book Fair in 2006, he noted. The forum celebrated Jerusalem as the capital of Arab culture in 2009, by hosting a special pavilion for the Palestinian calligraphers, besides a pavilion of the international participating museums and others for Children to introduce to them the principals of the arts of ceramics, drawing on the water and calligraphy. Azab said that the library of Alexandria is keen on participating in all media and cultural events organized by Kuwait. He praised the distinguished role it plays in the fields of culture, and literature, pointing out that the Library will be hosting the Arab Media Forum in May 2009. A number of distinguished institutions in the field of Islamic arts are participating in the Kuwait Forum, like Library of Alexandria, Qatar Islamic Cultural Center, and The Islamic Arts Museum in Malaysia. -KUNA

## Participation in cultural events 'showcases national development'

**DOHA:** Kuwait's participation in international cultural exhibitions helps showcase the development which the country is currently undergoing, a Kuwaiti media official said here on Monday. "Cultural communication between nations is the most successful means of interaction," head of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the Doha International Book Fair Nasser Al-Deihani told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). "The fair bridges Kuwaiti relations with Qatari people through publications displayed at Kuwait's pavilion at the fair," he noted. "Publications covering cultural, economic, political, social domains alongside those tackling the country's modernization processes, distinguish Kuwaiti participation in Doha's 20th exhibition," he said. "Around 16 Kuwaiti publishers are taking part in the exhibition where countries worldwide are participating," he said, adding "the Ministry of Information distributed brochures and books tackling Kuwaiti

history and screened a movie highlighting Kuwait's development." Al-Daihani also stated "Qatari Minister of Culture and Heritage Dr. Hamad Al-Kawari who was awarded a commemorative plaque by Kuwaiti delegation, praised Kuwait's significant participation which showcased deep-rooted relations between the two countries." Al-Daihani hailed Doha for holding the fair which pin points the transition which the country went through. A celebration to commemorate the naming of Doha as the "Arab Capital of Arab Culture" will be held on the sidelines of the fair that kicked off on Dec. 31 with the participation of 24 countries and 357 publishers. Cultural French activities demonstrating the cultural interaction between the City of Light, Paris and Doha will be held as well. Egypt supersedes the rest with the number of publishers taking part in the exhibition with 96 participating, followed by Lebanon with 70, and Qatar with 64. -KUNA