

Advocacy dossier

Salman Al-Khalidi

سلمان الخالدي

Imprisoned (serving sentence) **Kuwait**

Salman Al-Khalidi is a Kuwaiti blogger and founding member of the UK-based Kuwaiti Refugee Association who was granted asylum in the United Kingdom after several prison sentences were issued against him in Kuwait. Iraq handed him over to Kuwait on 1 January 2025, he has been detained there since, and on 11 January 2026 the Kuwaiti Criminal Court sentenced him to 15 years with hard labour followed by deportation over posts on X.

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The case at a glance

Salman Al-Khalidi is a Kuwaiti blogger and founding member of the UK-based Kuwaiti Refugee Association who was granted asylum in the United Kingdom after several prison sentences were issued against him in Kuwait. Iraq handed him over to Kuwait on 1 January 2025, he has been detained there since, and on 11 January 2026 the Kuwaiti Criminal Court sentenced him to 15 years with hard labour followed by deportation over posts on X.

Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **1 Jan 2025**	Country **Kuwait**
Sentence 15 years' imprisonment with hard labour followed by deportation (Kuwaiti Criminal Court, 11 January 2026).		
Charges Deliberately challenging the authority of the Emir through his X account Insulting the head of state Committing a hostile act against Saudi Arabia		

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Salman Al-Khalidi immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

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How the case unfolded

21 May 2022

Departure into exile

Arrives in the United Kingdom and applies for asylum

He travelled from Qatar, where he was studying at Lusail University, to the United Kingdom two days before his trial in Kuwait was due to open, and applied for political asylum.

6 June 2022

Ruling in absentia

Sentenced in absentia to five years over tweets on Saudi Arabia

A Kuwaiti court sentenced him in absentia to five years in prison with hard labour for a 'hostile act' against Saudi Arabia, two weeks after he had arrived in the United Kingdom. The case followed a complaint filed on 7 April 2022 by the Saudi ambassador in Kuwait over tweets in which he condemned the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

18 January 2023

Pardon

Pardoned by the Emir for the June 2022 sentence

The Emir pardoned him in respect of the five-year sentence issued in June 2022.

15 May 2023

Conviction

Sentenced to five years with hard labour

A Kuwaiti court sentenced him to five years in prison with hard labour while he was living in the United Kingdom.

26 September 2023

Conviction

Sentenced to three years in prison

The State Security Criminal Court sentenced him to three years in prison, on charges GCHR describes as largely similar to those in the November 2023 case. He was living in the United Kingdom at the time.

19 November 2023

Ruling in absentia

Sentenced in absentia to five years over online criticism

The State Security Criminal Court sentenced him in absentia to five years' imprisonment with labour on charges including spreading false news abroad about the country's internal situation, insulting the head of state and misusing telephone communications. The court did not allow him to appoint a lawyer and required him to attend in person.

13 December 2023

Other act

Emiri pardon cancelled

The authorities cancelled the Emiri pardon that had covered his June 2022 sentence.

29 December 2023

Other act

Granted political asylum in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom granted him political asylum.

23 January 2024

Ruling in absentia

Sentenced in absentia to three years in a new case

The State Security Criminal Court sentenced him in absentia to three years in prison with labour for publicly insulting the head of state in writing and intentionally misusing a mobile phone. GCHR counted 21 years of prison terms against him at that point.

7 April 2024

Citizenship revoked

Kuwaiti citizenship revoked

The Kuwaiti authorities revoked his citizenship, a measure GCHR describes as arbitrary.

1 January 2025

Forced return or rendition

Handed over by Iraq to Kuwait

Iraqi authorities handed him over to the Kuwaiti authorities at the Al-Abdali border crossing, where the Governor of Basra delivered him to Kuwait's Minister of Interior. Local reports said Iraqi security forces had arrested him at Baghdad International Airport as he was about to fly to London.

1 January 2025

Deprivation of liberty

Detained in Kuwait

On his handover, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior announced his arrest as a fugitive, and he has been held in Kuwait since. Amnesty International's report covering 2025 lists him among dissident bloggers deported to Kuwait and detained there.

11 January 2026

Conviction

Sentenced to 15 years with hard labour and deportation

The Kuwaiti Criminal Court sentenced him to 15 years in prison with hard labour, followed by deportation, for using his X account to deliberately challenge the authority of the Emir, insulting the head of state and committing a hostile act against Saudi Arabia. He remained in detention.

11 November 2026

Detention conditions and health

Still imprisoned in Kuwait

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights reported on 11 November 2026 that he remains in prison, serving the 15-year sentence imposed in 2026, and that he was reportedly tortured after being handed over from Iraq.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Salman Al-Khalidi remains in prison in Kuwait, where he has been held since Iraq handed him over on 1 January 2025. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights reported on 11 November 2026 that he is serving a 15-year sentence imposed in January 2026; Kuwaiti press report further sentences upheld on appeal.

Background and Work

Salman Al-Khalidi is a Kuwaiti blogger born in Kuwait in 1999. While studying at Lusail University in Qatar he became known for posts on X criticising the Kuwaiti and Saudi authorities. In December 2021, according to ALQST, he was stopped at the Saudi border while travelling overland from Qatar to Kuwait and banned from entering Saudi Arabia for 25 years. In March 2022 he posted tweets condemning the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and on 7 April 2022 the Saudi ambassador in Kuwait filed a complaint against him under the national security law. In August 2022 he co-founded the UK-based Kuwaiti Refugee Association. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights says he also defends the rights of the Bedoon community and of prisoners of conscience.

The Case

On 21 May 2022, two days before his trial was due to open, he travelled to the United Kingdom and applied for asylum. A string of sentences followed in his absence. On 6 June 2022 a court sentenced him in absentia to five years with hard labour for a 'hostile act' against Saudi Arabia; the Emir pardoned him for this sentence on 18 January 2023, and the pardon was cancelled on 13 December 2023. Courts sentenced him to five years with hard labour on 15 May 2023, to three years on 26 September 2023 and to five years on 19 November 2023, the last in absentia before the State Security Criminal Court on charges including spreading false news abroad and insulting the head of state. On 23 January 2024 the same court sentenced him in absentia to three more years. The United Kingdom granted him political asylum on 29 December 2023, and an Emiri decree withdrew his Kuwaiti citizenship on 7 April 2024, which he says left him stateless.

The Abduction

According to local reports cited by the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Iraqi security forces arrested him at Baghdad International Airport as he was about to fly to London. On 1 January 2025 Kuwait's Ministry of Interior announced his arrest outside Kuwait 'in direct cooperation' with Iraq and said 11 enforceable prison sentences had been issued against him. At the Al-Abdali border crossing the Governor of Basra handed him to Kuwait's Minister of Interior. The New Arab reported criticism in Iraq that the handover breached international law. Amnesty International's report on 2025 lists him among dissident bloggers returned to Kuwait through cooperation with foreign governments.

Detention Conditions and Health

He has been held in Kuwait since 1 January 2025. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights reported in November 2026 that he was reportedly tortured after his handover. No further public information is available on his conditions of detention.

Legal Proceedings

On 11 January 2026 the Kuwaiti Criminal Court sentenced him to 15 years in prison with hard labour, followed by deportation, for deliberately challenging the authority of the Emir through his X account, insulting the head of state and committing a hostile act against Saudi Arabia. The New Arab quoted the court as saying that freedom of expression does not permit the denigration of state symbols. Kuwaiti press have since reported further rulings that rights organisations have not yet documented: the newspaper Al-Rai reported on 5 March 2026 that the Court of Appeal upheld four Criminal Court sentences of five years each, for insulting the Emir, the judiciary and Saudi Arabia, and on 21 July 2026 that the State Security Court of Appeal upheld a five-year sentence with deportation in a case over an incident outside the Kuwaiti embassy in London, after a psychiatric report found him responsible for his actions. Times Kuwait reported in July 2025 that a ten-year sentence had been upheld on appeal.

International Response

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights has followed his case since 2022 and calls for his release, and ALQST called on Kuwait in 2022 to quash the charges and on Saudi Arabia to lift its entry ban. Amnesty International cites his case as an example of transnational repression by Kuwait. PEN America lists him as a writer at risk.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/salman-al-khalidi/

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