

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2003		33	Kuwait	Yasser al-Habib, writer
	2004			<i>follow-up 2</i>
	2004			<i>follow-up 1</i>

### *Announcement*

International PEN reports that Kuwaiti writer Yasser al-Habib (See NCH #33, #33ii) was released on 25 February 2004 but that he is at risk of imminent re-arrest. Please see the NCH summary below and the new appeal by International PEN. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

### **NCH SUMMARY**

On 30 November 2003, Kuwaiti writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib (?1973–) was abducted in a Kuwait City street by security forces, reportedly in connection with an audiocassette recording of a lecture he gave on Islamic historical issues to an audience of ten to twenty people in a closed environment. His research reportedly relied heavily on Wahhabi references and texts and apparently angered hard-line Wahhabi groups who used their influence within the establishment to bring about the maximum punishment against al-Habib. On 20 January 2004, he was sentenced to one year of imprisonment for “questioning the conduct and integrity of some of the ‘companions’ of the prophet Muhammad”. In frail health, he was reportedly subjected to orchestrated violent attacks in prison by Wahhabi inmates. Amnestied by the Emir on 25 February 2004, Kuwaiti National Day, he was at risk of imminent re-arrest by the security forces. (See NCH #33, #33ii, #33iii).

[Source: PEN, *Rapid Action Network 56/03*, 16 December 2003, 9 February, 2 March 2004.]

### **RAPID ACTION NETWORK**

2 March 2004

Update #2 to RAN 56/03

**KUWAIT: Writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib released but feared to be at risk**

**of re-arrest.**

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN welcomes the release of writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib, who was amnestied by the Emir on 25 February 2004, Kuwaiti National Day. However, PEN is deeply concerned at reports that security forces have attempted to re-arrest him without a warrant. Yasser al-Habib was sentenced to one years' imprisonment on 20 January 2004 for "questioning the conduct and integrity of some of the 'companions' of the prophet Muhammad" in a lecture he had delivered. International PEN considers the sentence to have been in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Kuwait is a signatory. PEN is seriously concerned that Yasser al-Habib may be at risk of imminent re-arrest, and urges the Kuwaiti authorities to guarantee his safety as a matter of urgency.

Yasser al-Habib, who has worked for several Arabic-language newspapers including the monthly al-Menbar (The Pulpit), was abducted on a Kuwait City street on the afternoon of 30 November 2003 by unknown individuals and taken away in an unmarked vehicle. His family was not informed that he had been detained by security forces until the following day. Al-Habib was arrested in connection with an audiocassette recording of a lecture he gave to an audience of 10-20 people in a closed environment on Islamic historical issues. His research is believed to have relied heavily on Wahhabi references and texts, and is said to have angered hard-line Wahhabi groups who have used their influence within the establishment to bring about the maximum punishment against al-Habib. Yasser al-Habib was released on 25 February 2004 as part of a prisoner amnesty to mark Kuwaiti National Day, but according to PEN's information the Wahhabi lobby within the National Assembly has pressurised the Minister of Justice to order al-Habib's re-arrest.

International PEN Writers in Prison Committee considers Kuwaiti writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib to have been detained in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Kuwait is a signatory, and welcomes his official pardon on 25 February 2004. However, PEN is deeply concerned that in spite of this, al-Habib may be at risk of imminent re-arrest, and calls upon the authorities to guarantee his safety and protection from re-arrest as a matter of urgency, in accordance with national and international law.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS:**

welcoming the release of writer, journalist and researcher Yasser al-Habib as part of the 25 February Kuwaiti National Day amnesty, but expressing serious concern that he may be at risk of imminent re-arrest;

seeking guarantees that he will be protected from further arrest as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Kuwait is a signatory.

**APPEALS TO:**

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