

URGENT ACTION

KUWAITI ACTIVIST NAWAF AL-HENDAL ACQUITTED

Kuwaiti human rights activist Nawaf al-Hendal was acquitted on 1 March, along with 10 other men, of charges including “illegal gathering”.

Human rights activist **Nawaf al-Hendal** and 10 other men were acquitted by a misdemeanours court on 1 March. They were already free on bail.

They had been charged with “participating in a gathering of more than five people in a public place”, “participating in an illegal demonstration” and “failing to obey orders to disperse”. During the third trial session, on 26 January, the judge had not allowed Nawaf al-Hendal’s lawyer to cross-examine the police officer whose testimony had been heard in court, and instead told him he should present his defence immediately, without preparation. The lawyer complained to the Head of the Court. A week later the trial judge postponed the session to 16 February, to allow Nawaf al-Hendal’s lawyer to present his defence.

Nawaf al-Hendal had been arrested on 23 March 2015 as he was monitoring a peaceful demonstration organised by Kuwaiti opposition groups calling for reforms including “upholding freedom of expression and assembly as guaranteed by the constitution”, “the release of prisoners of conscience” and “the abolition of unfair and retaliatory withdrawal of citizenship for political reasons”. He was beaten during the arrest and had his phone confiscated. 15 other men were also arrested. Eleven of them, including Nawaf al-Hendal were released on bail two days later; the five others were released the next day and their cases referred to the Criminal Court.

No further action is requested from the UA Network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 70/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde17/1354/2015/en/>

Name: Nawaf al-Hendal

Gender m/f: m

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