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## **Secularism is solution to Kuwait's sectarian tension, activist says**

By Habib Tourni

Gulf News (23.05.2011) / HRWF (30.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Manama, Bahrain  
- The solution to Kuwait's current political situation is secularism, a Kuwaiti political activist has said.

"What's happening today is reflective of the destruction of society which has been going on for more than 20 years," Ibtihal Al Khateeb, an academic, columnist and supporter of secular liberal values in Arab society said.

Last week, an intense argument between lawmakers over Kuwaitis held in Guantanamo took a sectarian tendency and turned into an unprecedented scuffle.

The case was fuelled by media comments and analysis.

### **Monster**

"This monster called sectarianism is now turning against government and Parliament members alike. People in Kuwait today have severe mistrust in the system and choose to resort to other options, such as the sect or tribe," Al Khateeb said.

"Today, we need sincere efforts to get us out of this mess. Precisely, we need to separate religion from politics. We need to make people trust that policymaking is not at all dependant on any sect or religious affiliation," she said, quoted by Kuwait Times.

The damage done to the current generation might be very severe, but it is not too late to ensure a better future for the future generation, she said.

### **Education**

"Education is a very important and valuable factor. School curricula need to be updated, and any traces of teachings that encourage sectarianism, sexism or any sort of prejudice must immediately be remedied," she said.

"People are starting to feel endangered, and the launch of a national awareness campaign is very important today. This monster called sectarianism took over 20 years to be built, and as much as we need to topple it down, we know that the process will take time, courage, and determination," she said.

According to the activist who had often waded into controversy for the boldness of her views, dissolving the parliament to defuse tension was not a solution.

"The solution does not lie in replacing the current faces with new ones, but in educating people and changing their attitude towards voting. With the same ideology that the

majority of people have today, they will still be electing the same people in the next elections, or people who have the same agendas.

Shiites will vote for Shiites and Sunnis for Sunnis. If we separate religion from politics, people will not mind voting for even a Buddhist because they know that the policymaking is irrelevant to the religious background," she was quoted as saying.

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