

Um-Bader

A colleague since the eighties, she is as honest as the day is long. Life has taught her a lot and the moment she accomplishes one thing, she starts on another. She is now holding a well-deserved position of leadership in the government and has been assigned a mission that must be completed within a month. Out of her professional due diligence, she never hesitates to seek advice, even from those who have little experience in her field because brainstorming often requires somebody removed from the situation who can think “outside the box.” The conversation began and the discussion intensified around a table stacked with platters of sushi and sashimi. The main topic was the rights of Kuwaiti women, and two hours later Um-Bader felt that she ran out of fuel. I only hope I was of some benefit to her. But her topic was a reason for me to become anxious and it pushed me to ponder the philosophy of citizenship and the principles of rights and duties. And to the woman, allow me to go deeper into this philosophy without becoming too depressing. Men normally think of women in terms of her relationship to him. He thinks of her as “mother,” or “sister,” or “daughter.” And although women make up half of the community, at the moment of truth, those relationships change and we enter into a bizarre system of classifications. Once the matter of her legal rights are mentioned, she is officially labeled “married,” “divorced,” “unmarried,” or “wife of a non-Kuwaiti.” Especially when it comes to residential care, this classification is unjust. If a man deserves residential care, then it is also the right of the woman to receive the same. Not all women are married, and not every single woman has a mother or father with whom she can live.