

My first encounter with brother Ali Al-Youha, Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL), took place when he was an engineer in the Council and directly responsible for the restoration project of the historic Bayt Al-Othman. My father, may God have mercy on him, started building the house in the 1940s and each phase expressed a different and beautiful development of architecture in Kuwait. Maintaining the house is a long story which I'm not going to discuss now. What is important is that one of the local television channels wanted to film inside the house, but the site supervisor prevented them from entering. The film crew asked me to intervene and I was referred to Ali Al-Youha, the engineer in charge of the restoration, and we argued a lot. "This isn't your house anymore," he told me, "it's ours." I corrected him, "No, the house belongs to neither of us. It belongs to the Kuwaiti people, so let the film crew enter so the people can see the work that's being done to their house." The film crew was allowed to enter. Then days passed by, and Al-Youha became the NCCAL Secretary General and our relationship evolved with the development of the Bayt Al-Othman Museum's activities.

Honestly speaking, after getting to know this guy, I found him to be the very embodiment of morality, having nothing to do with dirty money and with a clean heart. But what happened recently of his suspension, along with two other leaders of the Council, took me by surprise. The reasons for his suspension was based on nothing but some objections to a book which NCCAL printed containing maps mentioning the "Persian Gulf" instead of the "Arabian Gulf." This was strange because all of the old historical maps mention the name of Persia, just as they would mention the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. This is history and geography, and we cannot simply change a map or prevent its publication because it bears a name that doesn't match