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Kuwait: Anti-Corruption Journalist Attacked

An unknown assailant attacked and beat up Kuwaiti journalist Zayed Al Zaid as he briefly stepped out of a conference on transparency. Al Zaid is known for his anti-corruption work. ARTICLE 19 condemns the attack and calls on the Kuwaiti authorities to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice.

On the evening of 4 October, Al Zaid was participating in a conference on transparency when he left the hall to answer a phone call. Whilst outside he was attacked and returned to the meeting with blood and bruises on his face and body. The assailant left the scene immediately by car.

Senior officials, parliamentarians and journalists have condemned the attack. According to the satellite channel *Al Arabiyya*, Kuwait's prime minister has pledged a full investigation of the attack and the arrest of the assailant.

ARTICLE 19 fears the attack is related to Al Zaid's work as a journalist and anti-corruption activist. Al Zaid, the publisher of *AL-AAN* (Now) news website (www.alaan.cc), is an outspoken figure against corruption. Photos of him covered in blood and bandages have been placed on the news website's front page with the caption: "*Whatever you do, you will not prevent us from telling the truth. We will continue to unveil corruption wherever it lurks.*"

The attack follows a similar incident on 27 September when journalists from *Al Rou'iah* (The Vision) newspaper were attacked by government officials. The journalists were covering the Ministry of Higher Education's procedures for enrolling students. Government employees engaged in a fist fight with the journalists, confiscated their mobile phones and pushed them outside of the building.

"ARTICLE 19 strongly condemns the attack and urges the authorities to identify the culprits behind it," says Dr Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. *"Journalists should not, under any circumstances, be subjected to physical abuse as a result of their opinions or their writings."*

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech