



## Kuwait: Tweep “Carols” Sentenced to 5 Years in Jail for Insulting the Emir & KSA

Cairo: 18 January, 2016

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) condemned the verdict returned by the Kuwaiti Criminal Court today, January 18, to imprison a tweep named “Awad Al-Mutairi” (aka: Carlos) for 5 years with labor over the charges of “insulting the Emir” and Saudi Arabia through writing abusive tweets in the aftermath of the death of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.



On January 24, 2015, large numbers of security forces stormed the house of Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi and inspected it; causing dismay among the family members. Then, the forces detained his brother “Ahmed” for 10 hours, pressurizing him into speaking out about Abdulaziz’s whereabouts. On January 26, 2015, Abdulaziz was arrested for posting a tweet about the death of Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz on a Twitter parody account called “Carols”. The Kuwaiti authorities saw the tweet posing a danger to Kuwait concerning severing ties with a brotherly country (Saudi Arabia).

Al-Mutairi was subjected to torture during his detention at the state security service’s building, according to his lawyer’s statements to the media. The public prosecution accused him of harming the national interests of the country and insulting the late king Abdullah. The criminal court released him on March 15, 2015 on bail of 3000 Dinars. Throughout the hearings, the court heard the testimony of a state security officer, who confirmed that Abdulaziz is the owner of this parody account. In the meantime, Abdulaziz denied that testimony.

Noteworthy, the Kuwaiti authorities has passed the law no. 63 of 2015, a new law for the cybercrimes. It came into effect on January 12, 2016, while the National Assembly approved it on the 16th of June 2015. The law is drafted to give the authorities a broader legal space to narrow down the Kuwaiti citizens’ rights to freedom of expression, to prosecute dissidents, activists, journalists and others; using vague explanations of the moral motives and requirements of the national security. The new law also contradicts the international law that requires clarity and accuracy in connection with defining crimes. In addition, this new law breaches the UN decision on the promotion and protection of human rights, and their use on the Internet that was issued in 2014. On the other hand, some Kuwaiti entities proclaimed their refusal of it, deeming it a new repressive and anti-freedoms law, particularly freedom of opinion and expression under the cover of anti-cybercrime law.

“The judgment passed today violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international conventions on freedom of opinion and expression. This verdict comes under a state of crackdown on the limited space for freedom of expression, by the repressive Kuwaiti authorities, under several claims including fighting terrorism, protecting ties with a friendly country, or insulting the Emir. All these claims are used to justify the repression against dissidents and violations of freedom of expression and opinion,” ANHRI said.

Kuwaiti authorities should abandon the prosecution of tweeps and political opponents over vague claims, and stop the continual hostility against the right to freedom of opinion, expression and thought, ANHRI demands.

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