

## **Watchdog blasts Kuwait over corruption ranking**

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**Agence France-Presse** - 10 October, 2007

A Kuwaiti watchdog on Tuesday criticised the oil-rich emirate which dropped 14 places in the ranking of a world corruption index and called for immediate practical measures to fight graft.

In its annual Corruption Perceptions Index, Berlin-based Transparency International (TI) last month ranked Kuwait in 60th place among 179 countries, down from 46th place last year.

Kuwait has been downgraded on the TI corruption index in each of the past five years.

Among the Gulf Arab countries, Kuwait was ahead of only Saudi Arabia, which came in 79th position, while Qatar topped the Gulf states in 32nd position.

"We call for immediate practical and effective measures to eliminate corruption at the administrative and political levels," the Kuwait chapter of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) said.

GOPAC, launched two years ago, also called in a statement for approving a law for access to information and for ratifying the UN anti-corruption convention.

"Corruption (in Kuwait) threatens the stability of society, fair distribution of resources and human rights, and obstructs economic and social development," it said.

GOPAC, which groups serving and former MPs, blamed both the government and the elected parliament for Kuwait's slide on the corruption index.

There were allegations of wide-ranging corruption in the emirate by the opposition during last year's general elections.

A Kuwaiti court last month sentenced former defence ministry undersecretary for life and fined him 72 million dollars after convicting him of corruption charges.

The public prosecution is investigating dozens of corruption cases in which a number of officials, including former ministers, are allegedly involved.