KUWAIT

Date of Elections: 23 February 1981

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament in the first such poll since dissolution of the National Assembly in August 1976*.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Kuwait, the National Assembly, is composed of 50 members elected for 4 years. In addition, Ministers of the Government who are not elected members of the National Assembly are considered *ex-offwio* members of Parliament; these currently number 15.

Electoral System

Only literate men at least 21 years of age who are natural-born Kuwaitis or who have been naturalized citizens for 10 years are entitled to vote. Electors must, moreover, reside in Kuwait and have their names entered on the electoral register of their home constituency. Persons are disqualified from being electors if they have been convicted and not yet rehabilitated, while the right of suffrage is suspended as to military and police personnel.

Within each constituency, electoral registers are compiled by committees appointed by the Ministry of the Interior and are revised annually. Voting is not compulsory. Voting by post or proxy is not permitted.

Candidates for the National Assembly must be Kuwaiti by origin, possess the franchise, be over 30 years of age and be able to read and write Arabic well. Civil servants and members of the army or police services must resign from their offices if they stand for election. Company directors may not at the same time be members of Parliament.

As there are no political parties in Kuwait, candidates for the National Assembly run in an individual capacity. They must make a cash deposit of 50 Kuwait *dinar,* which is reimbursed if the candidate obtains one-tenth of the votes cast in his constituency.

Kuwait is divided into 25 electoral constituencies. In each, voters choose two candidates from among those whose names appear on different lists. The two candidates in each constituency who obtain the most votes are considered elected.

If a seat falls vacant between general elections, a by-election is held within two months of the date on which the vacancy was registered. No by-election is held to fill a vacancy which occurs within six months of the end of the Assembly's term.

• See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections XI* **(1976-1977), p. 22.**

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Subsequent to the 1975 general elections, the National Assembly was dissolved by the late Emir Shaikh Sabah as-Salem as-Sabah in August 1976, following sharp parliamentary criticism of the Government's policies. In August 1980, the restoration of the parliamentary system by the end of February 1981 was decreed by Emir Shaikh Jaber al-Ahmad as-Sabah.

Candidates for the 50 Assembly seats totalled 447, all of them running in an individual capacity. Approximately 46% of a total possible electorate of some 90,000 registered as voters. On polling day, the majority of triumphant candidates were considered to be conservative, pro-Western and loyal to the royal family and Government; men of bedouin origin gained nearly half the seats. Arab nationalists and the Shia Moslems achieved limited results.

On 28 February, the Crown Prince, Shaikh Saad al-Abdullah as-Salem as-Sabah, was reappointed Prime Minister by the Emir, and his Council of Ministers was reshuffled. The first session of the newly-elected Assembly was held on 9 March.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections*

Number of registered electors	41,698
Voters	(90%) (approx.)