

KUWAIT

Date of Elections: 20 February 1985

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the elective seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

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-officio* members of Parliament; these currently number **14**.

Electoral System

Only literate men at least 21 years of age who are natural-born Kuwaitis or who have been naturalized citizens for at least 20 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 of crime 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.

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. Ministers, judges and public prosecutors must resign from their offices if they stand for election, while civil servants must take official leave if they do so. 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 *dinars*, 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.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

A total of 231 candidates competed for the 50 elective Assembly seats. Although there were no organized political parties, some informal alliances of candidates having a common platform were formed. The two-month campaign debate focused mainly on economic questions (including the decline in oil prices) and social reforms.

Voter turnout on polling day reached almost 85% of the registered population of nearly 57,000 (out of a total population of approximately 1.6 million). According to final results, Islamic fundamentalist candidates suffered somewhat of a setback while Arab nationalists and the broadly-based group known as the Democratic Alliance registered gains. The make-up of the new Parliament thus featured both conservatives favouring the status quo and advocates of change; altogether, 31 members were newcomers to the Assembly. On 24 February, the Crown Prince, Shaikh Saad al-Abdullah as-Salem as-Sabah, was reappointed Prime Minister by the Emir, and his Cabinet 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.	1	56,745
Voters.	1	48,000 (84.58%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	1	255
Valid votes.	1	47,745

Distribution of Elected Members of Parliament according to Sex

Men	50
Women	50

3. *Distribution of Elected Members of Parliament according to Age Group*

30-39 years.	15
40-49 »	24
50-59 »	9
60 and over.	2
	50