

Kuwait – A Chronology

1600s: The area now known to the world as Kuwait, which is the North-east portion of Arabian peninsula, becomes a part of the vast Ottoman Empire.

1700s: Settlers from the interior of the Arabian peninsula travel to the site of present-day Kuwait City. The settlement struggles but slowly grows into a busy trading hub.

1756: One specific family, the Al-Sabah family, gains control of the area. Over time, the Al-Sabah's managed to make an agreement with the rulers of the Ottoman Empire for semi-autonomy.

1899: Sheikh Mubarak "the Great" is an extremely strong ruler and he fights to end Kuwait's relationship with the Ottoman Empire. He arranges an agreement with Great Britain to become a protectorate of the little kingdom. In exchange for naval protection, Britain is given control of Kuwait's foreign affairs.

1937: Oil reserves are discovered by the US-British Kuwait Oil Company. Before the oil industry can fully develop, World War II breaks out, delaying. But once the war ends, development of the oil industry brings great wealth to the small nation.

1951: Kuwait's citizens achieve a high standard of living due to the great wealth brought about by the oil industry.

1961 June: Kuwait proclaims independence and ends the 62-year British protectorate. Sheikh Al-Sabah becomes Emir Al-Sabah. At this same time, Kuwait joins the Arab League.

1961: Iraq startles Kuwait and Great Britain when they claim that Kuwait rightfully belongs to Iraq. When the British military intervenes, the government of Iraq withdraws their claims.

1963: The Kuwaiti government drafts a constitution and proclaims elections in order to elect a National Assembly.

1976: Emir Al-Sabah does not appreciate interference from the Assembly. He disbands the elected National Assembly.

1980: War erupts between Iraq and Iran. The Kuwaiti government is concerned about the danger of the Iranian Shiite majority so they give financial and psychological support to Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Kuwaiti citizens throw their full support behind Iraq.

1981: Emir Al-Sabah recalls the Kuwaiti National Assembly.

1985: Unrest and security problems arise in Kuwait due to the long Iraqi/Iranian war. Iran tries to create unrest in Kuwait's Shiite's minority. That's when the Kuwaiti government orders thousands of Iranian expatriates to leave Kuwait.

1986: The Kuwaiti National Assembly is disbanded once again.

1990 July: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein depleted the Iraqi treasury during the Iran/Iraq war and he calls for Kuwait to forgive all war debts. The Kuwaiti government refuses. Saddam files a complaint with OPEC. He accuses Kuwait of stealing Iraqi oil from an oil field near the Iraqi border. Saddam threatens military action.

1990 August 2: Iraq invades Kuwait. The Kuwaiti government makes it safely to Saudi Arabia where they can continue to govern from Taif, Saudi Arabia. Saddam annexes Kuwait.

1990 August/September/October: Jean Sasson travels to London, Cairo, and Taif, Saudi Arabia to meet with Kuwaiti survivors of the August 2nd Iraqi invasion. She is one of the few writers to interview the Kuwaiti Emir and Crown Prince.

1991 January 15: Jean Sasson's book, *The Rape of Kuwait*, highlighting personal experiences fleeing their country on the day of the invasion, is published in the United States. The book becomes an instant best-seller, reaching #2 on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

1991 January: The UN passes a resolution ordering Iraq to pull out of Kuwait. Saddam Hussein refuses. The United States leads the UN-backed bombing air campaign against the Iraqi military in Kuwait and Iraq.

1991 February: Saddam orders his men to set fire to the Kuwaiti oil fields. The military obeys, torching the Kuwaiti oil fields as they leave the country.

1991 February 26: The Iraqi army leaves Kuwait. Upon departure, enemy soldiers kidnap Kuwaiti citizens as hostages, taking them on the military retreat. It is believed that some Kuwaitis perished on the “Highway of Death” attack on the road leading from Kuwait. Others are imprisoned, but later returned on the orders of the UN. 605 Kuwaitis disappear forever in Saddam’s prisons.

1991 February: After the Iraqi army departs, Allied forces arrive in Kuwait City. The entire country erupts into a mass celebration.

1991 March 13-16: The Kuwaiti government sponsors the **FREEDOM FLIGHT TO KUWAIT**. Author Jean Sasson is an invited guest. Jean Sasson remains in the country for three weeks after the **FREEDOM FLIGHT** returns to the USA.

1991 March: Emir Al-Sabah returns to Kuwait, calling for a three-month period of martial law.

1991 March 21: Approximately 1,000 Kuwaiti POW’s are returned to Kuwait. Relatives of the missing gather at SURRA at the Shiakhan Al-Farise Hall to greet the survivors. Jean Sasson is escorted to the hall by Soud a. Al-Mutawa, where both talk with families and survivors and commiserate with the families who wait in vain.

1992: Emir Al-Sabah allows National Assembly elections. Everyone is surprised when opposition candidates win many votes.

1993: The UN establishes a new Kuwait-Iraq border. Saddam orders Iraqi border raids into Kuwait. The United States dispatches American troops.

1994: The UN puts pressure on Iraq to formally recognize Kuwait's independence and the new UN-defined borders.

1999: After elections, government supporters and the Al-Sabah family are dismayed when Islamists dominate the new assembly.

2000: Over the years, the Kuwaiti government, along with a special committee, calls for action regarding the 605 missing Kuwaitis still believed to be in Iraq. The Iraqi government denies all, but the families know that their family members are either in Iraqi prisons or have been murdered by the Iraqi regime. One of the missing is Fayeq Abdul Jaleel (the pen name of Fayeq Al-Ayadhi) who is a famous Arab poet known throughout the Muslim world and beyond. Jaleel's son, Fares AL-Ayadhi, never gave up on his father and searched until Fayeq's remains were found in a mass grave in the deserts of Iraq. Fares is in the process of writing a book about his father's life, a man who gave his life for his country. (Fares' father was one of the more active members of the men fighting for Kuwait and was captured prior to the retreat of the Iraqi army.)

2000: A death sentence is given to Kuwait's pro-Iraqi puppet ruler from the days of the 1990 invasion and occupation.

2001: Kuwaiti courts commute the death sentence to life for the pro-Iraqi puppet ruler, much to the dismay of many Kuwaiti citizens.

2002 March: Many thousands of soldiers congregate on the Kuwait-Iraq border for a US-led military campaign to oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

2003: Emir Al-Sabah appoints Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah Prime Minister. (This has never happened before, signifying a division of powers.)

2005 January: Violence erupts between Islamist militants and police, spreading alarm throughout the country.

2005 May: Parliament passes a law so that Kuwaiti women can vote and run for parliament.

2005 June: Massouma al-Mubarak is appointed as the first female cabinet minister.

2006 January: Emir Sheikh Jaber dies. Crown Prince Sheikh Saad succeeds to the throne but poor health creates a government crisis and he is forced to resign. Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad becomes the new Emir.

2006 April: Women cast their votes for the first time in an election, but later fail to win any seats in the parliamentary elections.

2006: Mass graves are discovered in Iraq. Many of the dead are identified as missing Kuwaitis (by DNA).

2007 July: Kuwaitis are shocked when they are told to conserve electricity. Their own generators struggle to meet demands of economic growth fueled by record oil exports.

2008 March: There is discord in the government. The Emir dissolves opposition-dominated parliament. He calls for elections in May after cabinet resigns.

2008 May: The Emir calls for elections when his cabinet resigns. Still, no women are elected although Islamists win more than half of the 50 seats.

2009 January: Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah forms a new government after chaos in the Parliament when a Shiite cleric visits.

2009 February: Kuwaiti citizens are surprised when Kuwait's Foreign Minister visits Baghdad for a high level visit, the first formal meetings between the two governments since Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

2009 May: Kuwaiti women make history when three of their number wins seats in the Parliament.

2009 October: Kuwaiti women celebrate when the Constitutional Court makes a ruling that Kuwaiti women will be allowed to obtain passports without the consent of their husbands. Another ruling says that female MPs are not required to wear an Islamic head cover when working. The ruling puts Kuwait in the forefront of women's rights in the region.

2009 December: The Prime Minister survives an attempt by the opposition to remove him over corruption allegations.

2011 March: Inspired by protests around the Arab world, many young people in Kuwait demonstrate for reform.

2011 December: There are protests over government corruption. The Emir dissolves the parliament.

2012 January 22: Sheikh Saud Al-Sabah passed away after a long battle with cancer at the age of 68, the Emiri Diwan announced. The Sheikh was a member of Kuwait's royal family and vigorously served as Kuwait's US Ambassador and he was the leading voice calling for international help after Iraq's invasion and occupation. He was laid to rest in Kuwait.

2012 February: The Islamist-led opposition takes control of the Kuwaiti parliament due to a wave of public anger over political deadlock. The Emir asks the outgoing Prime Minister to form a new cabinet. .

2012 May: The Emir blocks a proposal by MPs to make all legislation comply with Islamic law.

2012 June: The Emir suspends parliament. Kuwait's highest court annuls the election results, reinstating the previous assembly.

2012 October: The Emir once again dissolves parliament for the fifth time in six years. Thousands rally against possible changes to the election law. Kuwaitis are shocked when a prominent opposition figure breaks a taboo by directly criticizing the Emir. The Emir orders changes to the election laws, reducing the number of votes per citizen in parliamentary elections from four votes, to one vote. The opposition then calls for an election boycott. Tens of thousands of people march against the new voting rules. The crowd is dispersed by tear gas and stun grenades.

2012 November: Thousands of protestors march on the prison where the opposition figure is held for insulting the emir. The police rout the crowd with tear gas. The emir stands firm.

2012 December: Kuwaitis vote in a parliamentary election held under the new polling rules. Turnout is low.

2013 June: The Kuwaiti Constitutional Court scrapped the parliamentary election of December 2012, but approved the Emir's electoral law that created the boycott. The court has called for a new election to replace the current parliament.

Despite the recent political upheavals, most observers agree that Kuwait has one of the most lively parliaments and freest media in the Middle East.