



[The Latest Dissolution of Parliament in Kuwait Could Be Different from Previous Times](#)

Kuwait's most recent dissolution of parliament has evoked concern regarding the potential curtailing of freedoms in the Gulf country. Amid continuing political gridlock, Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah dissolved parliament late last week, taking over some of its duties and also announcing the suspension of various articles of the constitution. All of this comes merely weeks after elections were held in Kuwait back in early April following the February 2024 dissolution of parliament. The April-elected parliament members had not yet begun their new session or been sworn in. Experts have pointed out the conundrum that Kuwait is currently facing, whereby it appears to be trying to initiate a desire to restore some functionality to its paralyzed political system but in doing so risks sacrificing its range of civic and political rights. For many, what is particularly worrying is the seemingly open-ended and possible long-standing nature of the latest dissolution, with the Kuwaiti head of state calling it a "transitional period" in which time would be used to review "all aspects of the democratic process" in the country.

The suspension of parliament and articles of the constitution has understandably been deemed a serious threat to Kuwait's semi-democratic political system, a rarity in the Gulf region. Of the numerous articles of the constitution that have been suspended, there are a couple that are especially alarming. First is the article which requires that a new parliament be elected within two months of the dissolution of parliament, and the second is the article which necessitates that laws must be approved by both parliament and the emir. The fact that these two articles have been suspended indicates that the move could be indefinite and different from previous dissolutions of parliament. The Kuwaiti political system usually relies on a delicate balance between the monarchy and an elected parliament, where the latter wields significant powers and is more than a mere institution for show as it is in some other countries in the region. In Kuwait, the emir needs parliamentary approval to install his government and ratify laws.

As opposed to triggering fresh elections for a new parliament as would normally be the case, the latest move saw a new one – headed by the emir's nephew – be appointed by royal decree. Additionally bothersome is that while dissolutions leading to new elections in Kuwaiti politics have been relatively frequent, parliamentary suspensions have only happened twice before: back in 1976 and 1986. From 1976 to 1981 and from 1986 to 1991, then-Emir Jaber Al-Sabah suspended the legislative body, eventually restoring it both times after popular outcry. Thus, as some analysts have pointed out, the latest move presents the biggest challenge since then to the tradition of a democratically-elected parliament in Kuwait and risks entrenching governmental autocracy like in nearby Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – both of whom congratulated Kuwait for the course of action. It also leaves a few wondering if behind-the-scenes efforts are taking place to try and persuade Kuwaiti authorities to sign on to the folly of the Abraham Accords.

There are various key factors that have led to the current state of affairs in Kuwait. One of these is that the political deadlocks and turmoil in the country have intensified over the past several years. Members of parliament have accused the government of corruption while the Kuwaiti cabinet has criticized the conduct of parliament, stating that the legislative body has blocked planned economic diversification. This has seen Kuwait lag behind its Gulf neighbors in this and infrastructure development. As a result, according to issue experts, Kuwait's emir seems to

be signaling that he prioritizes national development and stability over other considerations and is therefore willing to initiate this type of a move. Furthermore, Kuwait has been plagued with high levels of parliamentary turnover and cabinet resignations, meaning that officials have lacked time to execute their policy agendas. Observers have also drawn attention to how the latest move in Kuwait is part of an unsettling regional pattern of suppressing any free elements of society, as exhibited in places like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain.

Unlike these other countries though, one can only hope that because of Kuwait's long history of a democratically-elected parliament and free press, any potential clampdown on this will be met with robust resistance. The latest political actions in Kuwait will certainly test this.