

# Kuwait political crisis at critical point

Kuwait holds its second parliamentary election this year amid escalating protests against new voting rules which opposition parties say favour pro-government candidates. The emir-led state has so far avoided the mass pro-democracy unrest seen in other Arab countries

## POLITICAL STRUCTURE

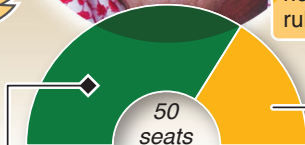
Gulf Arab region's most democratic state



◀ **Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah:**

Final say in state affairs, can veto laws and dissolve parliament

**Cabinet:** Emir appoints prime minister who chooses 15-member cabinet. Most top jobs held by members of ruling al-Sabah family



**National Assembly:**  
Distribution after February election

**Opposition bloc** (Around 34 members)

■ **Feb 2012:** Opposition – moderate Islamists, Salafi MPs, and populists – wins landslide victory

■ **Jun:** Spiralling political tensions result in dissolution of Parliament

■ **Oct:** Kuwait rocked by major unrest over new voting rules – opposition leader and former MP **Musallam al-Barrak** arrested for criticism of emir

■ **Dec 1:** Opposition and youth groups urge boycott of new elections as demands grow for reforms to political system