



**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
AND
CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT**
Executive Summary of the Kuwait Training Program

With the support of the Regional Program of Gulf States at Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Ibtakar launched its fourth in-house training program on “Political Leadership and Campaign Management” with a call out to interested parties in Kuwait in January 2020. The program included both practical skill development, in-depth reviews and discussions of the political system with local experts over 10 workshops that ran from February to June 2020. Each workshop had 20 to 25 participants, both men and women, and was not recorded to ensure that both the speakers and the participants would be able to express themselves and share their views freely. The creation of a monitored WhatsApp group for the participants meant that conversations carried on after the workshops and a new network of like-minded individuals was established that could and did carry on political debates and activities following the program’s conclusion.

The first two training workshops took place at the Kuwait Economic Society, an established NGO that Ibtakar has worked within in the past. However, due to the Covid-19 situation, the program was disrupted for two months, after which it was continued online via Zoom, recommencing in late April 2020. Delivering the training workshops online allowed us to admit up to 25 participants instead of the original 20 following a brief recap on the first two trainings to our new participants.

At Ibtkar we believe that engaging with local speakers who have a political background is the best way to ensure that there was a strong interaction between the participants and the political topics that were introduced. Thus, Ibtkar invited the following speakers to share their experiences and expertise in the sessions:

- **Fatma Hayat**, the first woman board member at Kuwait’s Football Association and a founding member of political movements on the student and national level like AlTahahluf.
- **Abdullah AlKhonaini**, founder of Sout AlKuwait (a Kuwaiti awareness group) and Raqib50 (a platform that tracks the sessions and laws drafted by members of parliament)
- **Dr. Anwar AlIbrahim**, Assistant Director of Kuwait University Construction Project
- **Abdulrazzaq AlMutawa**, CEO of Ghalia Tech
- **Ali Khaja**, a journalist and broadcaster with a history of activism for women rights in Kuwait
- **Shamael AlSharekh**, head of the Organizational Committee at the National Youth Project from 2012-2013, has also been involved in running several campaigns for new candidates
- **Abdullah AlSalloom**, founder and creator of “Dhammin”, a software company that offers a smart application that has a system to manage political campaigns
- **Abdullah Boftain**, a political commentator and election campaign specialist.

The workshop trainings touched upon a variety of topics, starting with an overview of the fundamentals of political participation and the different political bodies in Kuwait by Ibtkar's Director Dr. AlAnoud AlSharekh who lead and moderated the discussions. An in-depth coverage of the different political unions and entities (national assembly, municipality, co-ops, sports clubs, student elections, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI)) was followed by an examination of the characteristics of political leaders in Kuwait, which lead to discussions on the different qualities such as emotional intelligence and social astuteness and how they are being misused by some politicians in Kuwait, followed by Abdullah AlKhonaini's presentation on the difference between power and authority.



Dr. AlAnoud AlSharekh introducing the program at our first training workshop at the Kuwait Economic Society

Heated debates between the participants and Fatma Hayat regarding issues such as the implementation of gender quotas and the terms and qualifications for members of parliaments and other political bodies (which generally do not include academic qualifications but set a minimum age for running at 30 years old) transpired. Within the sphere of leadership skills and characteristics, Dr. AlSharekh conducted a training specifically on delegation and assertiveness starting by testing the participants' ability to express frustration, and to give and receive constructive criticism. This assessment was answered privately to give participants a chance to evaluate themselves honestly and assert control on their communication skills. Dr. Anwar Al Ibrahim related this topic to her co-leadership of on the construction of the new Al-Shadadiya campus of Kuwait University – which is known to be one of the biggest construction projects in Kuwait – embodying in her presentation the importance of transparent communication and delegation in leadership. The training that followed focused on the importance of body language, feedback behavior and negotiation, in order to hone the participants' skills on assertiveness before moving on to public speaking, where practical exercises were assigned to each participant.

Throughout the exercises, participants received individual feedback catering to their individual needs, and each was given a chance to present again, applying what they had gained from the training. This particular workshop was adjusted to fit the needs of participants going online for a wider audience for the first time, and the Ibtakar presentation touched upon the importance maintaining eye contact, handling questions and stage craft, among other skills.

Within the context of promoting a political campaign, Dr. AlSharekh dedicated trainings to the practical and political use of social media as a cultural and marketing tool, starting with an exhaustive review of the different social media platforms and how they can be utilized to sharpen political campaigns and messaging. Discussions on the credibility of traditional news channels and newspapers versus social media, and how politicized journalism is in Kuwait were initiated by Abdulrazzaq AlMutawa, with this theme being expanded in another discussion on the difference between new media and traditional media. Dr. AlSharekh recapitulated the laws and legislations in Kuwait that set limitations

and restrictions on both traditional and citizen journalists. With regard to media politics, the participants discussed the effects of citizen journalism and the issue of free journalism and compared the importance of taking local news internationally and when to do so with Ali Khaja.

Ibtkar's presentation also paid special attention to skills for Instagram Live given that it is a viable option during quarantine, and some of our participants held regular live sessions on their accounts to address social and political matters.



Highly respected broadcaster and women rights activist Ali Khaja sharing his varied experience with political media in Kuwait in one of our trainings via Zoom

The last section of the workshop covered the basic principles of running a political campaign, the use of digital tools, and an analysis of how this year's elections will go given the exceptional circumstances. Starting with the fundamentals of running a political campaign, Dr. AlSharekh emphasized on the importance of utilizing each district's demographic statistics, the importance of having a qualified campaign manager to run the campaign, the use of new digital tools, and possible avenues of funding for a campaign.

Shamael AlSharekh shared a presentation on characteristics candidates running for parliament should acquire for capacity building, and for building a voter base in Kuwait, and she shed light on the basics that may greatly affect an MP's reputation and likability such as respecting tradition and culture and attending social obligations. Dr. AlSharekh talked about the importance of name recognition and having an open, active social media account and a wide network of support, which led to a heated discussion on the ethics of networking with influential government figures in Kuwait.

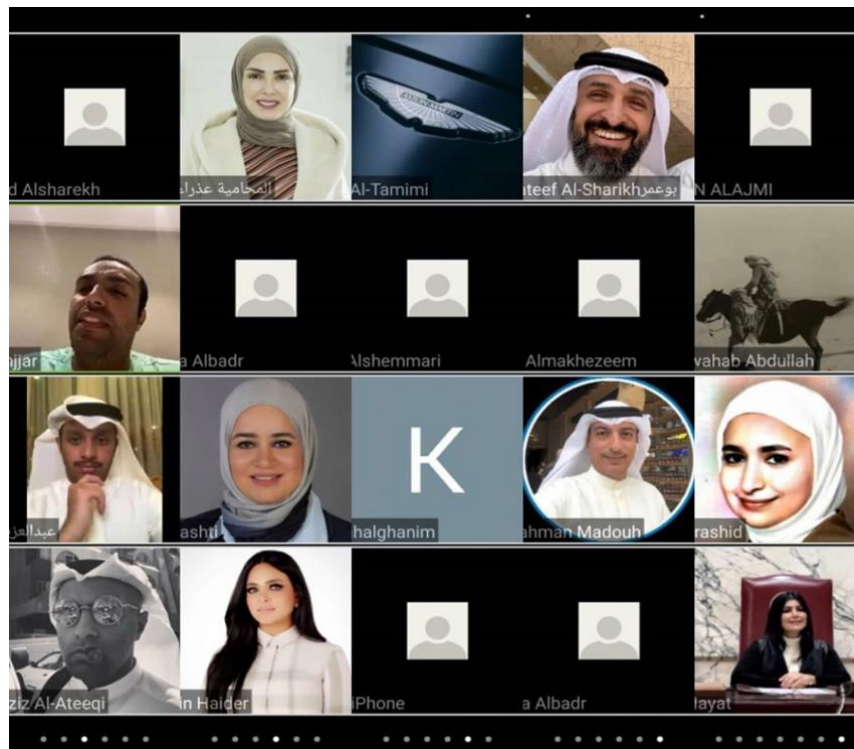
Within the scope of building a voter base and the use of digital tools, Abdulla AlSalloom explained the technical qualities of his application "Dhammin", and how it serves those running or managing a campaign in any political body. The participants were engaged in a discussion with AlSalloom and Dr. AlSharekh on how applications like "Dhammin" will serve as an efficient and effective shortcut in future elections, especially with around 50,000 new voters registered this year. This led to an interesting conversation about the Abolish 153 campaign's Sajelni movement that urged women and the youth to register, vote and participate in the upcoming elections to usher in positive change.

District	Number of new voters
First	4000
Second	4800
Third	7500
Fourth	14000
Fifth	17000

Table 1. The number of new registered voters in each of the five districts (2020, AlJarida)

Dr. AlSharekh concluded the workshop with a presentation on the different platforms candidates will be able to use to deliver their message and run their campaigns virtually this year given the exceptional circumstances such as Zoom, WebEx, various social media applications and even podcasts. Abdulla Boftain discussed how many previous and prospective members of parliament (MP) are now doing their pre-election gatherings, also

known as Political Diwaniyas, via Zoom and other online platforms to promote their campaigns and gain greater exposure. A video of a social media influencer receiving a gift from an MP ignited an exchange of views between participants and our speaker on the range of influencer's political clout in Kuwait and the GCC. Boftain suggested that by having to take the Diwaniya online, women may now have an equal opportunity to join these sessions and gain greater recognition, whether it be by participating or for use in promoting their campaigns.



The participants who held their own political debate on Arab Nationalism after the program ended

After the program concluded, the participants led their own independently organized political discussion on the various political movements in Kuwait and invited representatives from various political groups and others who had not been able to participate. They debated the continued validity of pan Arab nationalism and coalitions that still supported its tenets in local politics and made plans to continue this discussion series as the 2020 election draws closer.