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1st woman in Kuwait Cabinet

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KUWAIT CITY - An American-educated professor and women's rights activist was named Kuwait's first female Cabinet minister Sunday, a month after lawmakers in this oil-rich nation granted women the right to vote and run for Parliament.

Massouma al-Mubarak was given the planning and administrative development portfolios, Prime Minister Sheik Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah told the Kuwait News Agency. He described the appointment as a "wish come true," for the government that proposed the suffrage bill to the all-male legislature.

"This honor is not bestowed on my person but on every woman who fought to prove that Kuwaiti women are capable," al-Mubarak, 54, said.

The women's suffrage bill passed in a 35-23 vote on May 16, despite the opposition of many fundamentalist Muslim and tribal lawmakers who believe women should not mix freely with men and should stay home to take care of their families.

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