

Bahrain king names new consultative council

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King Hamad appointed the 40 members of Bahrain's upper house, the Majlis ash-Shura, a group that includes a Jew and a Christian among the 10 women named, the official BNA news agency reported.

The appointments come on the heels of elections for the lower house, in which Sunni and Shiite Islamists won a surprising victory.

The council also includes 10 former deputies who did not stand for reelection.

It will be headed by Ali Saleh al-Saleh, who replaces Faisal al-Musawi.

Among the women chosen were Houda Ezra Nonoo, a human rights activist and member of the country's tiny Jewish community, which moved to Bahrain from Iraq about a century ago.

Christian Alice Samaan was a member of the previous council, which counted five other women among its ranks. Her family, among only some 1,000 Christians in the Gulf archipelago, also comes from Iraq.

The Majlis ash-Shura has the power to block legislation coming out of the lower house.

Meanwhile, a Bahraini official said consultations are still underway for the formation of a new government. An announcement had been expected by Sunday or Monday, and the official said it should come "before the end of the week."