

Qatar Residents Begin Voting In First Ever Legislative Elections

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Candidate for Qatar's Shura council elections in the 17th constituency, Leena Nasser al-Dafa.

Doha: Qataris began voting in their country's first ever legislative polls Saturday, AFP correspondents saw, with 30 of 45 seats in a previously appointed, largely advisory council up for election.

Analysts say the polls, open from 0500 GMT until 1500 GMT with results expected the same day, will not lead to power shifting from the ruling family and are a largely symbolic nod to democracy.

At a polling station in the Jawaan bin Jassim school in the district of Onaiza in Doha, Qatari citizens wearing white thobes signed in to vote at a registration desk.

They cast their ballots into a semi-transparent plastic box emblazoned with the dhow boat, crossed swords and palm tree emblem of Qatar.

The candidates are mostly men, with just 28 women among the 284 hopefuls running for the 30 available council seats. The remaining 15 seats will be appointed by the all-powerful Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

Qataris number about 333,000, but only descendants of those who were citizens in 1930 are eligible to vote and stand, disqualifying members of families naturalised since then.

- AFP