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## OCTOBER

See NEWSPAPERS AND PRINT MEDIA: ARAB COUNTRIES

## OGLU

See GLOSSARY

## OIL EMBARGO (1973–1974)

*Arab nations' reduced oil production in response to the Arab-Israel War of 1973.*

Members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) decided in late October 1973 to cut oil production by 25 percent until Israel withdrew to the 1949 armistice lines. OAPEC also decided to cut off oil to the United States and the Netherlands to protest U.S. military and Dutch political support for Israel. Exempted from the boycott were France, Spain, Muslim countries, and Great Britain (conditionally). The remaining countries divided whatever oil was left between them. The result was a fourfold increase in the price of oil. The embargo was lifted in March 1974.

See also ORGANIZATION OF ARAB PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OAPEC).

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## OLIVES

See FOOD: OLIVES

## OMAN

*Arabian Peninsula sultanate formerly known as Muscat and Oman.*

Oman, officially the Sultanate of Oman since 1970, extends some 1,000 miles along the southeast coast



MAP BY XNR PRODUCTIONS, INC. THE GALE GROUP.

of the Arabian Peninsula, on the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman. Approximately 118,000 square miles, it has a population of 2,018,074 (1993 census). Oman's long-disputed southern border with Yemen and its western borders with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and the maritime northern border with Iran in the Strait of Hormuz, have all been largely negotiated and demarcated.

Physically, Oman is divided into three regions: Ru'us al-Jibal, Oman Proper, and Dhufar. The Ru'us al-Jibal exclave is separated from Oman by a 50-mile corridor of United Arab Emirates territory and is the mountainous tip of the Musandam Peninsula. Oman Proper, including Masira and the Daymaniyat Islands, is characterized by a narrow coastal plain (Batina), a parallel mountain chain (Jabal Hajar) anchored by Jabal al-Akhdar, and along its western limits, a dry gravel plain (al-Dhahira) that blends into the Rub al-Khali desert. Additional



**Qabus bin Said became the sultan of Oman in 1970 after ousting his father, Sa'īd ibn Taymur. Upon assuming leadership of the country, Qabus instituted a program of extensive modernization, opening up the long-isolated Oman to the rest of the world and adopting a moderate, independent foreign policy. © CORBIS SYGMA. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.**

desert and gravel plains (Sharqiyya and Wusta) extend to the south. Dhufar, including the Halaniyat (Khuriya Muriyah) Islands, also has parallel regions of a coastal plain, the Qara Mountains, and interior desert. The overall climate is hot, with summer temperatures reaching 120° F; dry inland, the coast is extremely humid. The climate of Dhufar is moderated by summer monsoon rains.

Oman's population is 80 percent Omani Arab, plus a significant South Asian expatriate community. Arabic is the predominant language, but English is used widely. Oman is unique because Ibadi Islam, characterized by its adherence to the principle of an elected religious leader called an imam, is the majority faith. Other Muslims include large Sunni and small Shi'ite minorities, and a small Hindu community. The Muscat capital area, an amalgam of several formerly separate coastal towns adjacent to Muscat, is the major urban center, with

550,000 people. Other cities are Salala, Nizwa, and Suhar.

Oman's modern history began in 1749 when Ahmad ibn Sa'īd (1749–1783), founder of its present Al Bu Sa'īd dynasty, restored Omani independence from Persian invaders and gained election as imam. Ahmad successfully balanced tribal and religious support while encouraging maritime and commercial expansion, but his successors devoted greater attention to external affairs and abandoned claims to the imamate. Sa'īd ibn Sultan Al Bu Sa'īd (1804–1856) established the antecedent of today's sultanate by utilizing Muscat as the base for expansion in the Persian (Arabian) Gulf and East Africa to form the western Indian Ocean's leading maritime state. But this proto-sultanate was considered illegitimate by Omanis committed to the imamate ideal. Periodic interventions by the Sa'ūdīs aggravated the internal instability, and Sa'īd often ran afoul of his British allies' efforts to suppress both the slave trade and piracy, the latter a consequence of Sa'īd's expansionism. With his options in Arabia thwarted, Sa'īd made Zanzibar his principal residence in the 1830s. Following Sa'īd's death in 1856, the British recognized separate Al Bu Sa'īd sultanates in Muscat and Zanzibar. Long-simmering Omani opposition to political conditions peaked with the election of Azzan ibn Qays (1868–1871), leader of an Al Bu Sa'īd cadet branch, as imam, and the unification of Oman under his rule. The British government utilized gunship diplomacy to overthrow the imamate and restore the sultanate. Muscat became a thinly veiled British protectorate. Support for the imamate remained strong and continued to grow as a consequence of the disruptive influences of economic globalization in the late nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century the imamate reappeared in Oman's interior but failed to overthrow the British-defended sultanate. In 1920 the rival Omani governments signed the so-called Treaty of Sib and regularized the conditions under which they coexisted for the next thirty-five years. Sa'īd ibn Taymur Al Bu Sa'īd (1932–1970) signaled Muscat's revival by diminishing British influence, suppressing the imamate, and reuniting Oman in 1957, then initiating exploitation of its oil resources. But his opposition to socioeconomic development led to widespread disaffection, a rebellion in Dhufar, and greater de-



Due to the country's 1,700 km of coastline, fishing is a fast-developing commercial industry in Oman. Since the early 1990s, the government has been investing substantially in this sector, building new harbors, granting fishermen subsidies to purchase boats, and constructing cold stores and processing facilities.

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pendence on the British. In July 1970 Qabus (also Qaboos) ibn Sa'id deposed his father. The new sultan ended Oman's long diplomatic isolation, suppressed the insurgency in Dhufar, and launched political and economic reforms.

Oman's political system has evolved from autocracy to nascent democratic system during the past thirty years. The Basic Law of 1996 defines the political system, which has two consultative bodies—an elected Majlis al-Shura and an appointed Council of State. There are no political parties. The sultan continues to be the source of all law. An independent judiciary system was implemented in 2001. In principle, women have full political rights, and they do serve in both consultative bodies and senior government positions.

Until the early 1970s Omanis subsisted upon an agricultural and fishing economy. Oil exports began in 1967 and funded modest economic development under Sa'id ibn Taymur. Those efforts accelerated greatly under Qabus after 1970. Modernized agriculture, livestock, and fishery practices still support about 50 percent of the population, but service jobs (35%) in both the public and private sector have increased dramatically. Industry and commerce (15%) provide other livelihoods. Production of petroleum products, both crude oil and natural gas, dominates the economy, accounting for 70 percent of state

revenues and 90 percent of exports, mostly to East Asia. Oman also exports copper and chromite, some industrial goods (mostly clothing), and food products, and it imports machinery, transport, and consumer goods, mainly from Japan, Britain, the United Arab Emirates, and South Asia. Since 1970 the government has developed a comprehensive communication and transportation infrastructure and provided modern education through university level and healthcare facilities for the Omani people.

*See also* AL BU SA'ID FAMILY AND TRIBE OF OMAN; AL BU SA'ID, QABUS IBN SA'ID; AL BU SA'ID, SA'ID IBN TAYMUR; DHUFAR; MAJLIS AL-SHURA; MUSCAT; SIB, TREATY OF (1920); ZANZIBAR.

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### OMAR, MUHAMMAD (MULLAH)

[1959–]

*Afghani leader of the Taliban Movement that ruled most of Afghanistan between 1996 and 2002.*

Muhammad Omar was born of Pashtun ethnic heritage in the village of Singesar, near Kandahar, and attended a religious school. He started teaching before finishing his degree but when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, he joined the resistance and commanded a small group of *mujahidin* (also *mojahedin*) (fighters), losing an eye in one of the confrontations with the Soviet military. After the