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## U.S. Department of State

### Oman Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, January 30, 1997.

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#### OMAN

The Sultanate of Oman is a monarchy which has been ruled by the Al Bu Sa'id family since the middle of the 18th century. It has no political parties or directly elected representative institutions. The current Sultan, Qaboos Bin Sa'id Al Sa'id, acceded to the throne in 1970. Although the Sultan retains firm control over all important policy issues, he has brought tribal leaders--even those who took up arms against his family's rule--as well as other notables into the Government. In accordance with tradition and cultural norms, much decisionmaking is by consensus among these leaders. In 1991 the Sultan established the 59-seat Consultative Council, or Majlis Ash-Shura, which replaced an older advisory body. The Government selects Council members from lists of nominees proposed by each of the 59 wilayats (regions). After the first national census in 1993, the Sultan expanded the membership of the new Council to 80 seats.