

Omanis make economic gains, press for democracy 2011

- [Arab Awakening \(2011\)](#) [1]
- [included participation by more than one social class](#) [2]

- [Arab Awakening \(2011\)](#)

Timing

17 January

2011

to:

14 May

2011

Location and Goals

Country:

Oman

Location City/State/Province:

Cities across the country of Oman

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

Better wages, more jobs, an elected parliament, and a new constitution, but not all protesters demanded all these goals.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 038. Marches

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 016. Picketing
- 034. Vigils
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 051. Walk-outs
- 052. Silence
- 105. Establishment strike
- 112. Reporting "sick." (sick-in)
- 116. Generalised strike
- 162. Sit-in
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 4th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 016. Picketing
- 034. Vigils
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 162. Sit-in
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 5th segment:

- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 6th segment:

- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Notes on Methods:

It's not clear when many of the strikes, sit-ins, walk-outs, or assemblies ended.

Segment Length:

20 days

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- Omani workers
- students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Not known

Partners:

Not known

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Oman Oman Air workers; Bank workers; Intercontinental Hotel workers; Haima oil workers; Rusayl Industrial Estate workers

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length:

20 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Omani government

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Rallies, motorcades

Campaigner violence:

Campaigners occasionally threw stones at security forces and some may have wielded knives

Repressive Violence:

Arrests, tear gas, rubber bullets, baton beatings, using tanks to clear blockades (without firing). How many protesters died is disputed.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

4 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Total points:

8 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

Actions by protesters against certain companies were successful and nationwide demands for government and labor reforms were partially successful. The Sultan made some concessions but did not completely overhaul the government as the protesters wished.

The Arab Awakening came to the Middle Eastern country of Oman with a peaceful protest in the capital Muscat on 17 January, 2011. This campaign consisted of several groups that worked towards both individual and collective goals. The campaigners had many demands including: government reforms, an increased minimum wage, lower unemployment rates, and higher education rates.

The 17 January march of about 200 Omanians occurred soon after the successful campaign in Tunisia to remove President Zine Al Abidine Bin Ali. This first action was held to demonstrate against corruption in the government and the cost of food. Police did not attempt to stop the march. On 18 February, after unrest increased in Bahrain, 350 people marched, this time demanding both an end to corruption and a more fair distribution of oil revenue; these protesters did not directly oppose the Sultan of Oman and police again did not attempt to stop the protest.

On 26 February, protests spread to Sohar, where 500 demonstrators blockaded a shopping mall. The next day, 27 February, protesters forced the closure of the Earth Roundabout to traffic by staging an occupation and blocking every access point to the main junction in the industrial port city. This occupation continued until the last day of strikes and protests.

Protesters elsewhere in Sohar, however, who had been cordoned off by security forces, threw stones at police, who responded by using tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. Witnesses report that two protesters were killed but the state would later claim that only one protester died.

On 28 February in Sohar, protesters blockaded the Port of Oman and looted and burned a market. Omani army soldiers and tanks dispersed the blockade without opening fire.

On 1 March in Muscat, approximately 50 demonstrators held a sit-in at the Consultative Assembly of Oman. The group grew to over 400 protesters. This was a well-organized sit-in including a tent camp with separate areas for men and women.

A counter-protest was held the same day in Muscat in support of the Sultan, although it is not entirely clear how many of the demonstrators in that group were there voluntarily, as many were government workers. Large motorcades also regularly drove through the city in support of the government.

Meanwhile in Sohar, a vigil was held outside of a police station in which two protesters were being held as the occupation and blockade of the Globe Roundabout continued.

On 5 March oil workers in Haima, a key oil region, began a sit-in demanding more investment in the region. On 6 March about 200 workers staged a protest at Oman Air in Muscat. They demanded a wage increase. Some workers called in sick, while others refused to work after arriving at their offices. One hundred protesters arrived outside the airline's headquarters to protest in solidarity with the Oman Air workers.

Walkouts and protests also occurred daily at Oman International Bank, Oman Investment Finance Company, and Muscat's government-owned Intercontinental Hotel. The staff of Oman International Bank and Oman Investment and Finance Company staged a walkout in the morning and stood in silent protest in front of their offices. They wanted higher pay and additional overtime.

Oman Air announced concessions to their striking workers.

Demonstrations spread throughout Muscat and then to the towns of Sur, Salalah, and Al Buraimi. Sultan Qaboos, the country's leader, responded to the protests with a pledge to create 50,000 new jobs and to distribute 150 rials (\$390) a month to unemployed workers. However, the Sultan's concessions only encouraged more protests.

Gulf Arab oil producers announced on 10 March that they were launching a \$20 billion aid package for Oman and Bahrain. This package was a job-generating measure that would enable the two countries to upgrade their housing and infrastructure.

However, two days later workers went on strike at Bank Muscat and succeeded in obtaining concessions and an increased salary on 13 March.

On 15 March the oil workers at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) went on strike to demand higher wages. 400 workers protested and held up placards outside of PDO headquarters in Muscat. Protesters also stopped work for several hours at the Marmul oil field and the Karn Al Alam gas field.

On that same day Sultan Qaboos announced that the government would double monthly welfare payments and increase pension benefits. Sultan Qaboos also ordered a salary increase of up to 100 rials (\$260) a month for civil servants, as well as security forces. The Sultan removed twelve cabinet ministers up to this point in response to the protests. He also offered to give some legislative powers to the partially elected Oman Council.

However, on 16 March the oil and gas workers' protests and work stoppages continued.

On 17 March over 1,000 strikers went from unit to unit at Rusayl Industrial Estate and forced all of its 150 units to stop their work. They demanded a 300-rial minimum wage, five-day work weeks, and Eid holidays off from work. Protesters also blockaded access to the estate with objects they had brought. The protests stopped production as well as transport of goods in and out of the estate.

Security personnel from Oman's Security and Safety Services also blocked the main Sultan Qaboos Highway opposite the Muscat International Airport in a protest of their own. Students at Sohar College blocked expatriate teaching staff from entering the premises and demanded lower passing grades.

On 20 March about 200 workers at two oil refineries went on strike to demand higher wages. Protesters at the refineries stated that they wanted higher pay, better pension, training, regular promotions, and more Omanis in the management team.

On 28 March mass media reported that dozens of youths had been holding a daily vigil throughout the course of the strikes in a square near the offices of Oman's Consultative Council. Protesters also camped out nightly in front of the parliament building in Muscat, outside the governor's office in Salalah, and in Sohar.

On 30 March police used tear gas, rubber bullets, and baton beatings to clear about 100 protesters from the blockaded roundabouts in Sohar. Police made arrests of 57 protesters.

The next day, hundred of people took to the streets, some beginning a sit-in, in protest of the arrests and police brutality.

The police responded again with violence, though the Omani government claimed they were acting in self-defense against knife- or stone-wielding protesters, killing one protester, injuring several others, and arresting as

many as a hundred more. On 3 April, Government authorities released the detained protesters after questioning. This appears to mark the end of direct action in Sohar.

Scattered protests continued throughout the country, but the most significant action occurred in Salalah, where, on 6 May, hundreds of protesters took to the streets and bolstered protest camps. Large protests had occurred in Salalah every Friday after prayer for four weeks. On 12 May, police cleared a camp, arresting as many as a hundred protesters. On 13 May and into 14 May, police and army forces used baton beatings and tear gas to disperse and arrest many of the remaining protesters. It is not clear if there were any significant actions taken in Oman after this point.

Actions by protesters against certain companies were successful and nationwide demands for government and labor reforms were partially successful. The Sultan made some concessions but did not completely overhaul the government as some protesters wished.

Research Notes

Influences:

Protesters were influenced by and influenced other protests in neighboring Arab countries as part of the Arab Awakening (2011)(1,2).

Sources:

"Sultan of Oman Give Some His Powers." Hyderabad. 14 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://www.hyderabadcircle.com/world-news/sultan-of-oman-give-some-his-powers-13497>>;

"Omani Police Release 57 Protesters | Islam Tribune." Islam News. 3 Apr. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://www.islamtribune.com/2011/04/03/omani-police-release-57-protesters.html>>;

Al-Shaibany, Saleh. "Oman's Battered Protesters Say They'll Be Back." RealClearWorld: World News, Analysis & Commentary. 3 Apr. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<http://www.realclearworld.com/news/reuters/international/2011/Apr/03/oman_s_battered_protesters_say_they_ll_be_b>;

Bellouchi, Mohammad. "Oman Protests Carry on despite Sultan's Reforms - Yahoo! News." Yahoo.com. 28 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20110328/wl_mideast_afp/omanpoliticsunrest_20110328182446>;

"Qaboos Cedes Some Powers to Parliament after Protests." Dawn.com. 14 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/14/qaboos-cedes-some-powers-to-parliament-after-protests.html>>;

"Omanis Go on Strike for Better Pay, Conditions." The Free Library. Farlex, 17 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Omanis+go+on+strike+for+better+pay%2c+conditions.-a0251607785>>;

Vaidya, Sunil K. "Workers Go on Strike at Oman Industrial Estate." Gulfnews. 17 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011. <<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/oman/workers-go-on-strike-at-oman-industrial-estate-1.778563>>;

Al-Shaibany, Saleh. "Oman Air Employees Strike for Higher Wages." The National. 7 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/oman-air-employees-strike-for-higher-wages>>;

Al-Shaibany, Saleh. "Workers at Oman Oil Refineries Stage Demonstrations." Investment: Finance, Forex, Stock Market, Financial Trading Analysis. 20 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://www.bestgrowthstock.com/stock-market-news/2011/03/20/workers-at-oman-oil-refineries-stage-demonstrations/>>;

"Oman Oil Workers Say Strike for Higher Wages." Real Info Portal. 17 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://realinfoportal.com/?p=21581>>;

"Oman Oil Workers Say Strike for Higher Wage." Signalfire. 15 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://signalfire.org/?p=8556>>;

Grey, Barry. "Oil Workers Strike in Oman." World Socialist Web Site. 17 Mar. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2011/mar2011/oman-m17.shtml>>;

Associated Press. "Middle East Unrest Spreads to Oman." Guardian.co.uk. 27 Feb. 2011. Web. 13 Apr. 2011.
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/27/middle-east-protests-oman-bahrain>>;

Additional Notes:

This research and writing draws on previous work by Kira Kern, 13/04/11 and Max Rennebohm, 09/09/11.
Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Michael Alex Hall, 01/08/13

[Back to top](#)

A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.

Copyright Swarthmore College.

[Creative Commons License](#)

Global Nonviolent Action Database is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](#).

Original website design and artwork created by [Daniel Hunter](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>.

Registered users can [login](#) to the website.

Source URL (retrieved on 09/26/2020 - 20:55): <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/omanis-make-economic-gains-press-democracy-2011-0>

Links:

[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/wave-campaigns/arab-awakening-2011>

[2] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/included-participation-more-one-social-class>