

Israel's future mediator with Iran? The sultan who keeps his door open

One of Sultan Haitham of Oman's first actions upon taking office was ensuring his son would succeed him, securing his legacy; Oman's strategic location forces the Sultan to navigate delicate diplomacy, maintaining good relations with both Iran and the US while offering medical aid to Yemen's Houthis; Could Trump's entry pave the way for Israelis to visit Muscat?

Lior Ben Ari / Dec. 27, 2024

Haitham bin Tariq Al Said is the Sultan and Prime Minister of Oman, Yemen's thriving neighbor, and ranks among the Middle East's most important brokers, always operating beneath the radar. He took power only five years ago on the death of his cousin, Qaboos bin Said who ruled Oman for 49 years – almost half a century. He maintains good relations with Iran, the US, and the Houthis, and conducts covert relations with Israel.

[...]

“Haitham appointed a successor. He already has a designated, heir, providing him with a certain stability” says **Dr. Yoel Guzansky, senior researcher and head of the Gulf Program at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)**. “In the meantime, he's doing good things for Oman that have contributed to stability, most importantly turning Oman into a dynastic monarchy - essentially toeing the line with other such Gulf states.”

In his first speech after taking office, Sultan Haitham promised to continue his predecessor's foreign policy of peace and economic development and hasn't implemented any revolutionary measures. “He's pretty much continuing Qaboos' regional policies in terms of relations with Iran and quiet, discreet mediation with the Americans”, says Dr. Guzansky. “He understands Oman's strength and capabilities, cultivated by Qaboos for years. He's now reaping the rewards.”

Haitham's four-and-a-half years in office have been generally stable with no serious crises. Despite Oman's economic development in recent decades, making the country a world success story, Oman is still regarded as relatively poor. “Oman exports around 10 million barrels,” says Dr. Guzansky. “Oman is poor in natural resources in Gulf terms. This makes things hard as there were years when oil prices were low.”

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