



**MIDDLE EAST IMMIGRATION NEWS FLASH 076/2020**

MIDDLE EAST  
**Immigration Restrictions Due to Coronavirus Outbreak (Multiple Updates)**

8 April 2020  
**Executive summary**

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus is being monitored closely by public health agencies around the world, and the governments in many jurisdictions including the Middle East have taken immigration-related measures in order to contain the spread of the virus.

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus is being monitored closely by public health agencies around the world, and the governments in many jurisdictions including the Middle East have taken immigration-related measures in order to contain the spread of the virus. As of now, the following restrictions have been imposed in the region (updates are in red ink):

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| <p><b>Bahrain</b></p> | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for all travellers except nationals of Bahrain, foreign residents in Bahrain, diplomats and passengers with Prior Permission Granted letter issued by the Ministry of Interior, military personnel, airline crew and holders of official, service and UN passports.</li> </ul> <p><b>Quarantine:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ for all travellers entering Bahrain, including nationals of Bahrain, foreign residents in Bahrain, diplomats and passengers with Prior Permission Granted letter issued by the Ministry of Interior, military personnel, airline crew and holders of official, service and UN passports who have been to Iran, Iraq or Lebanon in the 14 days prior to travel to Bahrain or arriving from any other country.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ all travellers must have a pre-arranged visa for travel to Bahrain as no visa-on-arrival is issued to nationals of all countries; this does not apply to diplomats;</li> <li>○ the endorsement of new residence visa stickers (including residence renewal applications) is limited to foreign nationals in select positions only if the applicant must travel internationally; otherwise paper visa printouts will serve as the permits until further notice.</li> </ul> |
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|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ all in-person immigration applications are suspended effective April 5, as the immigration authorities launch an online portal for the processing of visa-related services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ travel to Iran is not allowed for nationals of Bahrain;</li> <li>○ border crossing at the King Fahad Causeway, linking Bahrain with Saudi Arabia, has been closed;</li> <li>○ all passenger traffic at Bahrain International Airport, including transit passengers, is now restricted to nationals of Bahrain, foreign residents in Bahrain, diplomats and passengers with Prior Permission Granted letter issued by the Ministry of Interior, military personnel, airline crew and holders of official, service and UN passports.</li> </ul> <p><b>Concessions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) announced a waiver of government fees for the payment of monthly labour fees and fees for the issuance and renewal of work permits, for three months effective April 1;</li> <li>○ the LMRA announced an amnesty period until the end of 2020, during which foreign nationals may correct their status. Further details of the program are expected to be announced in the coming weeks.</li> <li>○ As of April 5, immigration applications previously completed manually with the immigration authorities have been automated through the website of the Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs (NPRA). Visit and business visas can either be extended or cancelled on the NPRA’s online portal.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Egypt</b> | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for Qatari nationals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of all commercial flights to/from Egypt until April 15;</li> <li>○ closure of border with Sudan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies and suspension of all immigration applications’ processing <b>until April 23</b>.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Iraq</b>  | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for nationals of Mainland China and Iran;</li> <li>○ entry ban for foreign nationals who have visited Mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Iran, Italy, Japan, Macau SAR, Singapore, South Korea or Thailand in the 14 days prior to travel to Iraq.</li> </ul> <p><b>Quarantine:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ for nationals of Iraq and foreign residents in Iraq who have visited Mainland China, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Macau SAR, Singapore, South Korea or Thailand in the 14 days prior to travel to Iraq.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies in Basrah, and suspension on issuance of security passes until further notice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of movement between Iraqi Kurdistan and Federal Iraq until April 19 for Iraqi and foreign nationals, excluding diplomats, medical personnel and security forces;</li> <li>○ suspension of all passenger flights until April 11.</li> </ul>  |

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| <p><b>Iraqi Kurdistan</b></p> | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for nationals of Albania, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Kuwait, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom;</li> <li>○ entry ban for foreign nationals who have visited Bahrain, Mainland China, France, Hong Kong SAR, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Macau SAR, Singapore, Spain, South Korea or Thailand on or after January 1, 2020.</li> </ul> <p><b>Quarantine:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ for no less than 30 days for nationals of all countries, including nationals of Iraq.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies and suspension of all immigration processes until April 16;</li> <li>○ visa issuance suspended for nationals of Albania, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Mainland China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and the United Kingdom.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of movement between the governates in Iraqi Kurdistan and between Iraqi Kurdistan and Federal Iraq until April 11 for Iraqi and foreign nationals, excluding diplomats, medical personnel and security forces;</li> <li>○ no commercial flights to/from Iraqi Kurdistan until April 11;</li> <li>○ all travellers who entered Iraqi Kurdistan between February 15 and March 30, 2020 should contact hotline 122 or go to the nearest coronavirus testing clinic or laboratory to obtain a coronavirus test, unless they have been in quarantine or are foreign nationals based inside the oil fields. Individuals who have negative test results will be issued a document of examination and those who test positive will be quarantined. Iraqi nationals who returned during this period and do not have a document proving they have been examined will have legal measures taken against them. Although it is a mandatory requirement, it is not clear what are the sanctions for non-compliance.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Jordan</b></p>          | <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies until further notice;</li> <li>○ suspension of movement between the governorates.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all land, sea and air borders for all passenger traffic until April 27.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Kuwait</b></p>          | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ for all travellers, except Kuwaiti citizens, immediate relatives of Kuwaiti citizens and foreign residents in Kuwait.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies extended until April 12.</li> </ul>  |

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|                       | <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of all commercial flights to/from Kuwait until further notice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Concessions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ expired work and residence permits for foreign nationals outside Kuwait can be renewed by employers in Kuwait;</li> <li>○ it remains unclear whether all categories of visas are automatically extended now. According to various reports, visa extension applications may be possible to submit from April 12, provided government offices are reopened by then;</li> <li>○ according to the Ministry of Interior, wives of Kuwaiti citizens, non-Kuwaiti parents of Kuwaiti nationals, non-Kuwaiti children and husbands of Kuwaiti women, non-Kuwaiti widows or divorced women who are the guardians of their Kuwaiti children, domestic workers, and foreign nationals who are in violation of the residency law and are present in the country as of March 1, 2020 will be exempt from overstay fines if they decide to depart Kuwait between April 1 and April 30, subject to coordinating the departure with their embassy; those who decide to remain in Kuwait will be able to regularize their status subject to the payment of prescribed fines and meeting eligibility criteria.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Lebanon</b></p> | <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies until April 12.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Suspension of all incoming and outgoing commercial domestic and international flights for all travellers, except incoming flights are allowing Lebanese nationals to return to Lebanon.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Morocco</b></p> | <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies until April 20.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of all commercial domestic and international flights;</li> <li>○ suspension of repatriation flights for foreign nationals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Concessions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ although not officially announced yet, it is expected that foreign nationals in a visitor status whose visas have expired due to the current situation will be allowed to extend them.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Oman</b></p>    | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for all travellers except Omani citizens.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension on the issuance of all in-country and out-of-country visas (except applications submitted on or before March 17 and Residence Cards applications);</li> <li>○ suspension of all immigration operations, including services related to civil status, passports and residency until further notice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ travel outside Oman is not allowed for nationals of Oman;</li> <li>○ suspension of all commercial domestic and international flights for all travellers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Concessions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ although not officially announced yet, it is expected that foreign nationals in a visitor status whose visas have expired due to the current situation will be allowed to extend them.</li> </ul>   |

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| <p><b>Pakistan</b></p>     | <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies (including the federal government and the provincial governments of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan) extended until April 14.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of all commercial flights to/from Pakistan until April 11.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Qatar</b></p>        | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for all foreign nationals. Passengers transiting through the airport in Doha are allowed to continue their journey, provided that have valid documents for their next destination.</li> </ul> <p><b>Quarantine:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 14-day quarantine for Qatari nationals entering Qatar.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of processing for new entry visa applications (i.e.: work visa, business visa, family visa) for applicants of all nationalities in Qatar Financial Centre Free Zone (QFC);</li> <li>○ suspension of processing of new residence permit applications for applicants of all nationalities in QFC;</li> <li>○ suspension of processing of all new and amendment labour quota applications, including those that are in progress;</li> <li>○ closure of all Qatar Visa Centres until further notice;</li> <li>○ suspension of all in-person immigration application submission.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ nationals of Qatar must use their passport for entry;</li> <li>○ travel outside Qatar is not allowed for nationals of Qatar until further notice.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Saudi Arabia</b></p> | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for all travellers except Saudi citizens until further notice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of all government agencies except those related to public health and security or the military sector until further notice;</li> <li>○ suspension of processing of all categories of visa applications in many consular posts, including Egypt, India, Jordan, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.</li> <li>○ suspension of work of all government departments and private institutions in Qatif governorate.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of all commercial flights to/from Saudi Arabia until further notice. Saudi nationals can register on an online system on which they can request to return to Saudi Arabia.</li> <li>○ closure of border with Jordan for all passenger traffic;</li> <li>○ closure of border crossing at the King Fahad Causeway, linking Bahrain with Saudi Arabia;</li> <li>○ temporary suspension of travel between all governorates in the country;</li> <li>○ travel is not allowed for nationals of Saudi Arabia and foreign residents in Saudi Arabia travelling to Bahrain, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, South Korea, Spain, Syria, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.</li> </ul> |

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|                                    | <p><b>Concessions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ foreign nationals whose residence permit and / or exit-re-entry visa expired while they are outside Saudi Arabia are expected to be able to renew their permits through one of the electronic portals Absher or Muqem (this option is currently unavailable but expected to be activated shortly);</li> <li>○ foreign nationals whose visit visa expired while being in Saudi Arabia, including visas for business and for tourism, can renew the visa electronically;</li> <li>○ residence permits of foreign nationals outside Saudi Arabia, that expire anytime between March 20, 2020 and June 30, 2020 have been automatically extended for three months;</li> <li>○ employers of foreign nationals with a final exit visa are expected to be allowed to obtain a special permit allowing the individuals to depart Saudi Arabia. Further details of the process are expected to be announced shortly.</li> <li>○ residence permits of foreign nationals who are outside and inside Saudi Arabia were renewed automatically by government authorities. Residence permits that were renewed are those which expired between March 18, 2020 and June 30, 2020;</li> <li>○ government authorities announced a waiver of fees for the renewal of residence permits.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Tunisia</b></p>              | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for all travellers except Tunisian citizens due to the closure of borders.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of issuance of all residence permit applications until further notice.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>United Arab Emirates</b></p> | <p><b>Entry ban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ entry ban for all travellers (including GCC citizens) except UAE nationals and diplomats. The entry ban for foreign nationals holding UAE residence visas has been extended until April 16, at which time it will be reassessed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Government closures/suspensions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of processing of the following applications: a) all new employment entry permit applications for foreign nationals who are outside of the UAE; b) all new residence entry permit applications for foreign nationals who are outside of the UAE; c) all new mission entry permit applications; and d) all new applications for a visit visa (for tourism, etc.). The suspension includes all pending applications;</li> <li>○ closure of the General Directorate of Residence and Foreigners Affairs (Immigration Office);</li> <li>○ closure of Amer service centers until April 9;</li> <li>○ the online processing of applications will continue, but there will be a suspension of the endorsement of residence visa stickers and all in-person applications, including the amendment of personal details and the ability to obtain and/or amend Unified Identity Numbers;</li> <li>○ government service offices at major free zones in the UAE, including DAFZA, DDA, DIFC, DMCC and JAFZA are closed until further notice. Online applications continue to be processed (although with some limitations in select free zones) but all in-person applications have been suspended, including the endorsement of residence visa stickers;</li> <li>○ closure of the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization branches until further notice;</li> </ul> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ closure of Tasheel, Tadbeer and Tawjeeh service centers until April 9. The processing of online applications continues, but all out-of-country applications and labor awareness training is suspended;</li> <li>○ select medical centres in Dubai have re-opened for new in-country residence permit applicants; majority of branches remain closed until further notice;</li> <li>○ select Emirates Identity Card centres in Dubai have re-opened, the rest remain closed until further notice.</li> <li>○ all Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) offices are closed until further notice.</li> <li>○ suspension of the endorsement of residence visa stickers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ suspension of all passenger flights and transit through all airports in the UAE until April 9, 2020 23:59 local time (on April 2, 2020, the Emirates Airlines announced that it will resume some of its outbound flights to destinations, including London, Mumbai, Islamabad, Dhaka and Colombo, effective April 6, 2020);</li> <li>○ travel outside the United Arab Emirates is not allowed for nationals of the United Arab Emirates.</li> </ul> <p><b>Concessions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ temporary waiver of medical examination requirement for renewal of residence permits for all employees in the private sector, including domestic workers;</li> <li>○ according to the UAE Cabinet announcement, residence permits that expired on March 1 will be renewed for additional three months, free of charge. It is not clear how this concession will be implemented and when;</li> <li>○ the validity of residence permits issued for foreign nationals in the Emirate of Dubai, including employment and dependents' visas, has been automatically extended by one month. The validity of residence permits issued in other Emirates, including Abu Dhabi, has not changed and the validity of Emirates Identity Cards remains the same across the country;</li> <li>○ employers in Abu Dhabi that are unable to meet their pension obligations, may be exempt from the payment of pensions for up to three months, subject to the Abu Dhabi Pension Fund's approval.</li> </ul> |
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### How Fragomen can assist?

Fragomen will continue monitoring the situation and will revert with additional information as developments regarding any other policies that may occur.

Please visit [this website](#) for a summary of current entry restrictions by jurisdiction and for additional insights on this topic.

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