



Immigration developments in the MENA Region

Middle East and North Africa Region

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. As has happened with other recent global health emergencies, governments in many jurisdictions have implemented a range of temporary immigration-related measures in order to contain the spread of the virus.

Many jurisdictions have implemented entry or travel restrictions for individuals who are traveling from, or have recently been present in, jurisdictions where the virus has become widespread. Some countries have gone so far as to temporarily prohibit the entry of all noncitizens and non-residents.

In addition, many airlines, rail and bus services have suspended routes into, out of, and transiting through affected areas. Those with travel plans to affected regions region should check with their travel provider for updates.

Check [this page](#) regularly for the latest immigration updates on this fluid situation.

United Arab Emirates

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE) announced that employers affected by current restrictions due to the coronavirus outbreak, including the suspension of recruitment of workers from overseas, can use a new Virtual Labour Market platform to recruit individuals from other companies that have a surplus of foreign staff. Additionally, the MOHRE outlined certain rules to which employers must adhere should they need to hire new workers or amend select conditions of employment. The regulations apply only to companies in the mainland and until the COVID-19-related restrictions have been lifted.

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 extension applies to all permits, regardless of their original expiry date. The new expiry date is reflected in the main immigration system hence may not be visible on other electronic platforms, including free zone portals. 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.

Foreign nationals with residence permits issued by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) who are unable to return due to COVID-19-related restrictions should register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) so they can apply for permission for re-entry. Similarly, Emirati nationals outside of the UAE who are seeking to return are advised to register with the MOFAIC as the government continues to arrange repatriation flights for citizens stranded abroad.

New employment and visa regulations for the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) have been announced to ease the relationship between employers and employees due to the impacts of COVID-19. The law has come into effect on 21 April 2020 and is applicable only throughout the duration of an emergency period that is expected to last until 31 July 2020, unless announced otherwise.

The regulations introduce a number of provisions that employers in the DIFC may implement in respect to some or all workers in their employ, including the reduction of working hours, the imposition of remote work, a mandatory leave (including the leave without pay) and a temporary reduction of salaries, among other issues.

Saudi Arabia

The Ministry of Interior announced that foreign nationals with an exit re-entry, final exit, tourist, or business visit visa in Saudi Arabia can return to their home country despite the immigration restrictions that have been imposed due to COVID-19. The initiative, called Auda (return), allows foreign nationals to request a pre-approval from the authorities to complete travel procedures and book return flights through the Absher platform. Previously, visa sponsors (e.g.: employers) had to submit the request to government authorities on behalf of foreign nationals.

ABOUT FRAGOMEN

Fragomen is the world's leading single-focus provider of immigration services and support. Our firm is comprised of law practices and immigration consultancies that work together to support our clients across all regions globally. At Fragomen, we leverage our collective immigration experience to offer clients targeted and trusted solutions that help them achieve their local, regional and worldwide business goals.

Fragomen's team of dedicated immigration professionals has extensive experience in working with multinational businesses, local employers, start-ups and individual investors. We have a deep understanding of the region and maintain strong professional relationships with immigration authorities. Our MENA immigration team is supported on a global basis by over 3,800 immigration professionals in more than 50 offices worldwide. Together, we provide comprehensive immigration support in over 170 countries.

All we do is immigration, a sole focus that makes a considerable difference. Unlike many other providers, all of our thinking, passion and resources are dedicated to improving the immigration experiences of our clients and their employees. We have the track record, region

specific experience and know-how to provide you with a streamlined and compliant immigration solution.

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