



Immigration developments in the MENA Region

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Saudi Arabia

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) has announced changes to the Nitaqat program in line with the labor market strategy that aims to enhance market efficiency and provide new attractive jobs for Saudi nationals, contributing to the creation of more than 340,000 jobs until 2024.

The announcement introduces three main changes; however, it does not clarify any details or mechanisms related to their implementation.

1. The establishment of a clear and transparent Saudization process and targets for the replacement of foreign national workers with Saudi nationals over the next three years;
2. The amendment of the process for calculation of the Saudization targets that are expected to be based on a new formula that disregards the current classification of establishments based on their fixed sizes (i.e.: small, medium, large and giant companies); and
3. The introduction of a revised list of business activities that is expected to contain 32 categories instead of the existing 85.

As the MHRSD's announcement is vague and does not provide clarification of many important aspects of changes to the Nitaqat program, we expect further details on this matter to be published in the coming weeks.

With immediate effect, the Ministry of Interior of Saudi Arabia has lifted entry restrictions imposed on travelers coming from the following countries: France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The entry restrictions were in place since February 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Travelers must meet all applicable entry conditions and abide by the precautionary measures that have been adopted in the Kingdom, including COVID-

19 PCR testing requirements, [COVID-19 vaccine registration](#) in case of those who have been vaccinated, and quarantine requirements, if applicable.

The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (MADLSA) have launched an online platform called '[Unified Platform for Complaints & Whistleblowers](#)', which allows employees and establishments in the private sector, as well as domestic workers, to file complaints related to violations of employment rights and the country's labour law provisions.

In the first phase of the platform's launch, the user can file a labour complaint against establishments, and domestic workers can file a complaint against employers. It is also possible to follow up on any existing complaints, and review and update user's contact details registered in the MADLSA's database. The user can anonymously report any explicit violation of the laws, such as: gathering of workers, inappropriate accommodation for workers, explicit violations at the work site, etc.

Oman

Effective immediately, holders of the following visa categories can convert their immigration status into a work visa without having to exit and re-enter Oman: Express visa, Consular visit visa for business, Visit visa for residents of GCC countries, Single-entry visit visa for tourism, Family visit visa, Student visa, Dependent visa, Investor visa, Visa for property owners and their dependents, Visa for artists and performers; and Cruise ship visit visa.

If the sponsor of the current visa is different than the sponsor of the work visa, a "no objection certificate" must be provided by the current sponsor. The new sponsor must also ensure that the appropriate labour clearance from the Ministry of Manpower in Oman is available. Previously, the change of immigration status was available only for select visa immigrant categories.

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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