



A summary follows of key issues arising in the context of the coronavirus crisis.

- **Covid-19:**
 - **Testing and treatment:** All residents, regardless of citizenship and status (legal or otherwise), are entitled to free COVID-19 testing and treatment (<https://arab.news/rwf34>); based on this official quasi-amnesty policy many visa overstayers with symptoms have reportedly proceeded to hospitals, which may account for some of the increase in contamination numbers.
 - **Rates:** Daily Covid-19 growth rates have fallen below 10%, suggesting successful containment efforts and lessons learned from the 2012 MERS outbreak.
 - **Medical manufacturing:** The Kingdom is ramping up production of medical supplies, increasing research funding and seeking to localize production of key equipment and materials to test, immunize, and treat victims.
 - **Ministry of Health:**
 - See Ministry of Health twitter account for new Covid-19 case reports by city (<https://twitter.com/SaudiMOH>).
 - All are encouraged to purchase necessities online (<https://bit.ly/2R7f7t0>).
 - **Violations:**
 - **Profiteering:** Profiteering from the crisis by artificially raising or controlling prices and quantities of food and medical supplies risks fines of up to SR10 million and 3x profits, double that for repeat offenders (<https://bit.ly/2JHoETp>). 5 million stockpiled masks in

Jeddah have been expropriated under this measure for public use (<https://bit.ly/2XeypiU>).

- **False Rumors:** The Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution will apply fines of up to \$800,000 for spreading Covid-19 false rumors (<https://arab.news/mv2m2>).

- **Curfew:** The curfew has been extended to 24 hours in Makkah, Medina and 7 heavily affected Jeddah neighborhoods, though residents may leave home to purchase health or food products 6am - 3pm (<https://arab.news/zubux>).

- **Dubai:** Dubai has implemented a 2-week 24-hour curfew, requiring permits to leave home for “essential purposes” <https://dxbpermit.gov.ae/>, <https://arab.news/b7yua>).

- **Government operations:**

- **GOSI:** Functioning; accepting online employee subsidy applications from April 8 (see below).
- **SAMA:** Functioning.
- **COC:** Accepting renewal applications.
- **CR:** Reportedly working for Saudi entities, though not foreign.
- **SAGIA:** Accepting renewal (though not new) applications.
- **Ministry of Justice:** E-services only (see below).

- **Visas:**

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced (Circular 001-41-182675, 04/08/1441) that:
 - Visas of foreign nationals, including iqama holders stranded overseas, will be automatically extended.
 - Visas of foreign visitors will be extended through April 30 upon payment of fees, with fines waived, until 30 days from Ministry of Health’s determination that the epidemic has ended.
- **Absher messaging:** The Saudi General Directorate of Passports has added a messaging feature to its Absher platform (<https://arab.news/wdree>).
- **Repatriation:** The US and UK Embassies have announced repatriation flights for American and British citizens, with flights starting last week and serving Riyadh, Dhahran, and Jeddah, with

priority to urgent cases. Friday's Saudia flight from Riyadh to New York left on schedule, below capacity. While initially intended to carry Saudi citizens on the return leg, flights currently return empty; only recently, the government has announced a repatriation program for Saudi citizens stranded abroad (see below). American citizens returning home must self isolate for 14 days, and comply with any additional state and municipal quarantine requirements. Lebanon has also organized repatriation flights, through Middle East Airlines. For country-specific information, contact your Embassy.

- **Saudis abroad:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced an initiative to repatriate Saudis stranded abroad, and invited applications online. According to a Twitter statement, "Registration will start on Sunday and will take five days. Priority will be given to those in countries most hit by the coronavirus, pregnant women and elders." Returnees must quarantine for 14 days on arrival (<https://arab.news/j9g8v>).

• **Employment:**

- **Unpaid Leave:** The Ministry of Human Resources & Development has warned against compelling employees to take unpaid leave (<https://arab.news/y4w8d>).
- **Bank lending:** In an effort to maintain employment, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) has directed banks to issue concessionary loans and debt service relief to businesses for 6+ months (<https://bloom.bg/2UziDhG>).
- **GOSI:** The General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI) has committed SR9 billion in financial support to pay 60% of salaries of Saudi private sector employees particularly impacted by Covid-19, excluding food, communications, banking, insurance, funding companies and SAMA and CMA licensees (<https://bit.ly/3bVAJ3x>). Coverage will begin April 3, with first payments promised May 3. Applications may be submitted to GOSI online beginning April 8.
 - To qualify, an employee must hold an active GOSI branch account and have been registered in GOSI's unemployment insurance scheme by January 1, 2020.
 - Once compensation ceases, employers must again pay full salaries.

- Employers may not require Saudi employees to work during the compensation period.
 - GOSI will monitor payment by employers of wages and GOSI insurance of Saudi and foreign workers not covered by the compensation through the first quarter.
 - Saudis receiving these benefits will also be eligible for GOSI insurance.
 - All Saudi employees of companies employing under five Saudi employees will be covered, and 70% of those with 5+ Saudi employees; employers may select who will be covered.
 - The government will cover 60% of wages of Saudi employees registered in the social insurance system from the unemployment insurance fund (SANED) for three months, up to SR9,000 / month.
- **Stimulus:** The Saudi government has announced a \$32 billion stimulus to moderate effects of Covid-19 and oil revenue fluctuations, \$18.6 billion private sector and \$13.3 billion banking sector (<https://bit.ly/2JJHWaV>), including postponements and exemptions for government dues (<https://bit.ly/2JJHWaV>).
 - **Ministry of Human Resources & Social Development:**
 - The Ministry has allocated \$4.5 billion to support private sector employment.
 - Expatriates whose iqamas expire before June 30 will receive 3-month visa extensions and exemptions from fees (<https://arab.news/y4w8d>).
 - **Ministry of Finance:** The Ministry has announced incentives and postponement of tax penalties March 18 - June 30 (Royal Decree No, 45089, 23/07/1441AH), including:
 - Relief from penalties for late returns due before March 18, and from amending any return previously filed with the General Authority for Zakat and Tax (GAZT).
 - Relief from GAZT late registration penalties for deadlines before March 18; registration should be complete, and all returns since original registration filed.
 - Penalties waived for March 18 - June 30.
 - Relief on installment payments, with GAZT approval.

- **Ministry of Justice:**

- **Portal:** The Ministry has launched an interactive guide for 120 e-services related to courts, enforcement and notarization, in Arabic and English via Najiz.sa portal, MoJ mobile apps, and the Mwathiq notarial app (<https://bit.ly/3aDUSdU>).
 - **Zoom hearings:** The Ministry has announced that some court hearings may be held via Zoom.

- **Ministry of Investment:** The Ministry has announced several Covid-19 response measures:

- **Task Force:** A task force will seek to ensure continued services to locally-based and offshore investors (<https://bit.ly/2R2gHvW>).
- **Response Center:** A Covid-19 Response Center (“MCRC”) will provide advice and support for “business continuity and mitigation of negative business impact.” (<https://bit.ly/3dO4Hlo>).
- **Business Continuity Guide:** A guide for businesses addresses human resource management, commercial activities, employment, customer and supplier management, and internal and external communications, along with practical measures to mitigate health risks (<https://bit.ly/2XchEWy>).

- **Privatization:** On March 31, as part of Vision 2030, government assets were listed on Saudi’s Tawadul stock market through direct and indirect IPOs, in line with efforts to generate \$10 billion (<https://reut.rs/2ypMC33>).

- **Oil:** OPEC+ negotiations scheduled for Monday have been postponed, due to Saudi/Russian differences. President Trump has proposed cuts of up to 15 million bpd, which Saudi Arabia and Russia have rejected pending U.S. commitment to participate in cuts. Demand has fallen up to 30% since March, while Saudi prices have fallen from ~\$55 per barrel early March to ~\$25 early April. In brief, Saudi Arabia faces not only a coronavirus crisis, but the prospect of a very severe fall in the oil revenues that continue to play a key role in driving the local economy. Vision 2030 was designed to prepare for the post-oil age, with no way of foreseeing how quickly and precipitously this may arguably have arrived (<https://arab.news/cqg25>).

- **Hajj and Umrah:** Hajj pilgrimage restrictions or cancellation are under discussion (<https://arab.news/4xx98>), as the Hajj & Umrah Minister has encouraged

prospective pilgrims to delay plans pending progress in containing Covid-19 (<https://bit.ly/343Q2EI>).

- **Expo 2020:** Organizers of the World Expo in Dubai have proposed a 1-year postponement (<https://bloom.bg/2X15orO>).

Earlier newsletters may be found at <https://www.alshariflaw.com/articles-news>.

We will be happy to provide more specific advice in the context of particular circumstances, concerns, and priorities; please let us know.

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