



Managing Workforce Mobility in the Middle East: *A Strategic Guide to Emergency Response and Repatriation*



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A Strategic Guide to Emergency Response and Repatriation

The Middle East mobility landscape has entered a period of unprecedented complexity. With military actions creating cascading effects across travel, supply chains, immigration services, and daily operations, HR and Global Mobility leaders face critical decisions that balance employee safety, business continuity, and operational resilience. This paper provides actionable guidance on emergency response protocols, repatriation strategies, and the specialised services required to navigate this evolving situation.

Overview: A Fast-Changing Mobility Landscape

Businesses with talent located in, or connected to, the Middle East are facing rapidly evolving conditions. Flight schedules are shifting with little notice, supply chains are constrained, and mobility decisions are becoming increasingly complex for expats, local staff, and travellers, including holidaymakers, caught in-region. Uncertainty levels are heightened by the fact that it remains unclear how long military actions will continue or how conditions may shift as the situation evolves.

What We're Seeing on the Ground

Across the region, conditions vary significantly, but several themes are consistent across our client conversations and supplier network:

Travel & Transportation Volatility

- Flight schedules are changing with minimal notice, with some carriers operating inbound-only services.
- Employees are being stranded mid-assignment, on holiday, or in transit between locations.
- Airspace closures are creating bottlenecks and causing unpredictable routing.

Supply Chain & Household Goods Constraints

- Organisations are pausing new shipments into and out of the region pending security assessments.
- Existing shipments experiencing delays, diversions, or placement into temporary storage depending on security restrictions.



Immigration Processing

- Saudi Arabia is experiencing significant delays in Iqama (residence permit) issuance and renewals due to reduced officer availability and shifting governmental priorities.
- Processing backlogs are affecting employee onboarding, family arrivals, and compliance timelines, and there is uncertainty around start dates and assignment commencement.
- UAE is implementing temporary overstay fine waivers for travellers stranded due to airspace closures (effective for fines incurred on/after 28 February 2026), covering tourists, visit visa holders, and residents who cancelled permits but cannot depart the country.
- Qatar is introducing automatic one-month extensions for expired entry visas linked to airspace disruptions.
- Kuwait, alongside UAE and Qatar, is providing visa relief including fine waivers and emergency extensions for those unable to depart due to regional flight suspensions.

Living Conditions

- In stable hubs like Dubai, shops remain stocked and daily life continues largely undisturbed, but clients remain cautious due to the fluidity of the situation.
- Schools have moved to remote or hybrid learning.

What Leading Organisations Are Doing: Crisis Response Patterns

Our client conversations and supplier network intelligence reveal consistent strategic approaches across industries:

- **Security-first decision making:** Organisations are partnering with organisations such as **International SOS (ISOS)** or equivalent security intelligence providers to assess real-time risk levels, with corporate security teams making final go/no-go decisions on assignments, travel, and repatriation.
- **Targeted repatriation focus:** Companies are **prioritising foreign nationals and business-critical foreign staff** for voluntary repatriation or temporary relocation, whilst local nationals typically remain in-country unless personally requesting departure.
- **Flexible temporary relocation windows:** Many employers are offering **30-day voluntary repatriation periods** for employees and families, with formal reassessment at the

conclusion to determine whether to extend, return, or permanently relocate based on evolving conditions.

- **Exception management surge:** There's been a significant increase in **approval requests for temporary solutions**- extended hotel stays, serviced apartments, furniture rentals, and interim housing due to shipment delays and travel uncertainties affecting standard relocation timelines.
- **Assignment pauses:** Most organisations have **paused new international assignments** to the region pending comprehensive security assessments, though a minority continue deploying talent on carefully evaluated, case-by-case bases for mission-critical roles.
- **Broader risk assessment:** Companies are evaluating **secondary risk zones**, including proximity to Turkey, locations housing military bases, or civilian compounds with military personnel presence, to anticipate potential escalation scenarios.

What This Means for Mobility & Assignment Decisions

Global Mobility and HR teams are navigating complex, interconnected questions that demand both strategic clarity and operational precision.

- **Assignment viability assessment:** Is this planned assignment still business critical? Re-evaluate the strategic necessity against current risk profiles.
- **Family safety & stability:** Should families remain in-country or be temporarily relocated? Balance employee preference, child education continuity, and evolving security assessments.
- **Stranded employee management:** How do we support employees caught mid-transit or on holiday? Coordinate emergency accommodation, flight rebooking, and expense management.
- **Incomplete move resolution:** How do we handle partial packing or shipments enroute? Determine storage solutions, insurance coverage, and alternative delivery timelines.
- **Tax, immigration & lease Implications:** What are the consequences of early assignment termination or temporary suspensions? Assess tax equalisation impacts, immigration status changes, and lease obligations.

Allied Moving Services: Comprehensive Repatriation & Moving Solutions

When repatriation decisions are made, execution must be swift, coordinated, and comprehensive. Allied provides the specialised capabilities required to manage emergency relocations and complex household goods scenarios with minimal disruption to employees and their families.

Rapid Response Deployment

Our emergency response protocols enable accelerated timelines:

- **Priority scheduling:** Fast-track processing ahead of standard move queues.

- **Dedicated project management:** Single point of contact managing all logistics, timelines, and communications.

Emergency Departure Services

- **Free Expert Guidance:** Virtual consultation on navigating your departure process efficiently
- **Turnkey Departure Service:** Complete lease, property, and account management from start to finish

Flexible Repatriation Options

We tailor solutions to match your organisation's approach:

- **Temporary Repatriation (30/60/90-day windows)**
 - Airfreight of essentials (clothing, electronics, important documents, children's items).
 - Storage-in-transit for remaining household goods at origin.
 - Pack and move some household goods to a friend or alternative address within the region, avoiding storage fees whilst keeping belongings secure.
 - Reverse logistics planning for potential return if situation stabilises.
- **Permanent Repatriation**
 - Full household goods packing, containerisation, and international shipping.
 - Destination delivery and unpacking services.
 - Pet and vehicle relocation coordination.
- **Split Relocations**
 - Family relocation to home country or safe third location.
 - Employee essential items to temporary assignment location.
 - Coordinated dual-destination logistics management.

Regional Network Strength

Our established Middle East presence provides critical advantages:

- **30 years of Middle East expertise: Teams averaging 10 years' tenure. We understand the region's regulations, culture, and complexities.**
- **In-country expertise:** Local offices in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, vetted partner across Middle East, and relocation partners in 190+ countries.
- **Alternative routing capabilities:** Multiple shipping lanes and carrier relationships to navigate port disruptions.
- **Storage facility access:** Climate-controlled warehousing options for short and long-term storage. 24/7 monitored and inventory managed.



How Allied and Sirva Support Emergency Response & Risk Management

Allied is a Sirva company, a global leader in relocation and moving solutions. Sirva supports a diverse and well-established customer base around the world, delivering services designed around the needs of individuals, families, corporations and government organisations. As part of Sirva, Allied benefits from shared expertise, global best practice and strong operational governance, while continuing to operate with the local knowledge and accountability our customers expect.

In crisis scenarios, having expert guidance and real-time intelligence transforms reactive scrambling into strategic crisis management. Sirva provides the frameworks, expertise, and ongoing support that HR and Global Mobility teams need to navigate uncertainty with confidence.

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