

Global Immigration alert

March 2026

United States

US consular posts and embassies across the Middle East announce closures and visa appointment cancellations

Executive summary

As of 3 March 2026, heightened security conditions stemming from escalating conflict in the Middle East have resulted in the closure of multiple US diplomatic posts, the suspension of consular operations, and the cancellation of routine visa and American Citizen Services appointments, often with little notice.

These disruptions are impacting immigrant and non-immigrant visa processing, US citizen services, and employer-sponsored mobility planning. Employers and foreign nationals should anticipate extended delays, cancelled appointments, and uncertainty regarding near-term visa issuance, even at posts that remain partially operational. Conditions remain fluid and may change quickly based on local security developments.

For US citizens in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Israel who wish to depart the Middle East, the US Department of State (DOS) has released a crisis intake [form](#). US citizens who are currently located in other countries in the region may contact DOS at +1 202-501-4444.

Background and analysis

On 28 February 2026, DOS issued a Worldwide Caution security alert, advising US citizens to exercise increased vigilance globally, with particular emphasis on the Middle East. In connection with these developments, most US consular posts in the region have also issued security alerts, with some personnel placed under shelter-in-place orders and others authorized or ordered to depart.

As a result, consular operations across the region have been impacted:

- Total suspension of consular services is in effect in several countries, including Bahrain, Israel, Iraq, and Lebanon;
- Emergency-only operations or temporary appointment cancellations have been announced in Cyprus, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates; and
- A small number of posts, such as Jordan and Oman, technically remain open but are operating under heightened security conditions, with the possibility of sudden closures or reduced hours.

While these conditions persist, it is likely that visa processing capacity will be constrained by security protocols and staffing limitations. DOS has emphasized that each consular post controls its own operational status, and conditions may change with little or no advance notice. Accordingly, previously scheduled visa interviews, including employment-based, family-based, and visitor visa appointments, have been postponed or cancelled across the region.

What this means

Employment-based immigrant and non-immigrant visa processing may be delayed for an extended and indeterminate period. Even where US posts technically remain open, staffing limitations, security protocols, and airspace disruptions are impacting processing capacity. As a result, employers should anticipate uncertainty around visa

issuance timelines and avoid reliance on near-term approvals when making hiring, relocation, or project-deployment decisions.

Employers are encouraged to build flexibility into workforce planning and onboarding timelines for affected foreign national employees. Start dates that depend on consular visa issuance may need to be deferred, and contingency planning, such as delayed assignments, remote work where permissible, or alternative processing strategies, may need to be considered. Closely monitoring consular post-specific announcements rather than presume regional consistency or predictable reopening schedules, as operational status may vary by post and can change with little or no notice.

For foreign nationals, these developments mean that previously scheduled visa interviews may be cancelled or postponed without advanced notice, and rescheduling may be delayed until services resume. Individuals should not travel to a US embassy or consulate unless they receive direct confirmation from the post that services are available and their appointment will proceed. Even after posts reopen, applicants are likely to experience processing backlogs and longer timelines due to accumulated demand and operational constraints.

Foreign nationals currently in the region or planning travel should also remain attentive to security alerts, potential airspace closures, and changes in local conditions. Embassy access, hours of operation, and the availability of emergency services may change in response to security developments. Individuals are advised to closely monitor official US embassy communications and DOS guidance, while remaining flexible in travel and relocation planning until conditions stabilize.

We will continue to monitor and share future developments. For additional information, or if you wish to discuss this further, please contact your EY Law LLP professional or Mehlman Jacobs LLP professional.

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