Global Immigration

Air travel across the Middle East is experiencing significant disruption as escalating regional tensions, have led to widespread airspace closures and operational challenges for airlines and airports. Several major airports have suspended operations, while carriers have been forced to cancel or reroute flights, causing extensive delays and stranding travellers throughout the region.

Organisations with staff or operations in affected Middle Eastern countries are navigating heightened uncertainty as conditions continue to shift rapidly. In response, many companies are activating contingency plans to ensure employee safety, maintain mobility, and safeguard business continuity. These proactive measures reflect the growing need for resilience as regional developments continues to impact normal operations.

Despite the widespread travel disruptions across the region, immigration systems outside the directly affected areas continue to operate for the most part. However, ongoing consular closures, reduced staffing, and continued flight cancellations are placing additional strain on administrative processes.

As a result, applicants are facing delays in visa processing, passport services, and document legalisation. Individuals seeking assistance in impacted jurisdictions should prepare for extended processing timelines and potential changes to scheduled appointments as governments work to manage the growing backlog.

CANADA

Temporary special measures for Iranian nationals extended

In response to instability in Iran, Canada introduced special measures in February 2023 to offer temporary support to eligible Iranians already in the country.

As the situation in Iran remains uncertain, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is introducing a new set of targeted measures to continue supporting eligible Iranians who are already contributing to Canadian communities and the labour market.

These measures allow individuals with a valid work permit, issued on or before 28 February 2025, to apply to extend it. These measures will now expire on 31 March 2027 and standard processing fees apply. Those looking to extend their stay as a visitor or to extend their study permit can apply under regular IRCC processes.

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DENMARK

Opening of the Working Holiday quotas for citizens of Chile and Argentina

The Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI) has announced that a new quota period for residence permits under the Working Holiday agreements for citizens of Chile and Argentina opened on 1 March 2026.

A total of 150 residence permits per year are available to citizens of Chile and Argentina under the Working Holiday agreements. The programme allows stays of up to one year in Denmark, and participants may do salaried work for up to nine of the twelve months.

A quota year lasts from March through February of the following year and is divided into two quota periods. From March to August (the first quota period), SIRI may grant residence permits corresponding to half of the annual quota, which means up to 75 residence permits for each of the two countries.

Residence permits are granted on a first-come, first-served basis. Once 75 residence permits have been granted to citizens of each country, any remaining applications will be refused. In such cases, the case processing fee paid to SIRI will be refunded.

Please note that any fee paid to VFS Global or to the Danish representation in Chile will not be refunded if an application is refused because the quota has been reached.

IRELAND

Extension of immigration permissions for beneficiaries of temporary protection

The Irish Minister for Justice, Home Affairs & Migration has extended immigration permissions for all people who are Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection up to 4 March 2027.

This extension applies to beneficiaries of temporary protection who are residing in Ireland with a Temporary Protection Certificate (yellow paper) valid until 4 March 2026.

Eligible beneficiaries do not need to apply for a new Temporary Protection Certificate and expired certificates may be used as proof of entitlement to temporary protection and related state services until 4 March 2027. They will, however, have to renew their Irish Residence Permit card (IRP card). This can be renewed here.

ITALY

Further extension of deadline for registering minors born abroad for citizenship

The Italian consulate general in San Francisco has announced that, with the entry into force of law no. 26. Of 28 February 2026, converting Decree-Law No. 200/2025 ("milleproroghe"), the deadline for submitting declarations to acquire Italian citizenship for eligible minors born abroad has been extended from 31 May 2026 to 31 May 2029.

The extension applies to minors who, as of 24 May 2025, were children of Italian citizens by birth, as defined under Article 3-bis of Law No. 91/1992, and who may acquire Italian citizenship through a formal declaration submitted to the relevant consulate. Previously, citizenship was automatically granted at birth in these cases.

JAPAN

New integrated Specified Residence Card launch date announced

Japan's Immigration Services Agency has announced that its new Specified Residence Card will be launched on 14 June 2026.

The specified residence card combines the functions of the residence card (or special permanent residence certificate) and the My Number Card into one card.

The My Number Card is a chipped photo ID card which shows the holder's 12-digit My Number, and which can be used for identity verification in person and online, usually for social insurance, tax and disaster-related procedures.

Eligible residents can apply for a Specified Residence Card at immigration or municipal offices, but are permitted to keep two cards instead.

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MALTA

Pre-Departure Course Requirement will now be formally verified

Identità, the Maltese migration and identity agency, has informed employers, prospective applicants, and current clients that, effective 1 March 2026, the Pre-Departure Course certificate is now formally verified as part of the work permit application process for new and still abroad third-country nationals (TCNs).

The Pre-Departure Course was officially launched on 5 January 2026, and forms part of Malta's updated regulatory framework governing employment entry procedures.

Important Notice

Employers and applicants are advised to ensure that all required documentation is obtained prior to submission of applications as from 1 March 2026, to avoid unnecessary delays in processing.

NEW ZEALAND

Further changes to the Skilled Migrant Category to come into effect in August 2026

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) has announced further details of changes to the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) ahead of these changes taking effect from late August 2026.

Details of the changes include:

- Confirmation of key occupation lists, including the Trades and Technician pathway list, and the red and amber lists, which determine eligibility for residence pathways
- Simplified median wage settings that apply across all Skilled Migrant Category pathways
- Clarified qualification requirements for claiming points
- Extended English language test validity for some applicants
- A new recognised occupational registration for accountants; and
- A future ability to extend an Accredited Employer Work Visa to complete skilled work experience requirements.

SINGAPORE

Upcoming changes for foreign workers

In a speech at the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) Committee of Supply on 3 March 2026, Dr Tan See Leng, Minister of Manpower announced several planned updates to the rules for foreign workers.

In January 2027, MOM will introduce a new Overseas Networks and Expertise (ONE) Pass "AI and Tech track" to replace the Tech.Pass.

Recognising that top talents in AI and Tech may be compensated through non-cash components such as Employee Stock Option Plans (ESOP) and Employee Share Ownership (ESOW), applicants under the new ONE Pass (AI and Tech) track will be allowed to meet the ONE Pass fixed monthly salary criterion through a combination of cash and non-cash components.

MOM will expand the Non-Traditional Source Occupation List (NTS-OL) from September 2026, by adding eight new occupations in the social services, food services and air transportation sectors.

UNITED KINGDOM

Visa brake imposed on four countries

The Home Office has announced that an 'emergency brake' on visas will be imposed for the first time on nationals from four countries following a surge in asylum claims from legal routes.

Asylum applications by students from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan rose by over 470% between 2021 and 2025, and the number of Afghans on work visas claiming asylum is now outstripping the number of visas issued.

In response, the Home Office will end sponsored study visas from all four countries and skilled worker visas for Afghan nationals.

The visa brake will be introduced via an Immigration Rules change on 5 March 2026, and come into force on 26 March 2026.

If you have any colleagues or peers who are affected by the situation in the Middle East, or by any of these other updates, please get in touch with a member of the Envoy Global team for support and advice: https://www.envoyglobal.com/.

ENVOY GLOBAL
(Formerly SMITH STONE WALTERS)
If you have any questions about these changes or would like to discuss how they may affect your organisation, our team is here to help. Please get in touch with a member of the Envoy Global, team for support and advice - https://smithstonewalters.com/.

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