

# GMS Flash Alert

Immigration

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## United Arab Emirates – MENA Airspace Closures and Flight Disruptions

Airspace closures and flight disruptions are widespread across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), following significant military escalations involving Iran, Israel, and U.S. forces.<sup>1</sup>

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Several MENA countries – including Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Syria, and the UAE – continue to enforce full or partial airspace closures. Major airports such as Dubai (DXB/DWC), Abu Dhabi (AUH), and Doha (DOH) are heavily affected with widespread cancellations. Global airline networks are significantly impacted, with 3,000–3,400 (or more) flights cancelled during the initial disruption period and continued operational instability across key international routes.

### Country Updates

- **Bahrain:** Flight operations at BIA remain temporarily suspended due to the closure of Bahrain airspace.
- **Egypt:** Egyptian airspace remains fully operational, but the national airlines - EgyptAir - has suspended flights to 13 Middle Eastern cities due to regional tensions.
- **Iran:** Entire airspace remains closed.
- **Iraq:** Entire airspace remains closed.
- **Israel:** Passenger flights remain suspended.
- **Jordan:** Airspace closed due to missile overflight risks.
- **Kuwait:** Airspace closed and attacks reported on the airport.
- **Lebanon:** Lebanese airspace remains technically open, but it is experiencing severe disruptions and limited activity.
- **Qatar:** Temporary airspace closure and airline suspensions ongoing.

- **Oman:** National airspace open, but overflow traffic and earlier temporary MCT shutdown; Oman Air suspended Baghdad route.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Only major East–West corridor currently open; unprecedented air traffic control (ATC) saturation causing delays.
- **Syria:** Extended a full airspace closure for 24 hours starting Monday midnight local time, keeping all takeoffs and landings suspended.
- **UAE:** DXB, DWC, and AUH were suspended following missile activity. The UAE General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) has announced on March 2 at 6:00 p.m. local time the launch of exceptional flight operations across UAE airports to facilitate the departure of stranded passengers affected by the recent regional developments. These flights will operate in accordance with schedules communicated directly by airlines to affected passengers and the respective destinations. The GCAA advises all affected travelers **not to proceed to the airports** until they have been contacted by their airlines and informed of their confirmed flight timings and details. This measure is intended to prevent congestion and ensure smooth processing for all passengers.

### Implications for Travelers

Operational uncertainty of authorities is high and reports from the airlines underscore the unpredictability.

Massive global cancellations within the past 48 hours left passengers stranded worldwide, including in Australia, Brazil, and the Maldives.

Limited rebooking is available, as aircraft and crews have been stranded across major cities (London, Paris, Toronto, Singapore), slowing scheduled recovery. Availability remains scarce until aircraft reposition.

Alternative corridors are congested—Saudi Arabia is the only open East-West corridor—and it faces unprecedented ATC congestion. Oman is absorbing overflow traffic after earlier operational restrictions. There is severe airport congestion at key hubs such as DXB, AUH, DOH, Kuwait, and Tel Aviv are overwhelmed with stranded passengers. Alternative routes and rerouted itineraries via Europe, Central Asia, or Africa are costlier and often involve long layovers. Reduced transit connectivity and disruptions at DXB, AUH, and DOH may undermine key global transit corridors.

There is an increase in diversions and mid-route turnbacks, and long-haul flights have been forced into 6-10 hour diversions or returns (“flights to nowhere”).

Insurance coverage may be limited because most travel insurance policies exclude disruptions caused by ongoing conflict events.

## KPMG INSIGHTS

In light of the changes, travelers might wish to consider the following:

- Travelers might suspend all non-essential travel to affected MENA states.
- Pre-travel risk assessments are recommended for all essential business movements.
- Travelers should track airline waiver windows, hub reopening indicators, and missile-activity alerts continuously.

- Travelers should check registration with their embassies to receive repatriation or emergency updates.
- Travelers may consider safe routing alternatives (via KSA, Oman, Africa, Southern Europe) while noting potential congestion delays.
- Travelers may identify the nearest open airports (e.g., Muscat, Riyadh, Cairo, Larnaca) as fallback extraction points should limited commercial operations resume.

KPMG in the United Arab Emirates will continue to monitor developments closely. Readers will receive further updates as new information becomes available or if travel conditions change significantly.

If you require tailored guidance for your organization or travelers, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional\* or the one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in the United Arab Emirates (see the Contacts section).

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## ENDNOTE:

1 Airline Ratings website, “Middle East airspace closures ground major airlines and disrupt flights worldwide,” published on March 1, 2026.

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## Contacts

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