

GMS Flash Alert

Immigration

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Saudi Arabia – Qiwa Clarifies Transfer Eligibility for Employees Recorded as “Absent”

Saudi Arabia’s Qiwa platform has clarified that certain employees recorded as “absent” may be eligible to transfer to another employer through Qiwa if they have spent more than 12 months in Saudi Arabia. The clarification also addresses responsibility for outstanding work permit fees and several related employment-platform procedures.¹

WHY THIS MATTERS

The clarification may affect employers managing sponsored foreign national employees in Saudi Arabia when an employee has been reported absent, has stopped working, or has had an employment contract terminated. HR, immigration, and mobility teams may need to determine whether the employee’s status permits a transfer through Qiwa and whether the prospective employer would become responsible for outstanding work permit fees. The appropriate process may also depend on how the employee is recorded across Qiwa and other government platforms.

Key Provisions

Transfer Eligibility

- An employee whose status has changed to “absent” following a Ministry absence report, a work-interruption report, or termination of the contractual relationship may be eligible to transfer to another employer through Qiwa if the employee has spent more than 12 months in Saudi Arabia.
- The clarification does not specify how the 12-month period is measured or whether additional approvals or supporting documents are required.

Outstanding Work Permit Fees

The prospective employer is responsible for paying the employee’s outstanding work permit fees, if any. The clarification does not specify the payment timing or process.

Government Employee Contracts

A contract cannot be created through Qiwa for a government employee until the employee completes the applicable clearance procedures and closes the registration with the government entity through the Masar platform.

Establishment Records

An establishment may exclude an employee from its records if the employee's status in Absher or Muqem is recorded as "left and did not return" or "final exit."

Contractual Disputes

Qiwa does not address disputes arising from the contractual relationship between the parties. According to the clarification, affected parties may submit such disputes through the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development's amicable-settlement service or pursue them before the labor court.

Platform and Work Permit Requirements

- Users access Qiwa through Nafath. A group manager may authorize other users through the "User Management" service and grant access according to their assigned permissions.
- Qiwa operates electronically and does not accept or validate paper documents through the platform.
- For an establishment to issue a work permit, the relevant entity is expected not to have remained in the red zone for eight consecutive weeks. The clarification indicates that an exception applies to newly established companies.

KPMG INSIGHTS

The clarification identifies a possible transfer route for certain employees recorded as "absent," but the employee's precise status and period in Saudi Arabia appear to be central to determining whether that route is available. The prospective employer may also face financial consequences if outstanding work permit fees need to be paid during the transfer process.

The interaction among Qiwa, Absher, Muqem, Nafath, and Masar may require employers to review information across several government systems. Employers and mobility teams might wish to consider:

- Review the employee's status in Qiwa, Absher, and Muqem before initiating a transfer or exclusion request.
- Verify whether the employee has spent more than 12 months in Saudi Arabia under the measurement method applied by Qiwa.
- Identify outstanding work permit fees and consider how they would be addressed during hiring and onboarding.
- Confirm that a prospective government-sector hire has completed the relevant clearance procedures and closed the government registration through Masar.
- Direct contractual disputes to the applicable amicable settlement or labor court process.
- Monitor official guidance on documentation, processing periods, system requirements, and possible exceptions.

If assignees and/or their programme managers have any questions or concerns about the scope of the update, its application and potential impacts, and appropriate next steps, they should consult with their qualified tax or social security professional or a member of the GMS/People Services team with KPMG in the Lower Gulf (see the Contacts section).

ENDNOTE:

1 Saudi Gazette, “Qiwa: ‘Absent’ employees can transfer jobs after 12 months in Saudi Arabia,” published on 30 September 2026.

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Contacts

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