

Immigration Law

30 March 2026

South Africa

- Temporary relief for those affected by the instability in the Middle East and Gulf region



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Temporary relief for those affected by the instability in the Middle East and Gulf region

On 23 March 2026, the Minister of Home Affairs issued a temporary visa concession (directive). The directive applies to passengers and crew of airlines (affected persons) who are impacted by airspace closures in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Oman due to the military strikes in the Middle East and the Gulf region (affected region).

This directive is issued in recognition of the current realities faced by affected persons who are prevented from travelling to or through the affected region, and is intended to assist these individuals to remain in South Africa legally for an additional period without suffering adverse consequences.

In terms of the directive, the following temporary concessions apply to affected persons who are impacted by airspace closures in the affected region:

- Where their long-term visa is due to expire up until 31 March 2026, and provided they meet all the prescribed requirements, they are allowed to apply for a visitor's visa in terms of section 11(1)(a) of the Immigration Act 13 of 2002 (Immigration Act). This application must be made on or before the expiry of their current visa, with the proviso that no change in an affected person's status or visa conditions will be allowed.
- Where their visitor's visa has reached its maximum validity period, and is technically not renewable in terms of section 11(1)(a) of the Immigration Act, they are allowed to apply for the same visa with the same conditions for a period not exceeding three months. Once again, no change in an affected person's status or visa conditions is allowed.

- Where their temporary residence visa has expired, they are allowed to submit a renewal application for their visa without first having to obtain a Form 20, which is a request for authorisation for an illegal foreigner to remain in South Africa pending their application for status.
- Where they have a visa application pending adjudication and may be able to board a flight once available, they should not be declared an undesirable person for having overstayed the validity of their visa.
- Where they were unable to depart South Africa before the expiry of their visa, and were declared undesirable upon their departure from 26 February 2026 onwards due to the closure of airspace in the affected region, they may submit an appeal accompanied by reasonable evidence to the following email address: middleeast.overstay@dha.gov.za

Importantly, the temporary concession in terms of the directive apply only to affected persons who are impacted by airspace closures in the affected region, and who were legally admitted into South Africa through a port of entry. Any foreign national who intends to rely on the concession must be able to demonstrate that they were prevented from departing South Africa timeously due to airspace closures in the affected region.

The temporary concession applies until 31 May 2026 or until the date of declaration of a ceasefire that results in the reopening of travel in the affected region, whichever comes first.

Lee Masuku and Taryn York



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BBBEE STATUS: LEVEL ONE CONTRIBUTOR

Our BBBEE verification is one of several components of our transformation strategy and we continue to seek ways of improving it in a meaningful manner.

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