

MAY 2026

PULSE SURVEY:
**EVOLVING MOBILITY
SUPPORT IN THE
MIDDLE EAST**



Nearly half of organizations with assignees evacuated from impacted Middle East locations are actively returning employees to host locations, while many others are planning returns but still assessing timing and conditions. Decisions are being driven primarily by security and geopolitical stability, business needs, and employee willingness to return. Some companies noted that their assignees never evacuated impacted locations.

Organizations continue to take flexible approaches for employees who remain outside their host location, with case-by-case management and extended remote work being the most common strategies. Tracking processes remain largely manual, with Excel and self-reporting still widely used. Many companies are continuing to adapt education support for families, including remote schooling arrangements, although there is a drive for families to return to certain locations where in-person schooling is resuming.

For assignees remaining outside the host location, nearly one-third are maintaining the full assignment package. 20% are adjusting relevant allowances – namely, COLA and hardship. For those remaining in impacted locations, most are still not implementing danger pay.

1. Do you currently have international assignees located in, or evacuated from, Middle East locations impacted by the conflict?

	%	Count
Yes	91	50
No	9	5
Total	100	55

2. What is your current approach to returning assignees to their original host location in the Middle East? Select all that apply.

	%	Count
Actively returning assignees	48%	24
Planning returns, but timing remains uncertain	36%	18
Not planning returns / alternative strategy in place	18%	9
Other (describe)	16%	8
Total Responding Companies		50

Other responses noted that some assignees were never evacuated, some employees had already returned upon request, and several organizations are still reviewing return plans, with target return dates ranging from the end of April to June 2026.

The U.A.E. was the most cited location where companies are actively returning assignees, likely reflecting its role as a major hub for international assignments in the region, followed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

3. What factors will most influence your decision to return assignees to the Middle East? Select top three.

	%	Count
Security/geopolitical stability	69%	34
Business need/operational demand	55%	27
Employee willingness/request	49%	24
Government guidance/travel restrictions	33%	16
Internal risk assessments	29%	14
Cost considerations	0%	0
N/A	10%	5
Other (describe)	4%	2
Total Responding Companies		49

Other responses note that schools are reopening so families are returning for children to attend school

4. How are you tracking assignees who remain outside their host location? Select all that apply.

	%	Count
Excel or offline tracking	48%	24
Assignee self-reporting	32%	16
Internal tools (e.g., SharePoint)	28%	14
HRIS	14%	7
Assignment Management Software	10%	5
N/A	12%	6
Other (describe)	2%	1
Total Responding Companies		50

5. What approaches are you using for assignees who have not returned to their host location? Select all that apply.

	%	Count
Case-by-case approach	55%	27
Extended remote work from current location	49%	24
Maintaining assignment status while outside host location	33%	16
Temporary relocation to another company location	22%	11
Assignment termination/repatriation	16%	8
N/A	8%	4
Other (describe)	4%	2
Total Responding Companies		49

6. How are you managing assignment compensation for assignees who remain outside the host location? Select all that apply.

	%	Count
Full assignment package maintained	32%	16
Selected elements adjusted e.g., COLA, hardship, housing	20%	10
Case-by-case approach	18%	9
Assignment allowances suspended until return to host	10%	5
Under review	8%	4
N/A	22%	11
Other (describe)	0%	0
Total Responding Companies		50

Of companies adjusting selected elements, COLA and Hardship are noted as the allowances being discontinued or suspended. Some companies note that COLA and/or Hardship are ceased after a designated time away from the host (ranging from 30 days to 90 days/3 months).

7. How are you supporting education for relocated assignee families? Select all that apply.

	%	Count
Supporting remote/virtual schooling with host school	41%	20
Case-by-case approach	33%	16
Funding international/private schooling in the home location (partially or fully)	14%	7
Enrollment in public school in the home location	12%	6
Allowing dependents to return to host location to complete exams	6%	3
Under review	4%	2
N/A	29%	14
Other (describe)	8%	4
Total Responding Companies		49



8. Are you paying or considering paying danger pay / temporary premium above your regular hardship premium in any of the following locations?

	Currently Paying	Considering	Not considering	Count
Bahrain	22%	11%	67%	18
Iraq	18%	12%	71%	17
Israel	16%	8%	76%	25
Jordan	25%	6%	69%	16
Kuwait	20%	10%	70%	20
Lebanon	13%	7%	80%	15
Oman	14%	9%	77%	22
Qatar	31%	12%	58%	26
Saudi Arabia	22%	13%	66%	32
United Arab Emirates	16%	25%	59%	44

Of companies paying danger pay, these are the amounts reported as % of salary:

Count	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	7	7	9
Country	Bahrain	Iraq	Israel	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Oman	Qatar	Saudi	UAE
Min								5%	5%	5%
Average	25%	20%	19%	15%	20%	18%	20%	20%	18%	17%
Max								35%	35%	35%

Minimum / Maximum reported for locations with more than 5 data points.

9. What additional challenges or considerations are you currently managing related to the Middle East situation?

Theme 1: Employee Safety, Well-being, and Duty of Care

- Reassuring assignees in pipeline that ME operations are active and providing them with accurate resources with relevant real-time info re local environment
- Extend psychological / safety support / communication to external employees
- Given the decision to return employees and families while the situation remains fluid (i.e., no clear outcomes of the negotiations), the company is ensuring we are ready to support another evacuation should things re-escalate.
- Level of support for voluntary evacuations
- Long-term concerns of returning employees and their families feeling unsafe
- We are also considering case-by-case those still in the Host Country with dependents due to personal situations that may prevent temporary travel and relocation (i.e. .working spouse that is in an essential position in Host, high-risk pregnancy, etc.)
- We are currently providing a high level of psychological support to our teams, with a strong focus on employee well-being. In parallel, protective shelters are being constructed on all potentially exposed sites to enhance safety and preparedness.
- We currently only have Expats in UAE, and those expats have not voiced any concerns about remaining there. This was reviewed when bombing occurred in UAE, but since then, no further review has taken place after we received initial Expat feedback.
- We have returned all assignees to the host location at this time. We did not initiate a formal evacuation, but employees were allowed to depart at their own expense if they felt unsafe. We had [a small number] of assignees stuck outside of the region due to business travel so we covered their expenses until they were able to return.

9. What additional challenges or considerations are you currently managing related to the Middle East situation? *(continued)*

Theme 2: Mobility Logistics, Immigration, and Tax Complexity

- Additional tax obligations resulting from temporary stay in Home or Third country. Additional costs in Home or Third country due to temp accommodation and other needs due to evacuation.
- Embedded assignments in an alternative location not driven by business need
- Employees who have relocated with relatives in countries the company is not currently operating in.
- External new hires had to be delayed until they were able to safely arrive in the ME. We looked into whether we could employ them elsewhere in the interim.
- Flight routes, flight cancellations and unplanned increased costs to the programs
- If evacuated, do they still get home leave in the same year?
- Immigration and tax considerations for employees to work remote outside of the Middle East
- Planning for post-evacuation scenarios of employees and family within GCC countries - we have [many] different home countries and [are] looking into PE and Tax implications of relocating to hubs in other countries or if they were to take home country charter flights to home country; how long could we sustain them; would there be a business and banking system remaining in their host country; what is the extent of the situation in host country - could they leave, what about personal effects, pets, etc.? The list is endless...
- Reviewing immigration, corporate tax, and individual tax implications for extended remote work periods outside country of assignment
- Immigration and travel schedules are volatile, so planning for delays, extensions, expirations is necessary; Remote working arrangements are not covered under policy, so requires research for each case
- Visa options for relocation to other countries, including domestic relocation opportunities, where feasible.

Theme 3: Business Continuity and Return-to-Host Planning

- Security teams monitor the situation. There were already plans to evacuate dependents and non-essential personnel but that didn't happen due to the pace of events. Pressure from employees in [a particular country] to introduce additional pay. We are considering but resistant to using danger pay because we do not like the notion of buying people out of the risk. Our relatively small teams in the most severely affected locations (Bahrain, Qatar, UAE) need to be considered alongside a large population in Saudi Arabia where a business-as-usual stance has been adopted.
- Tracking / managing evacuations and returns for local national employees in Saudi Arabia and UAE.
- We are retro-paying a hardship increase to impacted assignees back to [a specific date]
- We had an evacuation out of Egypt; the expats have since returned
- Business continuity plans
- Return mandate for local employees in UAE as well as international assignees for end-April completed (previously they could choose to work remotely internationally in their country of citizenship). Travel restrictions for business travelers and leadership approvals on business-critical basis. Monitoring developments locally with group security.
- Concerns about new escalations that will impact business and regional development

Demographics

55 organizations participated in the survey.

Headquarters Region:	%
Asia	6%
Australia/New Zealand	2%
Europe	32%
North America	60%

Top Industries Represented	%
Oil/Gas	17%
Aerospace/Defense	15%
Manufacturing	10%
Financial & Professional Services	8%
Life Sciences/Healthcare	8%
Tech	8%
Consumer Goods	6%
Energy Services	6%

Partial list of participating companies:

adidas	Mercy Ships
Apache Corporation	Nokia
Atlas Copco Services Middle East	Northrop Grumman
BAE Systems	OMV Aktiengesellschaft
BESIX Group	Pacific International Lines
Boeing	PETRONAS (PETROLIAM NASIONAL BERHAD)
Caterpillar	Philip Morris International
Chevron Phillips Chemical	Roche
Colgate-Palmolive Company	Rolls-Royce
ConocoPhillips	RTX
Databricks	Schneider Electric
Ecolab Inc.	Shell
EY	Stripe
Ford Motor Company	Syensqo
J&J	Textron, Inc.
Mavenir Systems Inc	Unity Technologies