

Immigration alert: Saudi Arabia amends government fees for visas

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As part of the country's initiative to diversify state revenues, the government of Saudi Arabia has decided to increase the government fees for some immigration services. These include the following:

- Government fees of SAR 2,000 for "single entry" visas for short-term visits. The government states that this fee would not apply for individuals intending to obtain a *Hajj* or *Umrah* visa, assuming that they have not obtained such a visa before.
- Government fees of SAR 3,000 – SAR 8,000 for "multiple entry" visas. The government fee applicable would depend on the tenure of stay that is permissible and the type of visa being procured.

The government has also announced that the fees for Exit/Re-Entry (ERE) permits – which are meant to facilitate the travel of foreign national residents to and from the country – will increase to:

- SAR 200 for a two-month, single trip ERE permit with an additional SAR 100 for each additional month requested (up until the duration permitted by the underlying residency). Previously, the government fees for such ERE permits were a flat rate of SAR 200 for permits valid for up to six months.
- SAR 500 for a three-month, multiple trip ERE permit with an additional SAR 200 for each additional month requested (up until the duration permitted by the underlying residency). Previously, the government fees for such ERE permits were a flat rate of SAR 500 for permits valid for up to six months.

Alongside the above-mentioned fee increases, the government also announced its intention to introduce new and longer durations for multiple entry visit visas, namely one year and two years. The framework and eligibility criteria for this has yet to be disclosed by the authorities, however we shall keep you updated as to any developments.

The takeaway

Employers operating in Saudi Arabia should incorporate the increased government fees in their mobility planning and forecasting efforts.

Employers should note that most immigration processes in Saudi Arabia include an in-country as well as an out-country portion. The out-country portion pertains to an entry visa application that is filed directly with a Saudi consular post abroad. The requirements (and subsequent processing fees) may vary from consular post to consular post.

We expect these changes to be fully implemented by 2 October 2016.

Let's talk

For a deeper discussion of how this issue might affect your business, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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