Part 3 – Labour, Visas, Residency and Compliance

FNRCO Chairman's Message

Ali Jaber Al Mahan
Chairman
First National Human Resources Company (FNRCO)

Welcome to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—one of the world's most dynamic and fast-growing economies. As you embark on your journey of establishing or expanding your business here, we are pleased to support you with guidance on **labour, visas, residency, and regulatory compliance.**

At **First National Human Resources Company (FNRCO),** we are driven by an unwavering commitment to support economic diversification and sustainable growth in line with the **Kingdom's Vision 2030**. Through our comprehensive HR and manpower solutions, we enable organizations to seamlessly establish, manage, and scale their workforce in Saudi Arabia. From recruitment and employee outsourcing to Employer of Record (EOR) services, workforce management, immigration support, and compliance advisory, FNRCO serves as a trusted partner in navigating the local labor landscape.

We strongly believe in the power of collaboration and the importance of nurturing both local and international talent. Our approach is centered on delivering reliable, compliant, and efficient workforce solutions that allow our clients to focus on their core business while we manage the complexities of employment regulations, visa processes, and Saudization requirements. Together with our partners and clients, we are dedicated to creating lasting value and contributing to the Kingdom's transformation into a global economic powerhouse. We remain confident that, through our collective efforts,

FNRCO will continue to serve as a catalyst for progress, enabling businesses and professionals to thrive in Saudi Arabia. We warmly welcome you and look forward to being part of your success journey in the Kingdom.

1. Visas, Iqama and Work Permits

By FNRCO GROUP

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1. Visas, Iqama and Work Permits

MAIN VISA CATEGORIES FOR INVESTORS, EMPLOYEES AND DEPENDENTS

For corporate market entry and executive mobility, the key categories are:

Investors and senior owners

- **Visiting Investor Visa:** fast-track business visit visa co-developed by MISA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) for owners and C-suite exploring or managing investments, typically with rapid processing compared to standard business visas.
- **Premium Residency:** long-term residence status that allows qualified foreigners to live, work and own businesses and property without a traditional sponsor, subject to capital and other conditions.

Employees (work-linked visas)

- **Standard Work Visa:** entry visa issued by MOFA on the basis of an employment contract, leading to a work permit and Iqama after arrival. It is the default route for long-term employment.
- **Temporary Work Visa:** for short-term assignments of up to 90 days, extendable once up to an additional 90 days, without issuing an Iqama. Processed via the employer's Qiwa account and MOFA invitation.

Business visitors and project related travel

- **Business Visit Visa:** for meetings, negotiations, and oversight. Multiple-entry versions allow stays of up to 90 days per visit within a one-year validity.
- **Business Work Visit Visa:** for short-term technical work, training or project interventions where remuneration is paid. Distinct from a "meeting only" business visit.

Tourism and stop-over

- **Tourist e-Visa:** one-year, multiple-entry visa for tourism and limited business-tourism activities, obtained online via the Visit Saudi platform. Allows to stay 90 days maximum per year in the country.
- **Airline Stop-over Visa:** up to 96-hour transit visa (for example via Saudia) that allows short visits during connections.

Family and dependents

- **Family Residence Visa (family Iqama):** spouses, sons under 18 and unmarried daughters can be sponsored by a legally employed expatriate who meets minimum salary thresholds and profession criteria.
- **Family Visit Visas:** short-term visits by relatives, granted via online MOFA applications initiated by the resident sponsor.

All employment-linked long-term visas are now tied to a skill-based work permit classification recorded in Qiwa, which can affect eligibility, compliance obligations and, indirectly, the ease of renewals.

PRACTICAL PROCESS FOR WORK PERMIT AND IQAMA FOR FRENCH NATIONALS

The process can only be started once you have already signed an employment contract with an entity registered in Saudi Arabia.

In practice, visa applications must be lodged through the Embassy's outsourced visa application center (Tasheer) and/or an accredited agent, as the Embassy no longer accepts direct submissions from individual applicants.

1. Launching of process by the employer in Saudi Arabia

The employer is responsible for issuing Saudi Work Visas for their employees and acts as a sponsor.

First, the employer submits a work-visa request via Qiwa (https://qiwa.sa/en/visa) to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD). Once approved, this generates an electronic work-visa authorization (invitation) coordinated between MHRSD, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), which MOFA then transmits electronically to the relevant Saudi consulate for visa stamping.

2. Pre-visa document preparation and attestation

Diplomas:

- Make certified copies of original diplomas at town hall, prefecture or notary.
- Have them translated into Arabic by a sworn translator. In France, sworn translators are registered on lists established by each court of appeal and by the Court of Cassation.
- Have the documents apostilled by a French notary. Since May 2025, French notaries have been authorized to issue apostilles for public documents intended for use abroad, replacing the courts of appeal. Applications are submitted online (https://apostille.notaires.fr) or through one of the 15 regional notarial offices.

- Obtain final legalization of your diplomas through the dedicated online platform Mosadaqa (https://www.mosadaqa.sa/Home/Landing)

3. Application for a work visa

Adult applicants in France must provide fingerprints at the Tasheer visa center in Clichy-la-Garenne before their file can be submitted.

Then, your authorized agent can start applying for a work visa for you by sending the following documents to the Saudi Embassy:

- Copies and legalized translations of your diplomas
- Original passport valid for at least 6 months, with at least 2 successive empty visa pages. It must be a biometric passport.
- Visa application form duly completed.
- Online visa application on the official website.
- Two recent color photographs on a white background.
- Electronic work-visa authorization (invitation) issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and addressed to the Saudi consulate through which you plan to apply.
- A copy of E-Wakala / Tafoyeed (electronic power of attorney).
- A copy of the employment contract signed by both parties (employer and employee) and legalized by the Saudi Chamber of Commerce and the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). In case of previous employment in Saudi Arabia, a letter of recommendation from a previous employer may be requested.
- Medical certificate of good health from an approved establishment or doctor. It is necessary to verify the name of the medical institution approved by the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, if you are applying for a visa outside France.
- A copy of the employer's CR (Commercial Registration) in Saudi Arabia.
- A clean criminal record certificate less than 3 months old (legalized original). In case you submit your visa application outside France, it is recommended to present a criminal record extract for both countries.
- Your CV.

4. Arrival in Saudi Arabia, work permit and Iqama

Once the employee enters Saudi Arabia with a work visa:

Work permit and social security

- The employer must register the employment contract and activate the work permit on MHRSD systems and Qiwa within 90 days of arrival.
- A GOSI (social insurance) number is generated, linking the individual for social security and Nitaqat.

Medical exam and health insurance

- A fresh medical examination (blood tests and chest X-ray) must be performed in a Ministry of Health-licensed clinic in Saudi Arabia. Results are transmitted electronically to the MOI.
- The employer must enroll the employee in group medical insurance.

Iqama issuance

- Once the work permit is issued, GOSI registration completed, medical results cleared and health insurance activated, the MO) issues the Iqama, which the employer prints through the Muqeem system.
- The employee can access a digital Iqama via Absher and Tawakkalna apps even before the physical card is printed.
- Fingerprints must be captured in-country at a Ministry of Interior biometric center (usually a Jawazat/passport office or other MOI-approved facility), which is mandatory to finalize residency and to access services such as driving licences and SIM cards.

The Iqama is the operational key to everyday life: it is required for leases, opening a bank account, obtaining a driver’s licence, sponsoring family, and accessing many e-government services.

PRACTICAL PROCESS FOR VISA AND IQAMA FOR DEPENDENTS OF FRENCH NATIONALS

The process of bringing your spouse and children to Saudi Arabia can only start once you, as the principal applicant, hold a valid Saudi work visa and Iqama (residence permit) with a profession that allows family sponsorship under Saudi regulations.

Saudi rules and consular practices can change, and some requirements vary by embassy and by individual case. Verify the latest instructions with your employer's HR/PRO, the Saudi Embassy in Paris, and any accredited visa agent before filing.

1. Prepare French and foreign civil status documents

For each dependent (spouse and children), you must gather and regularize civil status documents on the French (or foreign) side:

- Marriage certificate (for spouse).
- Birth certificates showing both parents' names (for each child).

The usual steps are:

- Obtain recent original certificates (or certified copies) from the relevant French civil registry (or foreign authority, if the document is not French).
- Have them translated into Arabic by a sworn translator; for French documents, the translator should be on the list of court-approved translators (Cour d'appel / Cour de cassation).
- Have all the documents apostilled by a French notary via the platform (https://apostille.notaires.fr), since notaries are now competent to issue apostilles for French public documents used abroad.
- If the marriage or birth certificates are non-French, follow the equivalent legalization/apostille route in the country of issuance, then obtain Arabic translations and Saudi legalization as required.

These civil status documents will later need to be recognized by the Saudi authorities (through MOFA and the Saudi Embassy/consulate).

2. Employer and sponsor-side preparations in Saudi Arabia

Once you have your own Iqama, you must coordinate with your employer and PRO in Saudi Arabia:

- Update your personal data (marital status, number of children, address) in HR systems and, where applicable, on MHRSD and GOSI records.
- Ensure your National Address in Saudi Arabia is correctly registered, as it may be requested when issuing family Iqamas.
- Confirm with HR that your medical insurance plan covers dependents and check whether they enroll dependents.

The sponsor (you) will normally initiate the family visa request via Absher or Jawazat.

3. Application for Family Residence Visa (entry visas) from France

For long-term relocation, dependents usually enter on a Family Residence Visa (sometimes called "Family Reunification" or "Family Visa"), not a short visit visa.

The main steps are:

1. Online family visa authorization in Saudi Arabia:

- Through Absher or Jawazat, you submit a family residency sponsorship request for your spouse and eligible children, attaching copies of your Iqama, passport, employment contract, and proof of income and accommodation as requested.
- Once approved, the Saudi system issues a family residence visa authorization/number under MOFA, linked to each dependent.

2. Visa application in France:

- In France, your spouse (and, if required, children) submit visa applications at the Saudi Embassy's outsourced visa application center (Tasheer) and/or via an accredited agent.

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Typical documents required by the Embassy/visa center include:

- Original passports for each dependent, valid at least 6 months beyond the visa expiry, with two facing blank pages.
- Completed visa application forms and online registrations.
- Recent color photos with a white background.
- The family residence visa authorization/approval issued in Saudi Arabia (MOFA reference).
- Attested and Arabic-translated marriage certificate (for spouse) and birth certificates (for children), with apostille and Saudi recognition as described above.
- Copy of the sponsor's Iqama and passport.
- Medical report for adult dependents according to the official Saudi template (children often provide vaccination records instead of a full medical report).
- All adult applicants must have their biometrics captured at the visa center. Applications are not accepted without prior biometrics.

Once approved, the Saudi Embassy issues a Family Residence Visa, usually valid 90 days to enter Saudi Arabia.

4. Entry into Saudi Arabia and first 90 days

On arrival in Saudi Arabia:

- Each family member enters with their Family Residence Visa, stamped in the passport.
- The entry visas are typically valid for 90 days, and the family Iqama procedures must be completed within that period to avoid overstaying or additional fees.

For the first 90 days after entry, there is generally no dependent levy, but this exemption and its exact duration may be adjusted by regulation.

5. Medical insurance for dependents

Before applying for Iqamas for dependents, you must arrange medical insurance:

- Dependents must be covered by health insurance from the same insurer and policy class as the sponsoring employee.
- In many cases, the employer enrolls dependents under the company's group scheme once the family arrives. In other cases, the employee must purchase coverage directly from an approved insurer.

Health insurance details are electronically linked to MOI systems and are a prerequisite for issuing family Iqamas.

6. Payment of dependent levy

Saudi regulations impose a dependent levy ("dependent fee") on expatriates who sponsor family members:

- As of recent guidance, this fee is SAR 400 per dependent per month, payable from a defined point after arrival until the sponsor's Iqama expiry date minus 90 days.
- The exact amount and calculation base can change by ministerial decision, so you should check the current tariff and due dates through Absher or your bank's government payments module (Sadad).

Payment of the fee is required before the Iqama for dependents can be issued or renewed.

7. Application for Iqama for dependents

Once your family is in the Kingdom, you must apply for a Family Iqama for each dependent:

1. **Gather required documents for each dependent:**
   - Passport copy and original with the entry visa.
   - Two recent photographs.
   - Copy of the sponsor's Iqama and passport.
   - Proof of health insurance for the dependent.
   - Proof of relationship (marriage certificate and/or birth certificate, already attested and translated).
   - Proof of accommodation (e.g. lease contract).

2. Submit the Iqama request at Jawazat or via online services :

- The sponsor or employer's PRO submits the application at the Jawazat or via the relevant MOI e-services (Absher/Muqeem), depending on current procedures.
- All fees must be paid via the banking system under Government Payments (Sadad).

3. Biometrics for dependents:

- Older children and spouses may need to register fingerprints and photos at a MOI biometric center Jawazat office. Requirements are age-dependent and can change.

Once the application is approved, Jawazat issues a Family Iqama for each dependent, normally with the same expiry date as the sponsor's Iqama.

Iqamas may be printed through Muqeem and delivered via the Saudi Post/courier service to the registered National Address.

8. Rights and limitations of dependents on Iqama

Holders of a dependent/family Iqama:

- May legally reside in Saudi Arabia, access healthcare, enroll children in schools, and perform many administrative procedures using their own Iqama.
- Do not have the right to work. To work legally, a dependent must obtain their own work visa and Iqama under a Saudi employer's sponsorship.
- Must keep their Iqama valid at all times; if the sponsor's Iqama expires or is cancelled, dependent Iqamas also become invalid, and renewal must be done promptly to avoid fines or loss of residency status.

The dependent's Iqama is therefore the key to everyday life in Saudi Arabia for family members, in the same way that the work Iqama is for the principal employee.

PRACTICAL PROCESS FOR TOURIST VISAS

French nationals can now obtain a Saudi tourist visa online. French citizens are eligible for the Saudi e-tourist visa, valid for 1 year with multiple entries and up to 90 days per stay. The cumulative time in Saudi to no more than 180 days in any 12-month period.

The e-visa covers tourism, short family visits and Umrah (outside Hajj season), but not work or long-term residency.

The required documents for the application are:

- Passport valid at least 6 months beyond entry, with at least one blank page.
- Digital passport-style photo on a white background.
- Email address to receive the visa PDF.
- Bank card to pay the fee (visa + mandatory medical insurance are usually bundled).

No sponsor, hotel booking, flight reservation or bank statements are usually requested for the standard e-tourist visa for French citizens.

The application process is the following:

- Go to the official e-visa portal (https://visa.visitsaudi.com/)
- Create an account, fill in the form, upload your photo and passport scan, then pay the fee online.
- In most cases, approval is automated and arrives by email within minutes to 24 hours. Some files can take up to 2–5 working days for manual review.

Print the e-visa or keep it ready on your phone when you travel.

If you plan to work for a short time in Saudi Arabia, you should apply for a Business Visa or a Temporary Work Permit.

SKILL- BASED VISA SYSTEM AND PROFESSIONAL VERIFICATION

Saudi Arabia is moving from a simple "professional / non-professional" distinction to a multi-factor, skill-based classification of work permits linked to job titles, qualifications and wages.

Skill-based classification of work permits

MHRSD and Qiwa now classify all long-term work permits into 3 levels:

High-skilled

- Professionals such as engineers, doctors, IT specialists and other advanced technical or managerial roles.
- Eligibility uses a points-based system combining academic qualifications, experience, specific skills, salary level and age.
- Some professions also require separate accreditation (e.g., Saudi Council of Engineers, Saudi Commission for Health Specialties, SOCPA for accounting).

Skilled

- Technicians, supervisors and many administrative roles requiring post-secondary qualifications or significant experience.
- Criteria focus on vocational diplomas, years of experience and a wage threshold lower than the high-skilled tier.

Basic

- Covers manual, service and other non-skilled roles. Subject to an age ceiling and lower wage bands.
- No advanced qualification required, but these jobs are increasingly regulated by localization and sectoral Saudization policies.

Employers must classify each expatriate role correctly in Qiwa. Misclassification can lead to compliance issues, penalties or restrictions on further hiring.

Professional Verification program

The Professional Verification program, launched in 2021, complements the skill-based classification by testing the technical competence of foreign workers in specific occupations. Over 1,000 specialized professions across 23 job families under the SSCO are covered.

Two testing tracks:

- Overseas track: skilled workers are tested in their home countries through approved international examination centers before visa issuance.
- In-Kingdom track: existing workers are tested in certified local centers.

Link to visas and work permits

For targeted professions, passing the exam is linked to the ability to issue or renew work visas and work permits. Failure can block new visas, renewals or change of employer.

In practice, for senior executives and specialists, HR should check early whether the proposed job title is within a profession covered by Professional Verification and, if so, schedule testing slots well before intended start dates.

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TIMELINES AND TYPICAL PAIN POINTS

For planning purposes, CEOs should see visas and Iqama not as a single step but as a critical project phase of market entry with its own risk points.

Indicative timeline for a first-time hire from France

Assuming clean records, complete documentation and an employer already set up in Saudi Arabia:

- Document legalization and Professional Verification: 4–8 weeks (diplomas, apostilles, criminal record...).
- Work visa invitation and consular processing (including Tasheer biometrics): typically 2–4 weeks, but can stretch longer during peak periods or if additional checks are requested.
- Travel to Saudi Arabia and local medicals, insurance and work-permit activation: 1–3 weeks.
- Iqama issuance and digital availability on Absher/Tawakkalna: often within days after all upstream steps are complete, but delays occur if any registration (GOSI, insurance, fingerprints) lags.

Overall, a realistic end-to-end window is 8–12 weeks from contract signature to Iqama in hand for a first-time assignee who needs full diploma legalization and, where applicable, Professional Verification.

Frequent pain points for companies and assignees

Fragmented document workflows:

- Coordination between French and Saudi authorities often creates unexpected rework.
- Early engagement with an experienced visa agent and clear responsibility mapping between HR in France and HR in Saudi Arabia are critical.

Medical exams and approved clinics

- Using non-approved medical centers (either in France or in Saudi Arabia) can invalidate tests. Always verify that the clinic is on the embassy or Ministry of Health list.

Professional Verification and skill classification

- Employers sometimes underestimate the time needed to book and pass skills exams or to reconcile job titles, contracts and qualifications with SSCO job codes.
- Misalignment can trigger visa refusal, inability to renew work permits or forced job-title changes.

Family dependants

- Family residence visas depend on the principal worker's profession, Iqama validity (often at least three months remaining) and minimum salary (commonly from SAR 3,500 per month for spouse and children sponsorship).
- Civil-status documents and translations for spouse and children follow the same complex legalization route, extending lead times.

Exit-reentry and travel planning

- Residents must obtain exit-reentry visas before leaving Saudi Arabia, either single-entry or multiple-entry. Recent e-government tools allow employees to initiate single-entry requests via Absher, but employers can still object in certain circumstances.
- Failure to observe these rules can result in fines or complications on re-entry.
- For a corporate newcomer, the most effective mitigation is to treat immigration and Iqama as a dedicated workstream in the overall market-entry plan, with clear ownership, contingency time built into project critical paths, and the systematic use of local visa and relocation specialists alongside internal HR and legal teams

FNRCO Brief Overview

Head Quarter Address:

Omar Ibn Abdulaziz Road, Corner Al Ihsa Street, Al Malaz District,Saudi Arabia

Google Map Coordinates: https://maps.app.goo.gl/nkdaDgLyEoBcEhaP7

Founded in 2001, **First National Human Resources Company (FNRCO)** has established itself as a premier provider of HR and Payroll Services, headquartered in Saudi Arabia. With a robust **capital base of 175 million Saudi Riyals**, FNRCO delivers tailored workforce solutions across both public and private sectors. As an ISO-certified organization, we adhere to the highest international standards of quality and operational excellence, ensuring our services meet the demands of a rapidly evolving global market. Our expertise lies in sourcing, deploying, and managing skilled professionals, with over 7,000+ employees currently deployed and serving more than **180+ clients**. FNRCO plays a key role in advancing **Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030** by fostering economic growth, promoting localization, and driving innovation, positioning us as a trusted partner for businesses seeking sustainable and scalable workforce solutions.

30+
year of professional experience

100k+
Ready working visas

50+
Global Partners

180+
Valuable Clients

7000+
Employees

60k+
Employees successfully mobilize to work in Saudi Arabia

⃁ 2B+
Revenue

2. Premium residency

By FNRCO GROUP

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2. Premium residency

Saudi Arabia's Premium Residency (Iqama Privilege) is a sponsor-free residency regime designed to attract investors, senior executives, and high-potential talent who want a long-term base in Saudi Arabia.

MAIN CATEGORIES AND FINANCIAL THRESHOLDS

Premium Residency now combines the original "unlimited vs. renewable" model with several targeted products launched in 2024–2025.

Unlimited (permanent) Premium Residency

- One-time government fee of SAR 800,000 (approx. USD 213,000).
- Indefinite stay, subject to continued compliance with program conditions.

Limited duration renewable Premium Residency

- Granted for 1 year, renewable, with an annual fee of SAR 100,000.
- Can be renewed an unlimited number of times if conditions and fee payment are maintained.

Five new economic/talent tracks

- **Special Talent Residency** for senior executives and highly qualified health or scientific professionals and researchers. Typically valid for 5 years, with professional criteria rather than a pure cash fee.
- **Gifted Residency** for award winning or officially recognized talents in culture and sports, subject to nomination and financial solvency tests. Usually 5-year fixed term.
- **Investor Residency** for investors holding a MISA licence and commercial registration and investing at least SAR 7 million in Saudi Arabia while creating at least 10 jobs within the first two years. Confers permanent premium residency upon fulfilling the investment and job-creation conditions.
- **Entrepreneur Residency**, two sub-tracks:
  - Track A: minimum SAR 400,000 investment and 20% equity in a Saudi start-up. 5-year premium residency (renewable once if criteria are maintained).
  - Track B: minimum SAR 15 million investment and 10 jobs created in year 1 and 10 in year 2. Grants permanent premium residency once goals are met.
- **Real Estate Owner Residency** available to individuals owning Saudi real estate with a value of at least SAR 4 million that meets program criteria. Residency is linked to continued ownership (duration fixed to the period of qualifying real-estate ownership).

All categories require proof of clean criminal record, valid passport, medical fitness, financial solvency, and a lawful source of funds. Detailed criteria and fee levels are specified on the Premium Residency Center's portal and can be updated by regulation.

2. Premium residency

RIGHTS AND BENEFITS FOR HOLDERS

Premium Residency offers rights that go significantly beyond standard expatriate residency and removes the need for a Kafala-style sponsor.

Key core benefits

Sponsor-free residence and work:

- Live in Saudi Arabia without a local sponsor and enter/exit without the usual exit-re-entry visas.
- Work in the private sector for any employer or establish and manage your own businesses under the Investment Law, subject to licensing.
- Exemption of the principal holder from the Nitaqat (Saudization) program as an employee, while their companies remain subject to normal Saudization rules.

Investment & business ownership:

- Conduct business and invest directly in Saudi entities, including 100% foreign ownership in permitted sectors, under a MISA license, without needing a Saudi shareholder solely for sponsorship purposes.
- Ability to hold board and executive positions and to open, acquire or exit local companies more flexibly than under standard work visas.

Real-estate rights (under evolving zoning rules):

- Acquire and usufruct real estate in most parts of the Kingdom, including residential and commercial properties, subject to sectoral and zoning restrictions.
- New real-estate regulations are progressively opening controlled access for premium residents to property in Makkah and Madinah under specific conditions from 2026 onwards.

Family sponsorship and lifestyle benefits:

- Sponsor spouse, children under 25, and in many cases dependent parents. Certain tracks also allow special-needs children and unmarried adult daughters to be included.
- Ability to recruit domestic workers, access high-quality healthcare and education, and use GCC-national queues at many airports.

Financial and administrative advantages:

- Exemption from expatriate and dependent levies for the principal holder and registered dependents.
- Visa-free entry and exit, fewer administrative touchpoints, and a more predictable long-term status, which is particularly valuable for C-suite executives and founders who need regional mobility.

The exact bundle of rights can vary by category, so applicants should confirm the current benefit matrix for their chosen product.

PREMIUM RESIDENCY APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Initial eligibility check and choice of track

Candidate selects the appropriate category (e.g. Investor, Entrepreneur, Real Estate, Special Talent, Gifted, Unlimited, Limited-duration) and confirms that core requirements are met: age, health, clean criminal record, minimum investment or income, professional profile.

2. Online application and documentation

Submission is made via the Premium Residency Center portal (pr.gov.sa), including:

- Passport copy, CV and professional track record.
- Criminal-record certificates and medical reports.
- Bank statements and proof of funds. For investor and entrepreneur tracks, detailed business plan, MISA license, commercial registration, and corporate documents.
- For real-estate category: title deeds, valuation reports and land registry extracts demonstrating the minimum SAR 4 million asset value and regulatory compliance.

3. Due-diligence and security checks
Authorities conduct background checks on the individual and the source of funds, review investment and employment plans, and may request clarifications or additional documentation.

4. Decision and fee payment
If approved in principle, the applicant receives a conditional approval and pays the relevant government fee (e.g. SAR 800,000 one-off, SAR 100,000 annual fee, or no upfront “cash” fee but binding investment/job-creation obligations for Investor/Entrepreneur tracks).

Once all conditions are fulfilled (including job-creation milestones where applicable), the Premium Residency permit is issued and the holder and family obtain their Premium Residency Iqamas.

Recent practice suggests typical processing times of a few weeks to several months, depending on the complexity of the case, the category chosen, and the completeness of documentation. High-value investor and executive cases tend to be prioritized, but timelines are not guaranteed.

Profiles for Premium Residency

Premium Residency is particularly relevant for:

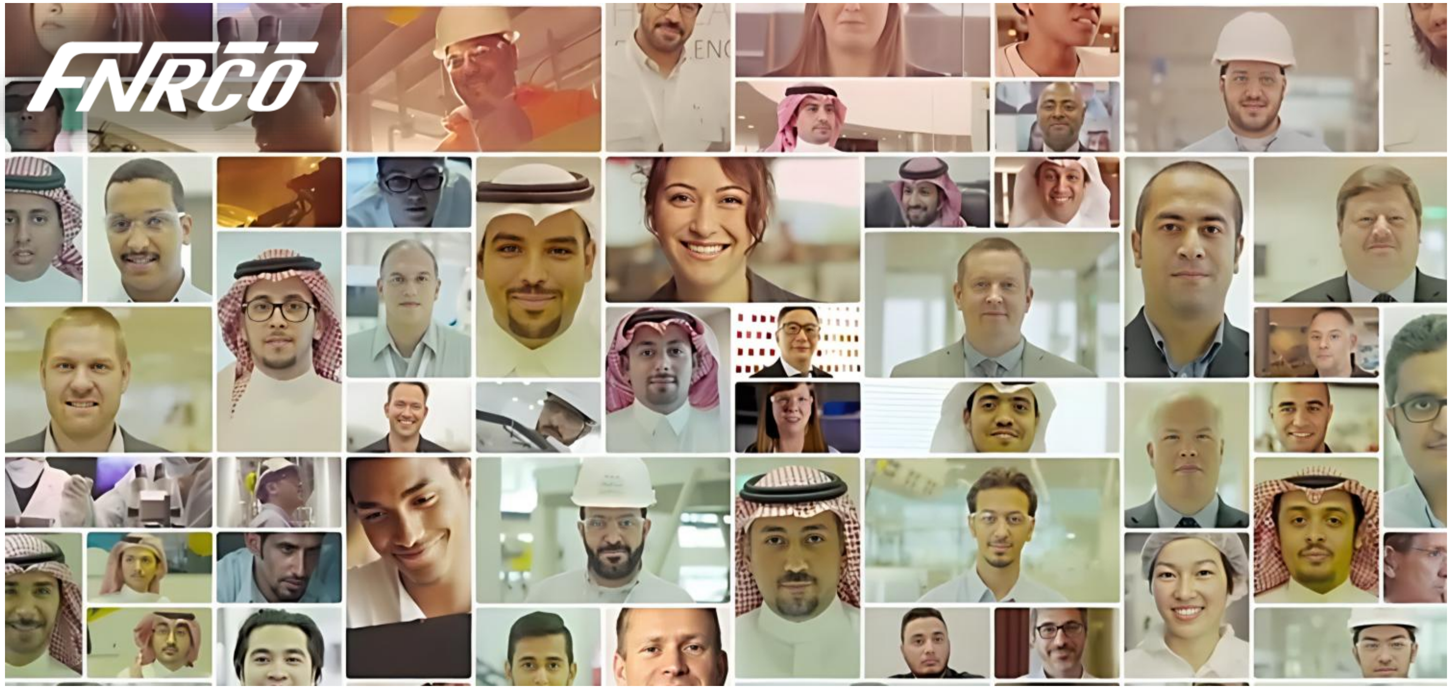
- Strategic investors who want a long-term operational base in Saudi Arabia, including family settlement, direct asset ownership, and the ability to oversee multiple ventures without relying on a local sponsor.
- Regional and global C-suite executives who need mobility, clarity on their status independent of any one employer, and the ability to sit on boards, hold equity and manage side investments while living in the Kingdom.
- Founders and scale-up entrepreneurs building Saudi-centric or regional platforms, who benefit from sponsor-free residency, the ability to hire talent, and a clear path to permanent status as they meet investment and job-creation thresholds.
- High-value specialists and recognized talents in health, science, technology, culture and sports who wish to base themselves in Saudi Arabia to support Vision 2030 projects while anchoring their family and professional life in the Kingdom.

For CEOs and top managers, Premium Residency can be seen as an additional strategic tool alongside the Regional Headquarters (RHQ) program and traditional foreign-investment licenses: it offers personal and family security, flexibility of movement, and direct ownership rights, while the corporate vehicle (e.g. RHQ, LLC, JSC) carries the operational licenses, tax profile and Saudization obligations.

FNRCO Services and Solutions

WHAT WE DO?

- ✓ Employee Secondment Services
- ✓ Employer Of Record (EOR)
- ✓ Ajeer Employment Services
- ✓ Contingent Workforce Services
- ✓ Employee Outsourcing
- ✓ Immigration Services
- ✓ Workforce Management Services
- ✓ Payroll Services Solution
- ✓ Recruitment Service Solution
- ✓ Saudization Solutions
- ✓ HR Services
- ✓ Supplemental Manpower (SMP)
- ✓ Saudi Recruitment Services
- ✓ Employee Outsourced
- ✓ Augmented Staff
- ✓ Work Visa Services



COMPREHENSIVE WORKFORCE SOLUTION

FNRCO provides a wide range of workforce solutions designed to support business flexibility and operational efficiency. Our services include Employee Secondment, Employer of Record (EOR), Ajeer Services, Contingent Workforce, Employee Outsourcing, Supplemental Manpower (SMP), and Augmented Staffing. These solutions enable organizations to quickly scale their workforce while ensuring full compliance with local labor regulations and minimizing administrative complexities.

INTEGRATED HR, RECRUITMENT, & COMPLIANCE SERVICES

FNRCO also offers end-to-end support across Recruitment, Saudi Recruitment, Saudization, Payroll, Workforce Management, HR, Immigration, and Work Visa Services. We manage the full employee lifecycle from hiring to payroll and compliance, providing efficient, reliable, and fully compliant solutions that allow our clients to focus on their core operations.

3. Employment law, Nitaqat and Saudisation

By FNRCO GROUP

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SAUDI EMPLOYMENT LAW

Saudi employment is governed by the Labour Law, its Implementing Regulations and ministerial decisions issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD). Roles are filled under Arabic or bilingual contracts registered on Qiwa digital platform.

Key contract and working-time rules

Contract form: Written contract is mandatory, with role, place of work, compensation, working hours and leave clearly specified. Foreign employees remain in practice on fixed-term or project-linked contracts, but once renewed repeatedly can be treated as open-ended.

Working hours: 8 hours per day and 48 hours per week is the general maximum. Reduced to 6 hours per day and 36 hours per week during Ramadan for Muslim employees.

Overtime: Typically paid at 150% of the basic hourly wage for work beyond the statutory limits or on weekly rest days and public holidays.

Termination: Objective reasons and notice are required for open-ended contracts (60 days for monthly-paid employees), subject to detailed rules on misconduct, performance and disciplinary procedures. Fixed-term contracts generally cannot be ended early without contractual or statutory grounds.

End-of-service benefit: All employees (Saudi and expatriate) are entitled to an end-of-service gratuity, usually calculated as 15 days' wage per year for the first five years and 30 days' wage per year thereafter.

Key protections and recent reforms

Equal treatment and anti harassment: Regulations prohibit workplace harassment (including sexual harassment) and require employers to implement internal complaint mechanisms and protect confidentiality.

Health and safety: Employers must provide a safe workplace, comply with rules on heat-exposure and report occupational injuries; injured workers are entitled to salary continuation for defined periods and compensation where disability arises.

Social insurance: Contributions to GOSI (pension, unemployment and occupational injury) are mandatory for Saudi nationals, while employers pay occupational hazard contributions for expatriates.

Maternity leave: Amendments coming into force in 2025 increase statutory maternity leave to 12 weeks on full pay, with at least 6 weeks to be taken after childbirth and the remainder flexibly taken starting up to 4 weeks before the expected delivery date.

Paternity and other leave: The 2025 reform package also clarifies paternity-leave timelines and expands compassionate and bereavement entitlements.

Social-insurance adjustments: GOSI parameters (contribution rates and coverage rules) have been fine-tuned in recent years, including a step-up in pension-related contributions for Saudi nationals to around 22% in some schemes; payroll cost modelling should therefore use up-to-date GOSI circulars rather than legacy percentages.

FROM KAFALA TO CONTRACT-BASED EMPLOYMENT

Historically, expatriate employment in Saudi Arabia was governed by the "kafala" sponsorship system, under which the individual's right to reside, work and travel was tightly linked to a single sponsoring employer. Since 2021 this framework has been progressively replaced by a contract-based model under the Labour Reform Initiative (LRI), with a further shift in 2025 widely described as the effective abolition of kafala.

Key practical changes for employers and expatriates

Job mobility: Eligible foreign workers may now change employers under defined conditions (e.g. after completion of the contract term or minimum service period, or in cases of employer breach), using Qiwa to request transfer rather than relying on a "no-objection certificate."

Exit and re-entry: Foreign employees can request exit-re-entry and final-exit permits directly through Absher or related platforms. Employer approval is no longer a legal prerequisite, though automatic notifications are sent to the employer, and outstanding fines or judicial restrictions may still block travel.

Contract centrality: The digitally registered employment contract is now the core reference for rights and obligations, which increases the importance of precise drafting and Qiwa alignment for non-standard benefits, variable pay or mobility clauses.

NITAQAT: CATEGORIES AND IMPACT ON EXPATRIATE HIRING

The Nitaqat program is Saudi Arabia's national workforce localization scheme. It classifies each private sector establishment into colour coded tiers according to the percentage (and, for some roles, the seniority and pay level) of Saudi nationals in its workforce. Nitaqat now interacts with almost every HR process, from visa issuance to work-permit renewal.

Nitaqat categories and what they mean

- **Red:** Establishments with the lowest Saudization performance for their activity and size band. They face severe restrictions: inability to obtain new work visas, change expatriate occupations, renew work permits or transfer sponsorship to their entity, and difficulty opening new files or branches.
- **Low Green:** Slightly improved status, but still restricted. Typically, unable to obtain new work visas or change expatriate occupations, although renewal of existing work permits and continued participation in Nitaqat calculations is allowed.
- **Medium Green:** Compliant but not leading performers. These companies can apply for new expatriate visas (subject to quota limits), change occupations, renew permits, and transfer expatriates in and out, with standard processing times.
- **High Green:** Strong performers within their peer group. They receive faster service levels, more flexibility in recruitment and transfers, and in some cases priority access to certain government services or programs.
- **Platinum:** Top-tier Saudization performers. Besides full access to all recruitment and mobility tools (new visas, occupation changes, transfers, renewals), they frequently benefit from expedited processing, eligibility for selected incentive schemes, and reputational advantages in dealing with regulators and large Saudi counterparties.

For multinational groups, the critical point is that Nitaqat is calculated at the establishment level (and in some cases across unified numbers), so individual CRs or branches can sit in different tiers. Major tenders and government counterparties increasingly look at Saudization status as part of supplier qualification.

SAUDIZATION QUOTAS AND INDICATIVE NITAQAT THRESHOLDS

Nitaqat thresholds are activity and size-specific, and are updated periodically through MHRSD ministerial decisions. There is no single "one-size-fits-all" national percentage. For detailed, up-to-date quotas applicable to a particular company, HR teams should always consult Qiwa or official MHRSD circulars for the relevant activity code.

The information provided here does not replace official tables. It shows typical expectations drawn from public guidance and sectoral decrees, to give a general view of Saudization requirements in 2026.

Retail & Wholesale trade

- Employees: 10-49
- Saudization rate: 20-25% High Green / 30%+ Platinum
- Note: frontline sales and cashier roles are reserved for Saudis. Specialised retail (e.g. gold & jewellery) may have higher ratios.

- Employees: 50-199
- Saudization rate: 25-30% High Green / 35-40% Platinum
- Note: Larger chains are expected to build Saudi talent pipelines for supervisory roles

Construction & Contracting

- Employees: 10-49
- Saudization rate: 10-15% High Green / 20%+ Platinum
- Note: Technical engineering offices are subject to separate decrees requiring Saudization of engineering professionals (often 30%+ where 5+ engineers are employed)

- Employees: 200+
- Saudization rate: 15-20% High Green / 25-30% Platinum
- Note: Heavy-labour roles remain more open to expatriates, but mid-management localisation is encouraged.

Manufacturing & Industrial

- Employees: 10-49
- Saudization rate: 15-20% High Green / 25-30% Platinum
- Note: Higher expectations where operations benefit from upskilling Saudis in production, maintenance and HSE

- Employees: 200+
- Saudization rate: 20-25% High Green / 30-35% Platinum
- Note: Export-oriented plants and those benefiting from incentives are closely monitored on localization.

Professional services (including consulting, legal, accounting)

- Employees: 10-49
- Saudization rate: 30-35% High Green / 40-50% Platinum
- Note: Professional licences and many front-office roles have elevated Saudisation expectations.

- Employees: 50-199
- Saudization rate: 35-45% High Green / 50%+ Platinum
- Note: Senior advisory, client-facing and HR functions are priority localization targets.

3. Employment law, Nitaqat and Saudisation

ICT & Digital

- Employees: 10-49
- Saudization rate: 25-30% High Green / 35-45% Platinum
- Note: Targeted localization of IT, cybersecurity and support roles is accelerating under HRSD decrees

Hospitality & Tourism

- Employees: 10-49
- Saudization rate: 25-30% High Green / 35-45% Platinum
- Note: Front-desk, reservation and customer-facing roles are reserved or strongly prioritized for Saudis.

These percentages are indicative. Exact thresholds can differ by activity code, sub-sector and establishment size, and are subject to change.

Additional information

For CEOs, three practical principles usually hold across sectors:

- A single Saudi employee is usually sufficient for very small entities (often up to 5 workers), but once an establishment grows beyond 10–15 employees, percentage-based requirements become binding.
- Crossing from Medium to High Green and then to Platinum often requires not only more Saudis but also better quality of jobs (e.g. higher salaries and more senior roles), because some schemes count weighted Saudi equivalents rather than simple headcount.
- Sector-specific decrees (for engineers, healthcare professions, customer-service roles...) can effectively impose mini-quotas within an establishment, regardless of overall Nitaqat colour.

Empowering Your Business Journey in Saudi Arabia

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4. Social security, GOSI and benefits

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Saudi Arabia's social protection framework combines mandatory social insurance (GOSI), compulsory health insurance, unemployment and work-injury coverage, and a growing layer of company-level benefits.

GOSI CONTRIBUTIONS FOR SAUDI NATIONALS AND EXPATRIATES

The General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI) administers compulsory social insurance for all employees, with different coverage for Saudi nationals and expatriates.

For Saudi nationals

For Saudi nationals in the private sector, three insurance branches are relevant in practice:

- Annuities (old-age, disability and survivors' pension)
- Unemployment insurance (SANED)
- Occupational hazards (work-injury insurance)

Under the framework that remained in place up to 2024, total contributions for Saudi employees reached 21.5% of the contributory salary, split as follows:

- 18% for annuities (9% employer, 9% employee)
- 1.5% for SANED unemployment insurance (0.75% employer, 0.75% employee)
- 2% for occupational hazards, paid by the employer only

For expatriates

For expatriates, the standard position in the private sector is more limited:

- They are covered by GOSI only for occupational hazards, funded by a 2% employer contribution on the applicable wage base.
- They are not covered by the Saudi annuities and SANED branches, unless a specific bilateral social-security agreement or special regime applies.

Contributions are calculated on contributory wage (basic salary plus cash allowances that meet GOSI's definition, up to a statutory ceiling), and must be declared and paid monthly on the GOSI online system.

Recent and upcoming changes to pension schemes

In July 2024 a new Social Insurance Law was approved, introducing a revised pension contribution scheme for newly insured civilians who have no previous contribution history before the law's effective date. Implementation for this cohort started on 1 July 2025.

For this new group of employees:

- The initial total pension-branch rate is set at the familiar 18%, but
- It will increase gradually by 0.5% per year for four consecutive years (cumulative +2 points), reaching a total rate of 20% shared between employer and employee according to the ratios set by GOSI.

This creates, in practice, two pension regimes in your workforce:

- Employees insured before the cut-off date remain under the legacy annuities rates.
- Employees insured for the first time after that date move onto the phased-increase schedule.

4. Social security, GOSI and benefits

MANDATORY HEALTH INSURANCE AND THE IQAMA-EMPLOYER LINK

Saudi Arabia operates a mandatory health insurance regime for employees in the private sector, overseen by the Council of Health Insurance (CHI). Employers are responsible for arranging compliant health-insurance policies for their staff through approved insurers.

Key features that matter for foreign employers:

- Health insurance is de facto a condition for the issuance and renewal of the Iqama (residence permit) for expatriate employees.
- The insurance policy's details are electronically linked to the employee's record in government systems; if coverage lapses, Iqama-related processes (renewal, status changes) can be blocked.

Employers typically also extend coverage to eligible dependents, as part of a competitive package and, in practice, is often necessary to secure family Iqamas for key expatriates.

In addition, from 2026, temporary work visas and shorter-term assignments are increasingly subject to proof of medical insurance as part of the visa process, closing a previous gap where some short-term business travellers might not have been under local health cover.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE, OCCUPATIONAL INJURY AND COMPANY-LEVEL BENEFITS

SANED unemployment insurance

SANED is the statutory unemployment insurance scheme for Saudi nationals covered by GOSI and working in the private sector.

Key points:

- Contribution rate: 1.5% of the contributory wage, split equally between employer and employee (0.75% each).
- Eligibility: Saudi nationals who lose their job for reasons beyond their control, meet minimum contribution and conditions, and actively seek re-employment.
- Benefit: a time-limited monthly cash benefit calculated as a percentage of the employee's previous average wage, decreasing over time, combined with re-employment support.

For employers, SANED does not replace normal end-of-service benefits, which remain due under the Labour Law, but provides a national safety net that can support workforce transitions when implemented in compliance with the law.

Occupational injury coverage

Occupational hazards insurance under GOSI provides compulsory cover for work-related injuries and occupational diseases for both Saudi and expatriate employees.

Employers must:

- Pay the 2% occupational-hazards contribution on the contributory wage base for all employees.

- Implement appropriate health-and-safety measures, maintain incident records and cooperate with GOSI and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) in case of workplace accidents.

Benefits to employees (or their dependents) can include:
- Medical care costs related to the work injury.
- Daily compensation for temporary disability.
- Lump-sum or pension benefits in the case of permanent disability or death linked to work.

Failure to comply with reporting and prevention obligations can expose the employer to financial penalties and, in severe or repeated cases, to enhanced liability for damages beyond GOSI's standard coverage.

Company-level benefits practices

Beyond statutory GOSI and health-insurance requirements, market practice in Saudi Arabia, especially for international and large local companies, includes a broader package of cash and in-kind benefits.

Typical elements for mid-to-senior staff and expatriate managers include:
- Housing allowance or company provided accommodation, often 20–30% of base salary for white-collar roles, and sometimes higher for expatriates on mobility packages.
- Transportation allowances or company car/driver arrangements, particularly where commuting distances are significant.
- Enhanced group medical insurance (wider networks, higher limits, international coverage) beyond the basic statutory minimum.
- Education allowances for expatriate dependents, particularly in Riyadh, Jeddah and the Eastern Province where international schools are concentrated.
- Annual airfare allowances or tickets for home leave, usually once per year for the employee and sometimes for dependents.
- Discretionary performance-related bonuses, long-term incentive plans for senior leaders, and supplemental savings or retirement plans for key talent, in addition to statutory end-of-service benefits.

For CEOs and top managers, three strategic considerations stand out:
- Statutory social-security and health-insurance obligations are non-negotiable and tightly integrated with immigration, tax and labour-law enforcement.
- The design of company-level benefits, particularly housing, schooling, medical and mobility components, will largely determine your ability to attract and retain Saudi and expatriate leaders in a highly competitive talent market.
- Upcoming changes to GOSI pension rules for newly insured Saudis introduce a structural upward drift in social-insurance costs, which should be embedded in long-term workforce and cost-planning scenarios.