

The Essential Guide to the Iqama Transfer Process in Saudi Arabia

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



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Table of Contents

01	Introduction	P1
02	What is an Iqama?	P2
03	Types of Iqama.....	P3
04	Iqama Transfer: A Detailed Overview	P4
05	Conclusion	P6
06	Case Studies & References.....	P7

01

INTRODUCTION

In Saudi Arabia, foreign workers' employment is controlled by the Iqama system, which sets residency and work rules. Changing jobs used to be difficult because it required employer consent, limiting worker mobility.

Recent reforms have made this process easier, giving expatriates more job flexibility and freedom. This guide explains the Iqama transfer process, covering the requirements, procedures, and key points to consider.



02

WHAT IS AN IQAMA?

An Iqama is a combined residency permit and work visa issued to foreign workers in Saudi Arabia. It serves as the official identification document for expatriates, allowing them to live and work legally in the Kingdom.

This essential document is issued by the Ministry of Interior and must be renewed periodically. The Iqama includes information such as the worker's name, nationality, employer's details, and job title.



03

TYPES OF IQAMA

Different types of Iqamas are issued based on the individual's profession and purpose in Saudi Arabia.

The primary categories include:



Professional

Issued to skilled workers with professional degrees.



Business

For business owners, investors, and entrepreneurs engaged in commercial activities.



Domestic Worker

Issued to household helpers, including maids, drivers, and gardeners.



Dependent

For family members (spouse, children) of Iqama holders, allowing them to reside in Saudi Arabia.

Each type has specific eligibility criteria and documentation requirements, which must be meticulously followed during the application process.

IQAMA TRANSFER: A DETAILED OVERVIEW

An Iqama transfer, also known as a sponsorship transfer or "Naqal Kafala," signifies a change in the legal sponsorship of an expatriate worker. This process typically occurs when an employee switches employers.

The Qiwa platform makes the process easier and faster, reducing the need for the current employer's approval.

Below are the technical details of the process:



Auto-Transfer (Employer Approval Not Required)

1. Eligibility Criteria:

- ▶ The employee must have completed at least one year of employment with their current sponsor.
- ▶ A valid work contract must be in place.

2. Process:

- ▶ The new employer initiates the transfer request through the [Qiwa platform](#).
- ▶ The Ministry of Labor (MOL) reviews and typically approves the request within 24 hours.
- ▶ The employee is responsible for paying the transfer fee, which varies based on the number of transfers previously completed:

First transfer: 2,000 SAR

Second transfer: 4,000 SAR

Third transfer: 6,000 SAR

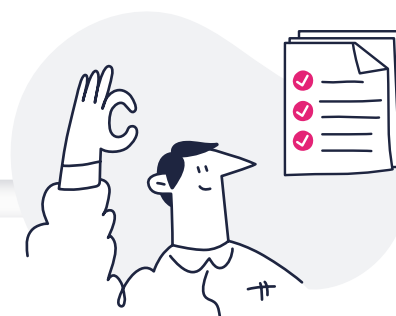
Court Approval Process (Required in Specific Situations)

1. Situations Requiring Court Approval:

- ▶ The current employer is non-cooperative or absent.
- ▶ Wage arrears or other disputes with the current employer.

2. Process:

- ▶ The new employer submits a court ruling along with the transfer request on the Qiwa platform.
- ▶ The MOL reviews the court ruling and updates the sponsorship information accordingly.



Additional Considerations

1. Expired Passports or Criminal Records:

- ▶ Expired passports or unresolved criminal records can impede the transfer process. It is essential to ensure all personal documents are up-to-date and any legal issues are resolved before initiating a transfer.

2. Traffic Violations:

- ▶ Employees must ensure that they have no outstanding traffic violations. A history of traffic offenses might affect the approval of the Iqama transfer.

3. Transfer Costs:

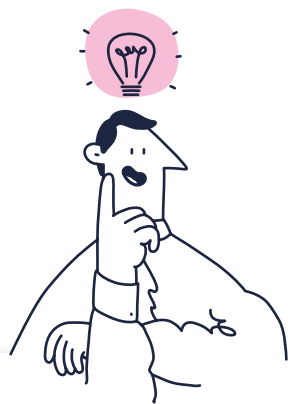
- ▶ While some employers may attempt to have employees share the transfer costs, Saudi labor law mandates that the new employer covers the entire expense of the Iqama transfer.

05

CONCLUSION

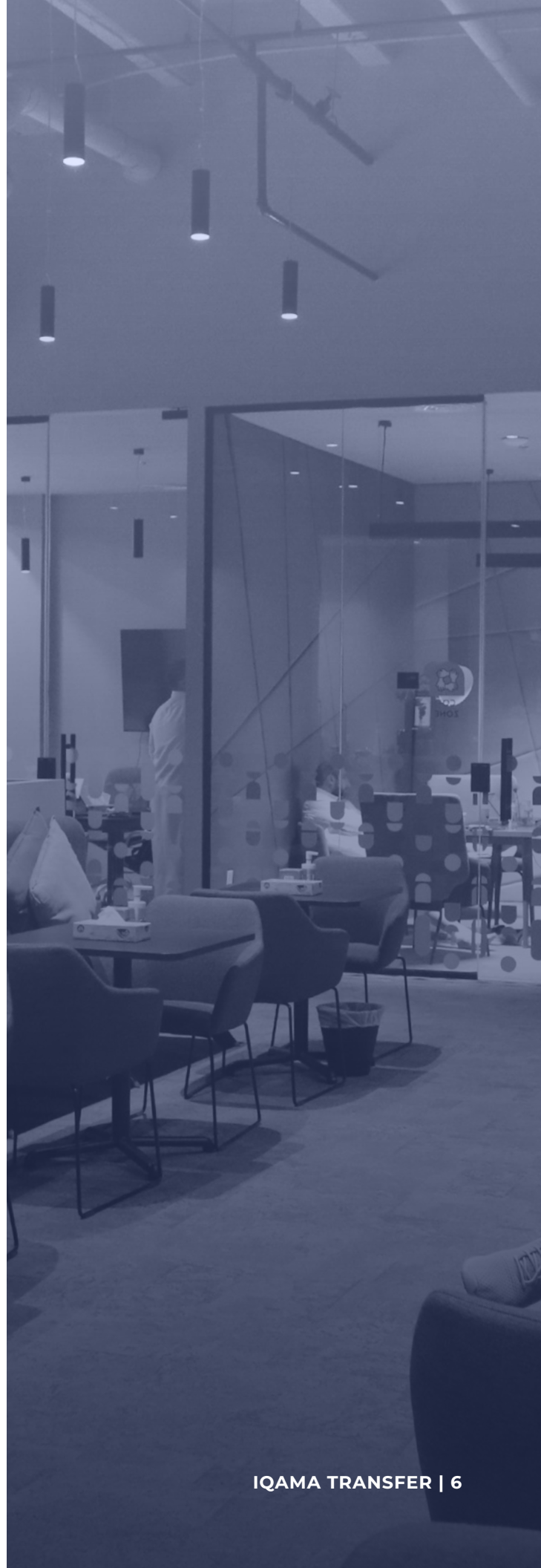
The new Iqama transfer process in Saudi Arabia gives foreign workers more freedom to change jobs without being tied down by their current employers.

By understanding the requirements and procedures, expatriates can easily manage the transfer process and transition to their new jobs.



For detailed and official information, visit:

- ➔ [Saudi Ministry of Labor and Social Development](#)
- ➔ [Qiwa Platform](#)



06

CASE STUDIES & REFERENCES

To gain deeper insights into the Iqama transfer process, you can explore the following resources:

- ▶ [Guide to Iqama Transfer](#)
- ▶ [Saudi Arabia Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development](#)
- ▶ [Expatriates Guide to Iqama and Visa Services](#)

Have you recently undergone an Iqama transfer in Saudi Arabia? Share your experience in the comments below!





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