

IAM – Middle East Regional Update

IAM is grateful to the members of the regional Core Members Management Board, Shankar Ram (Delight International Movers) and Ankit Bhalla (Leader Relocations) for this content.

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA (KSA)

Operations across Riyadh, Dammam, and Jeddah remain functional but disrupted. Western gateways such as Jeddah and King Abdullah Port are comparatively stable, while Eastern Province gateways remain heavily impacted. While we continue to receive inquiries and conduct surveys, confirmation levels remain low due to the high shipping rates.

Ocean Freight Imports: Only limited FCL activity observed. Imports via Dammam and Al Jubail remain heavily impacted, with diversions increasing via Red Sea gateways.

Ocean Freight Exports: No LCL services currently. FCL exports face high war surcharges and low confirmation levels due to elevated rates.

Air Freight: Only Emirates and Saudi Airlines are operating. Capacity is limited and rates remain high.

Additional Transit Time: Ocean freight delays range from 1–6 weeks; airfreight delays average 3–10 days.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (DUBAI and ABU DHABI)

Origin and destination services have slowed significantly. Destination services are impacted due to container delays. Most of the Origin services is marked as Pack and Move to Storage. While majority of the clients wait for normalcy in the freight rates, fewer clients decide to move forward with higher freight rates. Storage seeks higher demand at the moment.

Ocean Freight: Until early April, there was almost no movement in import shipments as many containers held up in transit. Recently, some progress has been observed, with a limited number of containers successfully cleared through key ports - Jebel Ali and Khor Fakkan Port. This indicates gradual normalization and further delays are still expected.

Despite ongoing disruptions, alternative export routing solutions have been established. Shipping lines are currently accepting export cargo via neighboring countries – KSA and Oman. However, freight rates have increased significantly compared to pre-disruption levels, and service coverage remains limited, with not all destinations or ports currently accessible. Nonetheless, export operations continue, and regular container stuffing and dispatch activities are being maintained.

Air Freight: Operational but at significantly elevated costs. Emirates and Etihad operate in full swing but with higher rates, booking confirmation delays seen up to 1 week.

Additional Transit Time: Average delays of 2–4 weeks for Sea Shipments, 5-7 Days for Air Freights.

BAHRAIN

Operations have largely normalized but remain volatile due to regional security conditions. Almost limited moves and very few pack-outs scheduled. Governments and logistics stakeholders are coordinating to maintain essential supply chains, but non-essential cargo faces delays. Intermittent port closures, airspace restrictions, and infrastructure disruptions have impacted service reliability.

Ocean Freight: Imports and exports remain irregular with routing primarily via Jeddah. Export bookings remain restricted or suspended on multiple trade lanes, especially ISC–Upper Gulf.

Air Freight: Limited airline availability; priority given to essential cargo. Only Gulf Air operates at the moment. Similar constraints as imports: Reduced uplift capacity. Priority given to essential and high-value cargo. Increased use of alternative hubs (Saudi Arabia / Oman) and road feeder services.

Additional Transit Time: Ocean delays range from 2–6 weeks; airfreight delays range from 3–10 days. Real examples show +USD 5,000 per container in some rerouted shipments.

QATAR (DOHA)

Ocean Freight: Limited imports and exports. Rates remain approximately 400% higher than normal, with most cargo routed via Jeddah. We are receiving regular inquiries and conducting surveys; however, due to the high shipping rates, confirmation levels remain very low despite providing quotations. Currently, only feeder vessels have started departure and arrival at the port. As per the Port Authority, normal operations are expected to resume soon.

Air Freight: Rates are elevated, but services continue. Air freight export is operating as usual. However, currently only Qatar Airways is departing from Hamad International Airport. Although the charges are higher, we have received a few confirmed air export shipments from retail clients.

Land Freight: Land movements across GCC countries remain the most reliable mode of transport. Export and import by land are continuing as usual from all Middle East countries. Land shipment confirmations are higher at the moment. We are currently handling land exports from Doha to KSA, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait. Similarly, we are also receiving import confirmations by land from the same destinations.

Additional Transit Time: Ocean shipments face delays of 30–45 days.