taylor root



Private practice salary guide Middle East

2025-2026

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Introduction

As the world continues to grapple with various geopolitical issues including the war in Ukraine, Chinese real estate problems and developing recessionary signs in Europe, the Middle East continues to outperform as the GCC economies diversify and attract investment into their evolving financial markets and infrastructure projects.

The Middle East was able to bounce back earlier than most of the world post Covid and continues to push forward with ambitious state-backed investment plans. This has inevitably been a focus for many firms across the region who are hoping to capitalise on these investments and hang onto growth projections for the coming year.

This relatively young region boasts over 50 of the top international, magic circle and US firms who operate in an ever changing and developing market, offering a refreshing and exciting change from working in more established international legal markets like London, New York or Singapore.

The majority of expat lawyers in the region are from major common law jurisdictions like the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa and enjoy the opportunity to work on a mix of top-quality international work as well as get involved in client development. The region can also offer top performing lawyers in mid-level international or regional firms in their respective countries take a step up to more globally recognised practices.

Recruitment needs of firms in the Middle East vary from year to year, however, the majority of roles which exist are for lawyers with between one and eight years' experience.

More junior and senior roles do exist, and we are very happy to speak to those lawyers interested in making the move to the region. Please do get in touch for a more detailed and confidential discussion around your own particular situation.





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Market overview

The Middle East recruitment market continues to be an attractive option for international lawyers, offering superb career opportunities.

It is fast paced, exciting and continues to attract global organisations to the region. It offers lawyers cutting-edge legal work, great client contact, relatively small but high-quality teams and impressive salary packages.

Dubai and Abu Dhabi continue to act as key legal hubs in the Middle East and both international and domestic law firms have had a very active year to date.

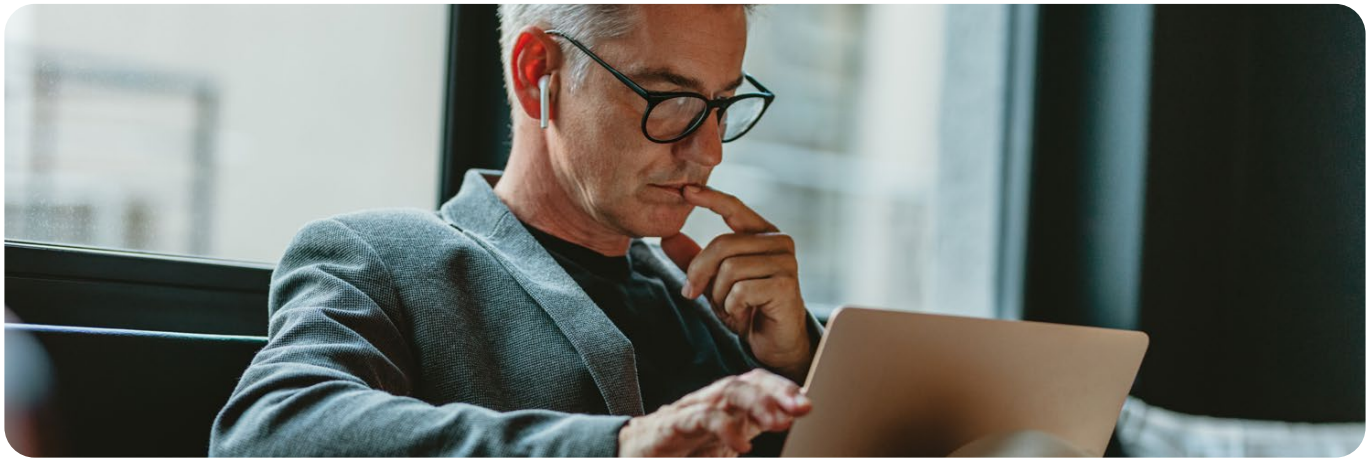
The hosting of Expo 2020 in the aftermath of Covid was a key driving force in the recovery of the UAE's key construction, real estate and tourism sectors. Other government policies including full foreign ownership of companies, loosened restrictions on Dubai's remote working visa and entitlement to remain in the UAE long term through the golden visa initiative continue to drive investment growth in the country.

The UAE has also experienced several significant legal developments in recent times, including the (legal) acceptance of cohabitation of unmarried couples and reforms to intellectual property rights and laws. There has also been marked changes to labour law for the private sector allowing more flexible working for employees and less red tape for businesses, as well as the Ministry of Finance (MoF) announcement of the introduction of federal corporate tax effective from financial years starting on or after 1 June 2023. These reforms will further bolster the economy as the authorities continue efforts to create a more favourable business environment and improvements to social equality.

The UAE's drive for development has been mirrored and even surpassed by the complete planned overhaul of the economy of Saudi Arabia, the largest in the region, under the guise of Vision 2030.

This envisages wholesale changes to both the economic and social landscape of the country with the aptly named "giga projects" at the forefront, building new cities, developing cultural and touristic attractions and opening up the country to large scale foreign investment.

Law firms have also seen significant change, with new regulations allowing them to operate in the country for the first time without the need for an association with a local Saudi firm. The market has already seen a number of new entrants and other firms have been looking to develop their presence on the ground to take advantage of the increasing opportunities.



Practice areas that remain consistently busy for law firms include corporate M&A, banking and finance, and projects/construction, whilst areas such as dispute resolution, TMT/IP, employment and real estate remain buoyant.

Salaries remain a hot topic in a market where firms have to pay attention to retention of their talent just as much as they do their attraction strategies given the premium and advantage of hiring those with regional experience. This also has to marry up with the price sensitivity for firms in an increasingly competitive market.

Regardless, salaries in the Middle East continue to be very competitive and have the significant benefit of being tax free, with lawyers from heavily taxed jurisdictions doubling or sometimes tripling their take home income. This complements a very attractive lifestyle and allows families to thrive, with a number of UAE schools having been named among the top 100 private schools in the world.

It's fair to say the market has become more focused and strategic over the past year, but firms remain optimistic and are continually on the lookout for talent to further strengthen and bolster their capability in the region.

Now is the ideal time to get in touch to discuss your career, what options are available to you and where Taylor Root can help.

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Partner search and recruitment

Lateral Partner search is a long and engaged process at the best of times and firms will naturally be assessing the validity of business cases as they look to build and future proof their regional business.

With the market in a current upswing and regional opportunities abounding, firms are monitoring and implementing their future growth strategy for the upcoming decade.

Whilst established partners with significant proven books of business will always be able to find willing interested parties, firms continue to be interested in commencing conversations with up and coming salaried Partners, or those that are at high level Senior Associate or Counsel level who may be blocked for whatever reason within their current firms, but still possess a reasonable book of business and contacts to build upon.

With our widespread coverage and depth of knowledge of the market, we are well placed to advise upon strategy and market mapping initiatives to make sure a firm is well placed to explore opportunities which exist in the coming period, as well as advising individuals or teams looking to test the market and assess different platforms.



Private practice salaries

The results of this year's survey culminated from the continued strength of the market in the region and requirement to compete with more established markets which had seen their own salaries increase substantially over the past two to three years.

Firms still remain watchful of the market and often have to remain adaptable within their bands to both attract and retain lawyers, particularly given the current shortage of suitably qualified individuals.

PQE	US firms	Magic circle	International firms	Regional firms
NQ	480,000 - 720,000	480,000 - 500,000	400,000 - 450,000	320,000 - 380,000
1 year	520,000 - 760,000	520,000 - 550,000	440,000 - 480,000	350,000 - 410,000
2 years	560,000 - 800,000	560,000 - 600,000	470,000 - 530,000	380,000 - 450,000
3 years	600,000 - 850,000	600,000 - 650,000	510,000 - 580,000	400,000 - 500,000
4 years	640,000 - 900,000	650,000 - 700,000	540,000 - 650,000	440,000 - 575,000
5 years	680,000 - 950,000	700,000 - 750,000	580,000 - 720,000	480,000 - 650.000
6 years	720,000 - 1,000,000	750,000 - 800,000	620,000 - 780,000	540,000 - 700,000
7 years	760,000 - 1,050,000	800,000 - 850,000	650,000 - 825,000	600,000 - 800,000
8 years+	800,000+	800,000+	750,000+	700,000+

Indicated salaries are in AED.



Roles we recruit



Partners and teams

Partner Search is core to our business and Taylor Root has long been established as a global market leader. Every year, our Partners and Directors are responsible for brokering and negotiating many of the headline lateral Partner moves in the global legal market.

Over the last 30 years, our international, domestic and boutique law firm clients have retained and partnered with us when seeking to make senior strategic hires. It is these long-standing relationships that are fundamental to our success. We also represent individual Partners and Teams who seek our guidance when exploring targeted lateral opportunities, as well as Senior Associates and Special Counsels looking to move vertically into Partner roles.



Paralegals and document review

Hiring paralegals to undertake administrative, routine or process- driven work can have a huge impact on the efficiency of a department in a law firm. It maximises the profitability of the work being undertaken and ensures that qualified lawyers have time to focus on complex work and also to dedicate time to developing client relationships. Our team recruits paralegals on both an interim and a permanent basis.

We are regarded as one of the leading providers of document review professionals and have supplied teams of between one and thirty lawyers and paralegals at short notice to a large number of law firms. Our expert and efficient service ensures that our clients can quickly resource a document review project with the correct specialist skills.



Associates

Taylor Root has been recognised as the market leading organisation for recruiting Associates, Senior Associates and Special Counsels into law firms for three decades. We believe that the strength and quality of our relationships with our law firm clients is unmatched in the market.

We connect the best lawyers with the broadest range of opportunities at law firms, domestically and internationally. Our specialist teams of mainly legally qualified consultants, recruit lawyers for the world's leading law firms including top-tier, mid- tier and boutique law firms, both domestic and international.

About Taylor Root

Established in London in 1989, and operating out of Dubai since 2007, Taylor Root is the world's leading legal and compliance recruitment consultancy.

With offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Singapore, Dubai, London, Birmingham, Dublin, Amsterdam, New York and Orlando, our international presence attracts candidates from the world's leading law firms, financial institutions and multinational organisations.

We work with businesses across multiple industries within commerce, financial services and banking with clients ranging from FinTech start-ups through to global investment banks.

We assist non-qualified legal professionals including ISDA Negotiators, as well as qualified solicitors, from Associates to Parter level, through to In-house Counsel, General Counsel, Head of Legal and Chief Legal Officers.

Our services include contingent and retained search, permanent, temporary and interim recruitment as well as consultancy solutions

Our reputation is built on the performance of specialist teams of recruiters who pride themselves on providing honest, professional and effective advice to clients and candidates.

From pioneering specialist recruitment in particular locations, to shaping how our clients have approached hiring, our influence is evident everywhere.

Today, we have a truly global network of search and recruitment experts. Put simply, no one can match our global reach, or our history.

Get in touch

If you would like more information on Middle East legal recruitment in the private practice market or to discuss hiring for your team, please contact Shane or Ruchi on the deails below.



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