



PRIVATE PRACTICE POWERLIST 2023
ARBITRATION | MIDDLE EAST

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For over 30 years, *The Legal 500* has been analysing the capabilities of law firms and sets across the world. In the research team, we constantly track which sections are used most by clients, and this often matches up with an increase in that section from submissions, client referees, requests for interviews and feedback – all of which make up the research process. The international arbitration rankings are consistently one of our most used and read editorial sections and one of the most competitive areas for law firms, sets, lawyers and barristers. This very much chimes with what we constantly hear anecdotally in the market, with international arbitration frequently cited as the preferred form of dispute resolution.

The *Arbitration Powerlist: Middle East* showcases the leading practitioners working in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Iran, Iraq and Jordan, as well as UK barristers with a prominent practice in the Middle East. It remains a region full of opportunity, and we hope the following guide will provide an insight into this fascinating and ever-evolving disputes market. Arbitration laws in the region are continuing to modernise; the UNCITRAL Model Law has been adopted either in whole or in part in a number of jurisdictions. The number of arbitration institutions in the Middle East also continues to grow, reflecting the growing interest in and use of arbitration in the region.

We were delighted to see successful teams not just embracing diversity but also actively attributing a substantial part of their success to it. It is widely believed

that unprecedented technological developments have and will impose a wider focus on the generational diversity, which is critical to the growth and development of international arbitration. In a region as multicultural as the Middle East, the teams that currently thrive the most seem to be those that have a solid understanding of both the local culture and laws but also can bring in expertise and be open to ideas from everywhere.

All of this points to the Middle East being one of the greatest jurisdictions in international arbitration. The practitioners featured on the following pages showed an impressive depth of expertise in a variety of sectors, highlighting insights on the most important qualities and skills of the top arbitrators in the region, as well as their future goals.

As with any publication of this nature, we were faced with the dilemma of including as many worthy candidates as possible without diluting the significance of their listing. After lengthy discussions across the editorial team, we decided that a larger selection was necessary to provide sufficient nuance and balance across so many different markets.

To collate the list of leading practitioners we have of course drawn on our research team's expertise. We have also approached leading arbitrators, arbitral institutions, and general counsel active in the market to help create a definitive list of the leading arbitration counsel in the Middle East today. As such, we think the listing reflects those practitioners that are deemed the gold standard by businesses. ■



Elena Lewis | Researcher

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James Abbott, Clifford Chance		
Susie Abdel-Nabi, Clyde & Co		
Adel Abdulhadi, Al Oula Law Firm (Adel Abdulhadi & Partners)		
Celine Abi Habib Kankari, Kennedys		
Faisal Adnan Baassiri, Faisal Adnan Baassiri Law Firm in association with Ashurst LLP		
Bushra Ahmed, KBH Limited		
Salih Ahnaish, Hadeef & Partners		
Dali Al Habboub, Dentons		
Raya Al Harthy, Trowers & Hamlins		
Ali Al Hashimi, Global Advocacy and Legal Counsel		
Hassan Al Khater, Hassan Al Khater Law Office		
Saif Al Mamari, Addleshaw Goddard		
Zeenat Al Mansoori, Zeenat Al Mansoori & Associates		
Hani Al Naddaf, Al Tamimi & Company In Association with Adv. Mohammed Al Marri		
Noor Al Rayes, Al Tamimi & Company		
Rashid Al Saad, Sharq Law Firm		
Fawwaz Al Saeed, Al Markaz Law Firm		
Qutaiba Al Saeed, Al Markaz Law Firm		
Essam Al Tamimi, Al Tamimi & Company		
Ali Ismael Al Zarooni, Horizons & Co Law Firm		
Sultan Al-Abdulla, Sultan Al-Abdulla & Partners		
Saud Al-Ammari, Dr. Saud Al-Ammari Law Firm		
Salaheddin Al-Bashir, International Business Legal Associates (IBLAW)		
Khulaif Al-Enezee, EKP Legal		
Mohammed Al-Ghamdi, Mohammed Al-Ghamdi Law Firm - In Association with Norton Rose Fulbright US		
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92 Mohammed Aldhabaan, Aldhabaan & Partners in association with Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP		
Nazanin Aleyaseen, K&L Gates		87
89 Elham Ali Hassan, Elham Ali Hassan & Associates		
74 Nasser Ali Khasawneh, Eversheds Sutherland		62
51 Hassan Ali Radhi, Hassan Radhi & Associates		
1702 Omar M H Aljazy, Aljazy & Co		30
Dr Sultan Almasoud, Dr. Sultan Almasoud & Partners in association with Shearman & Sterling		150
10 Nasser Alrubayyi, Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP		123
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Stephen Burke, Addleshaw Goddard		10
Adrian Chadwick, Hadeef & Partners		76
Parnika Chaturvedi, King & Wood Mallesons		102

Joseph Chedrawe, Covington & Burling LLP
 Paul Coates, Clifford Chance
 Adrian Cole, Independent arbitrator
 Jonathan Collier, Pinsent Masons
 Nayla Comair-Obeid, Obeid & Partners
 Rebecca Copley, Eversheds Sutherland
 Soraya Corm-Bakhos, Watson Farley & Williams
 Nicholas Craig KC, 3 Verulam Buildings
 Damian Crosse, Pinsent Masons
 Wissam F Dagher, DLA Piper
 Anneliese Day KC, Fountain Court Chambers
 Ahmad Ehtesham, T&S Associates
 Ghassan El Daye, Charles Russell Speechlys
 Claudia El Hage, al Marri & el Hage Law Offices
 Salim El Meouchi, Badri and Salim El Meouchi
 Alec Emmerson, Independent arbitrator
 Dorine Farah, Baker Botts
 Alain Farhad, Mayer Brown
 James Fox, DWF
 Yacine Francis, Allen & Overy LLP
 Abdel-Ghaffar Freihat, Freihat Attorneys
 John P Gaffney, Al Tamimi & Company
 Patrick Gearon, Charles Russell Speechlys
 Amir Ghaffari, Ghaffari Partners
 Sarah Gonem, Zamakhchary & Co
 Daniel Greineder, McNair International LLC
 Michael Grose, Clyde & Co
 Andreas Haberbeck, Derayah LLC – Saudilegal
 Ahmad Hafez, Charles Russell Speechlys
 Alain Hannouche, Hannouche Associates

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Raza Mithani, Conselis Law
 Nooree Moola, Gibson Dunn
 Ziad Najm, Albert and Ziad Najm Law Firm
 Karim J Nassif, Nassif Arbitration
 Kirsten O'Connell, Allen & Overy LLP
 Ziad Obeid, Obeid & Partners
 Aiman Odeh, 4 New Square Chambers
 Matthew Page, Hadeef & Partners
 Jennifer Paterson, K&L Gates
 Stuart Paterson, Herbert Smith Freehills
 Jan Paulsson, Independent arbitrator
 Erik Penz, Kennedys
 Philip Punwar, Outer Temple Chambers
 David Quest KC, 3 Verulam Buildings
 Henry Quinlan, DLA Piper
 Khawar Qureshi KC, McNair International
 Chatura Randeniya, Afridi & Angell
 Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, Haya Rashed
 Al Khalifa Law Firm
 Mark Raymont, Pinsent Masons
 Rupert Reed KC, Serle Court
 Kim Rosenberg, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
 Nada Sader, Derains & Gharavi International
 Marwan Sakr, SAAS Lawyers-Avocats
 Cyrus Shafizadeh, Atieh Associates
 Nicholas Sharratt, Stephenson Harwood LLP
 Sara Sheffield, Charles Russell Speechlys
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Important Regional Arbitration Centres – Middle East

Bahrain Chamber for Dispute Resolution

Location: Bahrain

GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre

Location: Bahrain

The Lebanese Arbitration and Mediation Center (LAMC) of the Chamber of Commerce

Location: Lebanon

Qatar International Center for Conciliation and Arbitration – QICCA

Location: Qatar

Saudi Center for Commercial Arbitration (SCCA)

Location: Saudi Arabia

Abu Dhabi Commercial Conciliation and Arbitration Centre (ADCCAC)

Location: UAE

Dubai International Arbitration Centre (DIAC)

Location: UAE

SAAS Lawyers-Avocats

Business message

SAAS (Sakr, Awwad, Abi-Najem and Sakr) is a boutique full-service law firm with international reach, with offices in France, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates. The firm was established by lawyers with more than 80 years of combined experience acquired in various international and domestic law firms, and with different and multidiscipline backgrounds in major areas of economy, commercial law and dispute resolution.

The firm's lawyers are regularly retained by individuals and corporations as well as states and state-controlled enterprises in a wide range of industries including construction, defence and aerospace, energy, financial services, infrastructure, insurance, intellectual property, management consulting, manufacturing, mining, technology, telecommunications, transportation and retail. They also advise international and professional organisations and diplomatic missions.

The firm's dispute resolution practice, led by Marwan Sakr, consists of lawyers with multi-jurisdictional and multicultural experience of domestic and international litigation and arbitration, often with Middle Eastern elements. Our core team of dispute resolution lawyers has acted as counsel, expert witnesses or arbitrators in a wide range of domestic and international cases in sectors and industries ranging from power, construction, engineering and infrastructure to energy, oil and gas, mining and resources, commercial agencies, banking and financial markets, shareholders disputes, public international law, European law, human rights, foreign investments and international trade. SAAS lawyers have been involved in a number

of landmark cases that have been reported in legal journals. They also appear before international courts and tribunals including the European Court of Human Rights.

The arbitration team combines the knowledge of practitioners who are experts in their various niche fields and who have conducted arbitration under various laws and jurisdictions across Europe, the Middle East and Africa and several arbitration rules (ICC, ICSID, BCCI, CRCICA, DIAC, GCCCAC, LCIA, QICCA, ADCCAC, ad-hoc and UNCITRAL). Cases dealt with by our lawyers either as counsel or arbitrators involved the application of the laws of jurisdictions such as France, Switzerland, Luxembourg, England and Wales, Egypt, UAE (including DIFC and ADGM), Qatar (including QFC), Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Oman, OHADA countries, Lebanon and Syria.

The firm maintains and continues to develop an extensive international network of alliances and affiliated law firms, ensuring that its clients receive top-quality integrated services by working with the foreign law firms that will best meet their needs. The firm is admitted to practice before the DIFC courts in Dubai and fully licensed as a legal consultancy in the UAE. Many of the firm's lawyers are admitted to practice in several European, US and Arab jurisdictions. The firm's multi-jurisdictional approach also allows its lawyers to act directly in cross-border and international matters and to keep up to date with the latest international developments in the legal field. SAAS lawyers are also involved in academic activities and lecture and publish extensively in their fields of expertise and practices.



Marwan Sakr

SAAS Lawyers-Avocats

Job title: Co-founding partner

Location: Beirut

Number of years in practice: 33

Number of years as an arbitrator: 13

Admissions: Beirut Bar (1989), Paris Bar (2006), advocate DIFC courts, Dubai (2009), legal consultant UAE (RAK, 2017)

Main sectors covered: Commercial and international work and disputes, banking and financial law, insurance and reinsurance, commercial agencies, corporate law, conflict of laws and jurisdictions, public law and government contracts, foreign investments, intellectual property, infrastructure projects (construction, energy, oil, telecommunications, Turnkey and BOT projects), joint ventures, project finance, defence and aerospace, European and Middle Eastern law

Languages: English, French, Arabic

Marwan Sakr is a co-founding partner of Sakr, Awwad, Abi Najem & Sakr (SAAS) Lawyers|Avocats. He was called to the Bar in Beirut (1989) and Paris (2006) and admitted as an advocate before the DIFC courts in Dubai (2009). He became a chartered arbitrator (CIArb, UK) in 2011 and is licensed as a legal consultant in the UAE (RAK) since 2017. He has been appointed specialist counsel (avocat spécialiste) in international, European and Arab laws by the French National Council of the Bar (CNB) in 2020. His practice encompasses commercial and international work and disputes (especially international arbitration and litigation), banking and financial law, insurance and reinsurance, commercial agencies, corporate law, conflict of laws and jurisdictions, public law and government contracts, foreign investments, intellectual property, infrastructure projects (construction, oil, telecommunications, energy, Turnkey, EPC and BOT projects), joint ventures, project finance and European and Middle Eastern law. He has arbitrated, advised and appeared as counsel

and expert witness in more than 75 arbitration proceedings in relation to these matters under various laws and jurisdictions (France, England and Wales, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Egypt, UAE, Qatar, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Syria and OHADA countries) and arbitration rules (ICC, ICSID, CRCICA, BCCI, DIAC, DIFC-LCIA, QICCA, ADCCAC and UNCITRAL). He also has significant experience negotiating major contracts involving these matters in Europe and the Middle East. Marwan also serves as an expert witness on Arab and French law.

Marwan has advised and assisted the Lebanese Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Lebanon and the Association of Banks of Lebanon, as well as the Lebanese Ministry of Administrative Reform and the Investment Authority of Kurdistan in the drafting and assessment of several financial, economic and investment laws and regulations.

Marwan started practising as a trainee then an associate of one of the most prominent litigation firms in Beirut. Between 1994 and 2000, he was a senior associate of AMNCC in association with Gide Loyrette Nouel in Beirut and Riyadh, before becoming a partner of Hennaoui & Sakr and then participating in the founding of SAAS. He also practises as an international arbitrator from chambers in London.

Marwan acted as chairman, member of tribunal and sole arbitrator under several arbitration rules (ICC, BCCI, UNCITRAL, ad-hoc and Lebanese CPR). He is on the panel of arbitrators for the Saudi Center for Commercial Arbitration (SCCA), the Dubai International Arbitration Centre (DIAC), the DIFC-LCIA, the GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre in Bahrain, the Arbitration Centre of the French-Arab Chamber of Commerce in Paris and the panel of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb) in London. He is also a member of the ICC Commission on Arbitration and ADR and its Task Force on Maximizing the Probative Value of Witness Evidence, the ICC Arab Arbitration Group and the ICC Lebanon's Arbitration Group. Marwan is one of the Lebanese government's appointees to the ICSID panel of conciliators.

In conversation with...

What are the most impressive arbitrations you have worked on as counsel?

I have worked with my team on a number of large cases involving important points of law. Among these cases was an ICC arbitration in Paris against a US party, in which I successfully secured a preliminary award extending the arbitration clause to the US entity's parent company (a large listed corporation) in application of the French 'Group of Companies' doctrine. Another example was again an ICC case seated in an Arab Gulf country against a very large property developer in that country in relation to a mega-construction project, in which I was able, with my team, to convince the tribunal that some provisions of a FIDIC-based model contract were incompatible with the law of that particular Arab Gulf country and thus should be ignored by the tribunal. But definitely, the most impressive case to date was a recent ICC case in Paris under French law, between a client and a major defence and aeronautic European manufacturer, against which we secured a substantial money award in a case involving allegations of corruption and legal issues and evidence under French, UK and US law. Currently, we are representing a Middle East sovereign in a very large ICC case in Paris brought by a European consortium in an energy-related dispute involving complicated technical issues and sensitive policy matters.

In all of these cases, the opposing party(ies) were represented by senior arbitration lawyers from 'magic circle' international law firms/silks from first-tier chambers.

I am also representing several major Lebanese insurers in ad-hoc arbitration proceedings against a regional reinsurer in relation to claims arising from the Beirut Port explosion, in a 'test case' that will have a great impact on the ongoing debate over the coverage of the events which caused the explosion by reinsurers and its social and economic consequences in Lebanon.

In addition, I am currently representing a party against France before the ECtHR on the grounds of refusal by French courts to enforce an international arbitral award issued in a North African jurisdiction, in a very mediatised saga in which the losing party in the arbitration brought default criminal proceedings against my clients and the arbitral tribunal in his Arab Gulf country, which led to their default conviction. The claim has now passed the admissibility test (which represents only a rate of 10% of the global number of cases admitted before the ECtHR).

What do international counsel facing a matter in the jurisdiction need to know about the local arbitration scene?

Of course, the first thing to know is reasonable knowledge about the local law and legal system which should often be completed with a more expert knowledge with local legal expertise. But knowledge of the law is not enough, knowledge of local mentalities is also very important; especially when dealing with local arbitrators, judges and counsel, the approach to the same legal principle may vary from one jurisdiction to another. Last but not least and especially in the Middle East context, knowledge of the language can be of paramount importance to clearly understand the legal context. My personal experience has told me that reading the legal materials in their original language is often necessary to fully grasp their meaning. Translated material could not always suffice to show the very meaning of foreign judgments or legal authorities.

You are the co-founding partner of SAAS Lawyers-Avocats. What advice would you give to someone looking to found their own practice?

It is a real challenge. The choice to launch one's own practice may not be always easy, especially nowadays, where it may be merely securing joining a large international structure (although this is not always guaranteed). Nevertheless, this is a decision that should be based on a sound feasibility study in view of the surrounding circumstances. Also the size and business model of the practice is very

important, a solo-practitioner can benefit from a lot of flexibility on several levels (for example, work from home, and low-pressure financial charges), while a mid-sized boutique like SAAS could be more challenging as you do not always have the flexibility of life-work balance as a partner, while having the financial constraints of a law firm without the benefit of a large international structure. While I fully understand that joining a larger structure could be more secure for lawyers at the early stages of their career, I personally think that the barristers' chambers business model and the emerging 'chambers practice' model for law firms could be a viable option for someone in the middle stages of their career as they can benefit from the advantages of the solo-practitioner practice together with the advantages of being a member of a team.

Which recent political, economic or regulatory changes have impacted your practice the most?

Definitely, I would say the Covid-19 pandemic. I think it has changed forever the way law is practised, including the lawyers' business models. The growing trend of distance working and the change in the landscape of law offices (rather focusing on meeting spaces than the traditional working offices) are here to stay. On a personal level, the Lebanese successive crisis in the last years (the banking, economic and political crisis in addition to the Beirut Port explosion) has had a huge impact on my practice, in view of the fact most of my team is based in Lebanon and/or have strong ties to Lebanon. Fortunately, we have now overcome this by expanding the practice (and relocating some) both in the UAE and France, while keeping strong ties with Beirut.

What qualities make a successful arbitrator?

Good knowledge of the facts and the law applicable to the case, a lot of patience, and most importantly a 'commercial' and pragmatic approach to the case. We should not forget that the role of an arbitrator is to resolve the dispute in strict accordance with the applicable law while avoiding legal statements on issues of principles. This is not always an easy task! ■

