

Shipping update on the recent events in the Middle East

Sue Kelly, Operations Director at [Publiship](#) and BIC Board Member has today (03/03/26) provided the following update on the recent events in the Middle East which have the potential to affect book shipping:

Air Freight

The Middle East airlines, Emirates, Qatar, Etihad carry significant airfreight volume and with their services out of action at the moment there will be a big capacity issue which will push up costs significantly. Priority is being given to perishable goods. Whilst we avoid moving books by air as much as possible advances may be affected. Air consignments from Dubai may be delayed.

Sea Freight

Over the past 24 hours:

- MSC has instructed vessels operating in or enroute to the Gulf to proceed to designated safe shelter areas until further notice.
- Maersk has advised of operational disruption in the UAE, Oman and Qatar, including precautionary warehouse closures and reduced on-the-ground staffing.
- Regional airspace and landside operations are also experiencing disruption.

While outlook is uncertain, there will no doubt be operational consequences.

For cargo moving to / from the Gulf region:

- Immediate vessel delays are likely where ships have been instructed to hold position.
- Port operations may experience backlogs once movements resume.
- Warehousing and inland transport capacity may be temporarily constrained.

For wider Asia–Europe trade lanes, effects may include:

- Schedule instability if services are re-routed.
- Potential capacity tightening if vessels are delayed or rerouted.
- Upward pressure on bunker and war risk surcharges.
- Risk of congestion at major transshipment hubs if vessel arrivals bunch.

At present, not all carriers have suspended transits, but most are reviewing movements on a voyage-by-voyage basis. The situation remains fluid and operational decisions may change quickly.

Road Freight

Fuel surcharges will be the main issue over the coming months if the situation is on-going. This will be a global issue and will affect all movements.

The situation is very fluid at the moment, please keep in contact with your forwarder for news of your individual consignments.

BIC will continue to monitor the situation.

03/03/2026