A Region in Transition: Why AIX Group Still Believes in Dubai

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Few years have reshaped the Middle East's business landscape as quickly as 2026. Since the conflict involving Iran began at the end of February, the region has faced pressures that have rippled through global markets, changed how companies operate and tested the confidence of residents and investors alike.

Companies put their people first

In the first weeks of the conflict, the priority for many international firms was the safety of their employees. In March, Citigroup and Standard Chartered cleared their Dubai offices and moved staff to remote work, while Bloomberg allowed Gulf-based employees to relocate temporarily outside the region. HSBC closed its branches in Qatar until further notice.

Many residents made similar decisions for personal reasons. According to the Financial Times, around 30,000 British nationals, roughly one in eight, left the UAE in the weeks after hostilities began, many of them choosing to wait out the uncertainty in Europe.

Markets under pressure

These changes, combined with wider global volatility, have reshaped regional markets. Real estate has felt the impact most clearly. According to Cavendish Maxwell, the value of residential sales in Dubai fell 47% year on year in the third quarter of 2026, and S&P Global Ratings estimates that prices fell by 5–15% between the end of 2025 and September. Financial markets have faced their own pressures, from currency and commodity volatility to diverging central bank policies and stricter compliance standards in cross-border banking.

Signs of confidence

Yet the story is not only one of retreat. The number of companies in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) grew at a record pace in the first half of 2026, with firms including Citadel and JP Morgan International Advisors opening regional offices. In October, US trading platform Robinhood chose DIFC as its regional headquarters. Early in the conflict, HSBC chief executive Georges Elhedery said the bank's "conviction in the GCC's fundamentals and its future is unchanged".

Time and patience

AIX Group, headquartered in the Burj Khalifa, shares that conviction. The company believes Dubai and the wider Middle East remain a region of great opportunity for business, but that time is needed: for markets to settle, and for businesses to adapt to a new environment.

For AIX, adapting has meant restructuring the programmes affected by current market conditions, rather than selling assets at today's prices. The company recognises that this asks a great deal of its clients, and says their patience during this period is deeply appreciated. AIX will continue to keep clients informed directly as the process moves forward.

Looking ahead

The Middle East that emerges from 2026 may look different from the region of two years ago. For companies willing to adapt and stay committed, AIX believes it will remain a place worth building in.

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Company Contact:

AIX Investment

T. +97144560000
E. marketing@aixinvestment.com
W. https://www.aixinvestment.com

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