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Mayer Brown Opens Abu Dhabi Office With 5-Lawyer Team

Global energy practice co-head Alexandre Chequer will lead the office, which the firm sees deepening its ties to the Middle East and beyond.

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Alexandre Chequer, global energy practice co-head and partner with Mayer Brown. Courtesy photo

Mayer Brown is relocating five lawyers, including a global co-head of its energy practice, to launch an office in Abu Dhabi, as a growing number of Global 200 law firms view the emirate as the Middle East's next major legal hub.

The firm said it expects the Abu Dhabi office to support regional clients that invest internationally and global clients that are expanding in the Middle East. Mayer Brown also has an office in Dubai, where its bench includes 10 partners, a counsel, and six associates, according to the firm's website.

“Abu Dhabi is central to global energy, investment and capital flows,” Mayer Brown Chair Jon Van Gorp said in a statement to Law.com International. “Our new office builds on our established Dubai platform and underscores our long-term commitment to the UAE and the wider Middle East.”

Alexandre Chequer, global co-head of Mayer Brown’s energy practice, will relocate from Rio de Janeiro to Abu Dhabi to lead the firm’s expansion in the region as office managing partner. The initial Abu Dhabi team also includes energy partners Priya Shah and Paulo Rage, who are relocating from Dubai; energy lawyer John King; and lawyer Walid Mughrabi, who is relocating from Houston.

The firm said it plans to add local lawyers to the new office, which has a capacity for 25.

Chequer described the Abu Dhabi opening as an important step in strengthening Mayer Brown’s global platform and connecting the region with key markets across the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia.

“I see the potential not only for outbound work but also inbound,” said Chequer, ticking off a list of clients that Mayer Brown already works with in the region, including Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and U.S. oil major Chevron.

Chequer said Mayer Brown already has a license to operate in Abu Dhabi, where he has purchased an apartment to cement the move. The license is through the Abu Dhabi Global Market international financial centre (ADGM).

Chequer’s arrival in the Middle East is a homecoming of sorts. Though a native of Brazil, Chequer’s father is from Lebanon.

“I feel comfortable with the people and the culture,” said Chequer. “The Latinos and Arabs are very similar. In the U.S. you can close a $2 billion deal by conference or video calls. In the Middle East and Latin America, you cannot get a deal closed without face-to-face meetings.”

But his move to Abu Dhabi almost didn’t happen.

Chequer spent much of 2026 advising Brazilian presidential hopeful Flávio Bolsonaro on energy policy. Bolsonaro lost his presidential bid to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva by a sliver in an October runoff vote. Had Bolsonaro won, Chequer would have likely joined the Bolsonaro administration.

“Brazil missed a great opportunity and I’m here,” said Chequer. “That’s okay, I’ll keep making money.”

Going forward, Chequer plans to split his time mostly between Mayer Brown offices in Abu Dhabi, Rio and Houston.

The Abu Dhabi office will work closely with Mayer Brown lawyers across Dubai and the firm's wider global network, Mayer Brown said. Energy will be a key strength, the firm said, with the platform also supporting clients on M&A, fund formation, investment management, infrastructure, finance, disputes and other complex cross-border matters.

The firm sees the office advising national champions, sovereign-backed institutions and international investors on matters within the region and worldwide.

The launch also builds on Mayer Brown's continued investment in its global energy group, including 18 lateral hires across the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East in 2025 and 2026 to date.

"We are seeing increased demand from Abu Dhabi government entities, particularly on energy matters," Nick Kouvaritakis, global co-head of energy and global head of LNG at Mayer Brown, said in a statement. "A permanent presence led by Alexandre Chequer, backed by our regional and global capabilities, will help us serve those clients more effectively and advance our broader Middle East strategy."

Over 75 legal service entities are listed in the Abu Dhabi Global Market Professional Services Providers Directory, alongside firms licensed in onshore Abu Dhabi. Global law firms active in Abu Dhabi include A&O Shearman and White & Case. This month, Italy's top-ranked BonelliErede also secured a license from the Abu Dhabi Global Market.

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