



## [IFLR Middle East Awards 2024](#)

In **October 2024**, IFLR will host the prestigious IFLR Middle East Awards in Dubai. The awards celebrate legal innovation and excellence across the region, with a focus on cross-border dealmaking and the firms, teams and lawyers behind it. The shortlist will be published on IFLR.com, and the winners will be revealed at the awards ceremony.

This document invites you to put forward entries on behalf of your firm/team and explains how this should be done. IFLR may have sent the awards invitation to more than one contact at your firm. Please coordinate the responses from your organisation and alert us if you are not the appropriate contact.

### [Our research](#)

IFLR conducts detailed research using a variety of sources, including direct entries and interviews with private practice lawyers, in-house counsel and corporate finance professionals. Written entries of deals, teams, firms and individuals are a vital part of the process, and are the best way to highlight your work. Final decisions are made by an internal IFLR panel, and are entirely independent.

You can find details of the award categories and of how to enter below. You may enter as many categories as you wish.

**These awards cover the period July 1 2023 to June 30 2024. All deals must have closed in this period to be considered.**

**These awards are for private practice law firms and practitioners, as well as in-house teams and individuals.**

Contact names supplied as part of entries will **not** be used for any purposes other than research and will be contacted without reference to the firm supplying the details.

### [Deadlines](#)

All [entry forms](#) must be uploaded [HERE](#) by **July 10 2024**.

For any queries, including extension requests, please contact:

[Danielle Ngwana-Joseph](#) – Head of IFLR research

[James Wilson](#) – Director EMEA research

## Key guidelines

- IFLR focuses on international deals – all deal of the year entries must be cross-border, except for the Domestic Deal of the Year category
- The **review period is July 1 2023 to June 30 2024**; all deals must have reached financial close in that period – ongoing transactions will not be considered. All work/projects as part of team entries must have had key milestones in this period
- IFLR rewards legal innovation and nothing else; we are not interested in how big, high-profile, or quick a deal was
- Law firms win team and firm awards for their roles on the most innovative deals. Team size or volume of work are not relevant; we therefore encourage firms to prioritise Deal entries
- We recommend that you submit **no more than three deals** per category (i.e., three deals for M&A, three for Project Finance etc). It is unlikely that more than three stand a chance of being shortlisted. We will only require a brief explanation of why a deal was legally innovative. It is therefore possible to be very concise with entries
- Key parties involved in a deal and a description of why it is innovative must be publishable, otherwise we cannot include the deal in the shortlists
- Some team, individual and firm award categories do have their own criteria, which are outlined below and on the entry forms
- Rather than send lots of forms, you will notice that the submission documents are multi-purpose – please use the templates for all your entries
- Please mark any **confidential information in red** on the submission forms
- Entry forms can be downloaded [here](#), and must be submitted via the dedicated [portal](#)

## IFLR1000

All IFLR1000 submission and research will automatically be considered within IFLR awards decision making. If your firm has submitted to and taken part in the 2024 IFLR1000 research, there is no need to repeat information. This applies primarily to the Team of the year and National firm of the year categories. You are free to make entries to include updates or additional information, but you can also make brief reference to your IFLR1000 submissions.

## New for 2024

This year, IFLR is has launched several new categories for in-house teams and individuals (p.5) and will be recognizing in-house teams' contributions in the deal awards. For private practice, IFLR has expanded categories for individual lawyers (p.7) and opened new awards for Islamic finance and real estate work (p.4).

## ESG

IFLR's awards focus on work that improves the cross-border investment environment, by recognizing legal innovation in cross-border transactions. While IFLR cannot fully evaluate the ESG impact of all submitted deals, we are committed to promoting the high ESG standards. As part of our efforts, IFLR will not include new investments into hydrocarbon projects in the Deal of the Year shortlists, unless projects are explicitly structured to protect the environment, certified by a climate body, part of a divestment, or a wind-down / restructuring.

## AWARD CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA

### Deals of the year

These awards are open to law firms and in-house legal teams and they seek to recognize the region's most legally innovative transactions across the following categories:

- Debt and equity-linked
- Domestic
- Equity
- Loan
- M&A
- Project finance
- Restructuring

All deals must meet the regional and cross-border requirements (the only exception being the Domestic category) and must have reached **financial close between July 1 2023 and June 30 2024**. All law firms and in-house counsel with direct roles (big or small) will be credited on each deal.

Complete one Deal of the Year form for each entry. Please put forward **no more than three** deals in any one category. Participants can make entries in any or all the seven categories.

**ALL ENTRANTS MUST ALSO NOMINATE ONE DEAL ON WHICH THEY DID NOT ADVISE IN EACH CATEGORY THEY ENTER**

### Category profiles

- **Debt and equity-linked:** corporate/sovereign debt and equity-linked capital markets issuances (bonds, hybrid, convertibles), whether onshore or offshore, including liability management exercises, tender offers and exchanges. Offerings must have been structured to include international investors, outside the home market of the issuer or originator. Circa 20% of the securities should have been sold to international investors.
- **Equity:** equity securities, typically taking the form of IPOs, private placements, PIPEs, rights issues or black trades. Circa 20% of the securities must have been sold to investors outside the home market of the issuer or originator; includes IPOs on a regional exchange by an issuer from outside the region AND offerings by a Middle East-headquartered issuer on a foreign exchange.
- **Loans:** all manner of corporate credit facilities, including bilateral/club/syndicated loans, Islamic financing, leveraged loans, acquisition financing, revolving credit facilities, asset financing, refinancings etc. The borrower must be based in Middle East and at least one lender must be headquartered in a different country to the borrower.
- **M&A:** buyer and target must be headquartered in different jurisdictions, and the target must be headquartered in Middle East; does include joint ventures and private equity M&A.
- **Project finance:** includes the financing of infrastructure, industrial, energy and natural resource and public service projects (including PPPs). The project must be in Middle East and carried out on an international basis. Hybrid financing structures are valid, but the purpose of the financing must be a specific project. See ESG note on Page 1 regarding any hydrocarbon projects.

- **Restructuring:** includes the restructuring or wind-down of a corporate entity. Cases must involve creditors outside the country of the company in question. The restructured entity must be headquartered in Middle East, or Middle East must be the venue of the restructuring.

## Teams of the Year

These awards are exclusively for law firms.

They will recognize the team with the best record on innovative deals. Team awards apply to a firm's entire practice group rather than a specific team within it. Firms can nominate their teams in any or all the categories. Complete one Team of the year form for each category, using the deals appendix to tell us about the deals your team has worked on. If a deal has already been nominated for Deal of the year, please refer to it briefly on the team form.

There is space on the submission form to note any other factors that may support a nomination for 'innovative team'. The focus should be exclusively on innovation and will only be considered where a decision based on transactions alone is too close to make conclusively.

- |                                  |                            |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Debt and equity-linked         | • M&A                      |
| • Equity                         | • Project finance          |
| • Financial services regulatory* | • Real estate <b>*NEW*</b> |
| • Islamic finance <b>*NEW*</b>   | • Restructuring            |
| • Loan                           |                            |

### \*Financial services regulatory

This award has its own entry form and recognises a firm for its innovative legal work in non-contentious financial services regulatory and compliance.

The award will look at teams that have improved, developed or brought clarity to market frameworks; set the stage or delivered pioneering projects and products; helped clients to be compliant; and demonstrated an exceptional ability to work with regulators.

## Initiative awards

These awards are for private practice law firms or in the case of the Tech award, specialist providers and recognise outstanding initiatives delivered in the awards review period.

### Net-zero transition award

This award seeks to celebrate net-zero initiatives that can move the dial towards a net-zero future. It will consider innovative internal or external projects that materially improve sustainability, help clients to decarbonise, or deliver projects / deals that provide net-zero solutions to the market.

### Tech innovation award

This award will be given to a legal tech solution that is pioneering, creative, or uses a new or untested product to great effect. Legal tech need not necessarily be specialist legal software, it could be a general software package re-purposed for a legal department's use. This award is open to law firms and partner legal tech companies and will seek to recognize specific projects.

## In-house awards

### In-house teams of the year

These awards are open to in-house legal teams and lawyers. In-house legal departments are invited to put themselves or individual lawyers forward directly in the categories below. Law firms may also nominate in-house teams.

Please use the In-house team of the year form for all categories.

- Investment bank team of the year
- Regional bank team of the year
- Team of the year: corporate
- Islamic finance team of the year **\*NEW\***
- ESG team of the year **\*NEW\***
- Technology team of the year **\*NEW\***
- In-house deal team: investments and funds **\*NEW\***
- Islamic bank of the year
- Market Maker

### Investment bank team of the year

This award is for international investment banks operating throughout the region. The award will primarily celebrate in-house teams' roles on shaping and delivering innovative cross-border deals.

### Regional bank team of the year

This is for investment banks headquartered in the GCC region. The award will celebrate in-house teams' roles on shaping and delivering innovative cross-border deals.

### Islamic finance team of the year

This award is open to all in-house teams and will recognize innovation in Islamic finance products.

### In-house team of the year: corporate

This award will go to the most impressive in-house legal department from a non-banking or financial institution, recognizing its work on delivering transactions and supporting corporate transformation and commercial success. IFLR will pay particular attention to a legal role in delivering and supporting innovative strategies and pioneering dealmaking.

### ESG team of the year

This award is open to all in-house teams, and will recognize outstanding ESG policies, focusing on diversity, equity & inclusion and environmental sustainability.

### Technology team of the year

This award is open to any in-house team and recognises technology and innovation. It will focus on innovation in process and systems that improve the legal function, its efficiency and effectiveness, and its ability to support corporate commercial or compliance and regulatory. The award will have a particular focus on technology development and application.

### In-house deal team: investments and funds

This award is primarily for asset managers, investment funds and sovereign wealth funds. It will have a particular focus on an in-house team's impact on dealmaking.

## Islamic bank of the year

This award will go to an Islamic bank headquartered in the region. Eligible banks must be fully Islamic / shariah-compliant, as a whole.

## Market Maker

This individual award will go to a general counsel (GC) or in-house legal department leader for their individual contribution to legal innovation, the deal landscape and team leadership during the review period. The award is based on direct entries and nominations from private practice.

In-house teams may also put forward entries for:

- Deal of the year
- Rising star awards

## Firm awards

### Rising star law firm

This award will go to a law firm established after January 1 2019 for its role providing local law advice on the most innovative deals. IFLR will consider a firm's deal record, as well as its impact on the legal landscape since its establishment.

### Pro bono firm of the year

This award is for law firms and will celebrate pro bono projects that were driven by Middle East-based teams. IFLR will consider the nature of the work undertaken by lawyers, commitment and impact. It will have a particular focus innovative approaches to pro bono.

## National law firm of the year

National firm awards will be given to a firm based solely on its best track record in providing local law advice on the most innovative deals closed between July 1 2023 and June 30 2024. Any and all IFLR1000 submissions will automatically form part of the awards process.

Deals can include banking and finance, capital markets, M&A, private equity, projects and restructuring. We recommend listing no more than six deals per firm on top of any deal of the year nominations. If a deal has already been entered as a Deal of the year, please refer to that briefly on the national form.

Complete one National firm of the year form for each jurisdiction you are nominating your firm in.

Law firm of the year for:

- Bahrain
- Egypt
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Oman
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- UAE

### International law firm of the year

There is no entry form for this award. It will go to the international firm with the best record on innovative deals.

## Individual awards

These awards will be given to individuals that stand out in each category as having made a substantial impact on the legal landscape, sufficient to distinguish them from their peers. Shortlists for individual awards will not be released and winners will be announced on the night. We welcome direct nominations. The categories are:

- Rising Star
- Managing Partner of the year
- Diversity Champion **\*NEW\***
- Outstanding Contribution Award
- IFLR Dealmakers Hall of Fame **\*NEW\***

### Rising star

The awards will recognise two associate/senior associate-level lawyers from both global/international firms AND domestic firms as rising stars. Candidates from in-house teams will also be considered. Eligible candidates must have less than 15 years post-qualification experience. Additional information such as CVs, biographies and deal lists are welcome on the rising star forms.

As awards will be based largely on an individual's role in innovative transactions, firms are also invited to list associates/senior associates that had important roles on any Deal of the year nomination.

### Managing partner of the year

This award is exclusively for a sitting managing partner of a law firm in the region. IFLR will consider a managing partner's role in winning or closing innovative deals, and in leading developments in their firm over the past 12 months.

### Diversity champion

This replaces the former IFLR Women Dealmakers Hall of Fame award. The award is for an individual lawyer in recognition of their role actively promoting diversity in law. This may include, but is not limited to, advocacy, influence and thought leadership around gender, race, disability, and social mobility. IFLR will consider the individual's deal record and leader in the market as a practicing lawyer, as well as their influence outside of transactional work. Past winners are not eligible.

*Past winners: Justine Jones – HSBC (2023), Nicola Reader, Clifford Chance (2022); Anneliese Reinhold, du (2021), Judith Kim, Allen & Overy (2020), Shihana Alazzaz, Public Investment Fund (2019); Lubna Qassim, Emirates NDB (2018)*

### IFLR Dealmakers Hall of Fame

This award recognizes a lawyer for their impact on the deal landscape in the region during the research period through their innovative approach, sufficient to distinguish them from their peers. IFLR will look at candidates' achievements in shaping the legal and dealmaking landscape, as well as their roles on innovative, cross-border transactions. Past winners are not eligible.

### Outstanding Contribution Award

This replaces the former Lifetime Achievement award. It is largely based on research conducted throughout the year by IFLR, but firms and in-house teams may directly nominate candidates.

This award is given to a lawyer in recognition of their impact on the Middle East legal landscape, who throughout their time in the market has helped drive deal innovation, shape standards in practice and influence the legal infrastructure.

*Past winners: Debashis Dey - White & Case (2023), Ibrahim Mubaydeen, Allen & Overy (2022); Graham Lovett, Akin Gump (2021); Hamza Kunna, Islamic Development Bank (2020); Sam Habbas, ASAR (2019); Mona Zulficar, Zulficar & Partners (2018)*



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How do you choose the winners?**

The direct entries provided by law firms and in-house teams are a key part of our decision-making process. IFLR will use these, in conjunction with interviews with law firms and in-house counsel, to select the most innovative deals of the year. Ultimately the decision is that of IFLR. It is not the result of a poll and we do not use an external panel of judges.

We find this to be the best way to retain integrity and consistency across all our awards in Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Americas and the Middle East. IFLR applies the same analysis and methodology to each region. It is not hard to discover the true legal innovation, and the firms and deals that have had the greatest market impact.

We find that using a judging committee or selection of clients to pick the winners makes it impossible to retain consistency and comparability across the geographies and years.

### **How do you decide what is innovative?**

When searching for innovation, IFLR looks for new legal structures, deals that overcome new regulatory hurdles and regional firsts that adapt existing technology to local regulation. The difficulty and intricacy of that innovation is assessed, as well as its likely market impact.

The role of the individual law firm on the deal is also considered, in order to decide how much credit the firm should receive towards the Team of the year awards and National law firm of the year awards.

### **Can I talk to/meet a researcher?**

If you want to talk to us, please contact Head of IFLR Research [Danielle Ngwana-Joseph](#)

### **When is the deadline?**

Please send us your entries by July 10 2024.

### **Must deals have reached final close by the end of June 2024?**

Yes. All deals must have reached financial close between July 1 2023 and June 30 2024. Deals that have been announced or signed cannot be considered.

### **How many people have you contacted at my firm?**

We have usually only approached one person at each law firm. We would like you to coordinate the response from your firm. If you are not the appropriate person or would prefer us to contact other people ourselves, please tell us immediately to ensure that your firm is not omitted.

### **How do you divide advertising and editorial?**

There is no connection between advertising and the success of a deal or firm in IFLR's surveys or awards. The IFLR legal awards are built on editorial objectivity.

### **What will you do with information about clients?**

IFLR speaks to in-house contacts to help assess which deals are the most innovative. Our researchers will call contacts that you provide. The contacts will be used for no purpose other than IFLR editorial research.