Preface

Since we edited an initial volume on human resource management (HRM) in the Middle East a decade ago (see Pawan S. Budhwar and Kamel Mellahi 2006. *Managing Human Resources in the Middle East*. London: Routledge), a number of significant socio-political-, economic- and security-related developments have taken place in the region, some of which are still unfolding. In particular, the changes from late 2010 (i.e., from the initiation of the Arab Spring, forcing down of dictators and rulers from power and the proclamation of the world caliphate by ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which have led to major upheavals) have been phenomenal, resulting in both regional and global disturbances in the form of hundreds of thousands dead and mass migration from the region. Such developments have implications for the management of human resources in firms operating in the region.

Indeed, there is a growing body of literature now emerging related to the management of human resources in the region. Some attempt has been made to put together a collection of works to provide a more conclusive picture of the scene (e.g., see special issue of *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 2014, vol. 25, issue 2, guest edited by Fida Afiouni, Huub Ruël and Randall Schuler). Nevertheless, there is no single volume which provides a comprehensive picture regarding the context-specific nature of HRM issues for the region. An attempt has been made in this volume to highlight the contextual and human resource (HR) functional issues, country-/region-specific forces determining HRM systems in eight countries, and a large number of emerging themes central to HRM and proposals for ways forward highly relevant for the region.

The shock created by the fall in oil prices in the late 1980s, a rapidly growing population and over-reliance on foreign workers and talent in order to run many economies in the region (amongst other factors), forced many countries of the region to think about reducing their dependency on the oil industry and diversify into other sectors via the development of their human resources. This is highly pressing in the present context (marked not only by the above-mentioned changes but also by the present crash in oil prices). Indeed, many countries in the region have been aggressively pursuing such a strategy, but it has created high levels of unemployment and other HRM related issues, which are examined in this volume. We hope this volume will provide useful information to both policy makers and researchers to enable them to deal with challenges faced by the HR function in the region in their respective ways. It will also help business students to gain an understanding of the different issues relating to HRM in the region. Thus, the objective of this book is to provide the reader with an understanding about the dynamics of HRM in the Middle East. It should also enable the reader to better understand the 'context-specific' nature of HRM in the region.

To achieve our objective, we invited all the contributions to be written around a set framework. It included an introduction and background information on a given topic/country; core issues pertinent to the given topic/country; factors influencing the core topic(s) of a given chapter; conceptual, theoretical and empirical development; the

present scenario; emerging key challenges and recommendations; and the way forward. Accordingly, we believe this handbook consolidates in a single volume the dynamics of management of human resources in the Middle East, and in particular questions pertaining to the ‘*what*’, ‘*why*’ and ‘*how*’ of HRM in the region. All the chapters in this volume are original contributions to the field and were specially commissioned for the handbook.

We would like to thank all those who have in various ways helped to make this project a success. Our special thanks to all the contributors and staff at Edward Elgar – Fran O’Sullivan, Emily Neukomm, Katy Roper, Benedict Hill and Aisha Bushby – for their enthusiasm and promptness, which helped us to complete this work.

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