

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

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**This interview took place in January 2026.*

I am Sanaz Javadi Farahzadi, the UK Intellectual Property (IP) Attaché for the Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan, based at the British Embassy in Dubai.

I represent the UK Intellectual Property Office (UKIPO) across the region, working at the intersection of IP policy, trade, innovation, and international cooperation. I have an IP and business background and moved from Switzerland and the United Nations (UN) system to the UK government in 2024.

My role involves close engagement with governments, IP offices, courts,

universities, businesses, and industry associations to strengthen IP frameworks, support enforcement, and help UK businesses protect and commercialise their ideas when operating internationally.

A key part of my work is translating complex IP systems into practical insights that businesses can use to manage risk and grow confidently, in what are increasingly attractive but diverse markets across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Pakistan.



Q: For those who may not be familiar with the role, how do you usually explain what an IP Attaché does?

Sanaz: The UKIPO's mission is to grow the UK economy by providing an IP system that encourages investment in creativity and innovation. A core part of delivering that mission internationally is ensuring UK businesses can protect and commercialise their ideas when they trade overseas - and that's where the IP Attaché network comes in.

I often describe my role as a bridge between innovation, policy and business. The UK IPO has attachés in key markets around the world, including here in the MENA region and Pakistan, as well as in China, United States, India, Southeast Asia, Latin America, Brussels and Geneva. Together, we represent the UK's IP interests overseas while supporting UK companies, creators, universities and investors to navigate local IP systems when they enter or expand in foreign markets.

Sanaz: In practical terms, this means engaging with governments and authorities on IP policy and enforcement issues, identifying and escalating any systemic barriers faced by UK rights holders, and helping shape environments where intellectual property is respected, enforced, and commercially meaningful. We want to support businesses to trade successfully overseas and compete on a global scale.

Critically, the support we offer is free and confidential. I'm here to provide initial guidance, signpost to resources such as our country guides and information on international registration processes, and connect businesses with the right local expertise.

Q: When you strip away the job title, what does a typical day look like for you?

Sanaz: No two days are the same. A typical day might begin with meetings at a ministry or IP office, followed by discussions with UK businesses facing real-time IP challenges, and later coordination calls with UKIPO colleagues in London.

My days often involve preparing briefings, participating in regional panels or workshops, and responding to emerging issues -from counterfeiting and piracy to questions around licensing, R&D collaboration or technology transfer.

Sanaz: Evenings are often spent on follow-ups and stakeholder coordination, given the time zones work across.

But whatever the mix of activities, the thread running through it all is the same: helping UK businesses protect their innovations, manage risk, and unlock opportunities in these markets. That direct connection to supporting growth and investment is what makes the role so rewarding.



Q: How much of your work is reactive versus proactive?

Sanaz: It's a balance. A significant part of the role is naturally reactive – responding to urgent business concerns or emerging issues. However, much of the value of the role comes from proactive engagement: building relationships before problems arise, shaping policy dialogue, and supporting long-term strategic initiatives.

Proactive work allows us to anticipate challenges, align stakeholders early, and create support mechanisms – such as IP clinics or targeted roundtables – that enable businesses to address risks before they become costly.

This reflects a core principle of the IP Attaché network: we want UK businesses to 'know before you go.' IP rules and regimes vary significantly across jurisdictions, and rights granted in one country don't automatically provide protection elsewhere. By engaging early, we help businesses think strategically about where they're selling, manufacturing, or sourcing, so they can develop an IP management approach that works for them.

This approach not only helps safeguard creativity and innovation but also unlocks long-term commercial opportunities in the region.

Q: Can you share a moment of your early days in the role that really brought home the impact or complexity of being an IP Attaché in this region?

Sanaz: One thing that struck me was that some UK businesses assume their UK trade mark automatically protects them here. It doesn't – IP rights are territorial. For example, if you haven't registered in the UAE - or indeed any specific market which you're entering - your brand may not be protected, and in some cases, others may have already registered similar marks locally.

Early on, I saw how quickly IP issues could escalate across borders,

especially for businesses operating in multiple MENA markets. A single trade mark or copyright issue can involve regulators, customs authorities, online platforms, and courts across several jurisdictions.

That experience reinforced how critical coordination, local understanding, and trusted relationships are - and how the IP Attaché role can help connect the dots between the UK system and regional realities.



Q: What kind of intellectual property challenges are you most frequently dealing with in the UAE, and how do they differ from what you expected?

Sanaz: Common challenges include **trade mark enforcement, counterfeiting, online piracy, licencing structures, and understanding enforcement pathways.** What often surprises businesses is not the law itself - UAE IP laws are relatively robust - but the need to navigate process, coordination, and timing.

For example, the UAE comprises seven emirates, and customs recordal must be done separately in most of them.

So businesses need to think carefully about their supply chains and points of entry. Businesses also find that multiclass trade mark applications aren't yet available in the UAE,

so each class requires a separate filing. This can affect both timelines and costs.

Businesses always prefer to have legal certainty, but success often depends on knowing when to act, which authority to approach, and how to align IP strategy with commercial objectives. That practical dimension is where a lot of my work sits.

The best advice for UK exporters is always: include IP in your market research and export planning from the start, do your due diligence, and if your IP is an important part of your business value, register your rights as early as possible.

“We’re here to help British Businesses succeed in this dynamic region”

Q: What skills or instincts have proven most valuable that aren't obvious from the job description?

Sanaz: Listening and judgment. Many IP issues are not purely legal; they involve commercial, cultural, and diplomatic considerations. Understanding what a business really needs – sometimes before they articulate it – is key.

Equally important is knowing when to escalate an issue, when to facilitate dialogue, and when to advise patience.

Relationship-building, trust, and discretion are essential but not always visible in a job title.

Part of my role is also knowing who to encourage businesses to connect with – whether that's a local legal expert, a UK government colleague, or the right authority in the host country.

No one has all the answers, but being well networked is important to have the best chance to help find them!

In conversation with Sanaz...

Q: At the end of a successful day, what makes you feel you've genuinely moved the needle?

It might be helping a business avoid a costly mistake early on, unblocking a long-standing enforcement issue, or creating clarity where there was confusion.

Often, success looks like quieter outcomes: better awareness, strengthened relationships, or a pathway forward for a company that was unsure how to navigate the system.

Every UK business that leaves a conversation feeling more confident about protecting their IP overseas is a win – that's what the UK IPO's attaché service is here for.



Q: What skills do you rely on most in your day-to-day work?

Sanaz: Strategic thinking, clear communication, stakeholder management, and the ability to translate complex IP frameworks into practical advice. Cultural awareness and adaptability are also critical in a region as diverse as MENA.

Q: What should UK businesses consider the GCC as a priority market, and how does IP fit into that picture?

Sanaz: The Gulf Cooperation Council represents one of the UK's most significant trading partnerships outside Europe. With bilateral trade worth around £59 billion, the commercial opportunities are substantial and growing.

What makes the GCC particularly compelling right now is the scale of transformation underway across the region. Countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar are investing heavily in economic diversification, moving beyond traditional energy sectors into technology, healthcare, creative industries, financial services and renewable energy.

These are precisely the IP-intensive sectors where UK businesses tend to excel, and where our expertise is in high demand.

For UK companies operating in these knowledge-driven industries, intellectual property isn't a secondary consideration – it's fundamental to market entry.

Your brand reputation, your innovations, your creative content: these are the assets that differentiate you in a competitive market. Protecting them effectively is what allows you to trade with confidence, attract investment, and build lasting partnerships.

The good news is that IP frameworks across the GCC are maturing rapidly.

The UAE's accession to the Madrid Protocol, Saudi Arabia's national IP strategy, and broader regional commitments to international standards all signal a growing recognition that strong IP protection attracts quality investment and innovation.

That said, navigating the practicalities still requires care. This is where early planning makes a real difference – and where the IP Attaché network can help UK businesses understand the landscape before they commit significant resources. We're here to help British businesses succeed in this dynamic region.

Q: What specific support can UK businesses access through your service, and how should they get in touch?

If you're a UK business looking to enter or expand in the Middle East, North Africa or Pakistan, I can help in several ways. I provide initial guidance on local IP systems, including how registration, enforcement and brand protection work in different markets across the region. Every jurisdiction has its own processes and timelines, and understanding these early can save significant time and costs down the line.

I also signpost businesses to useful resources, including our country-specific IP guides, and information on international registration systems like the Madrid Protocol for trade marks or the Hague System for designs. These can be valuable tools for companies looking to protect their rights efficiently across multiple markets.

Beyond individual guidance, I arrange briefings and webinars in partnership with UK and local organisations – including chambers of commerce and trade associations – to raise awareness of IP issues and share practical insights. These sessions are a good way to hear from others who have navigated similar challenges, and to ask questions.

And importantly, while I can provide guidance and context, I'm not a substitute for professional legal advice. A key part of what I do is encouraging businesses to connect with qualified local IP professionals who can support them through registration, enforcement or disputes. Getting the right advisers in place early is one of the most valuable steps any company can take.



Advice and Key Guidance

Intellectual property should be seen as a business asset, not a legal afterthought. Whether you are entering a new market, launching a product, or collaborating on R&D, thinking about IP early can significantly reduce risk and increase long-term value. Do your due diligence – check if your trade marks or similar marks are already registered locally, and consider registering your rights as early as possible. Engage early, ask questions, and use the support available through the UK government and trusted networks. If you would like to connect or explore how IP considerations may affect your business in the region, I am always happy to engage: sanaz.farahzadi@fcdo.gov.uk

Thank you Sanaz for your time.

British nationals should continue to monitor the latest [travel information from the FCDO for those affected by the situation in the Middle East](#) and advice from local authorities.

