

## Israeli Restrictions on Entry of Foreigners to the West Bank Contradict the Reciprocity of Visa Waiver Programs

On January 30, the U.S. Embassy announced significant progress in Israel's inclusion in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. At the same time, the embassy emphasized the following:

Reciprocity of travel is a fundamental requirement to enter this program. We seek equal treatment and freedom of travel for all U.S. citizens regardless of national origin, religion, or ethnicity, including Palestinian Americans, seeking to enter or transit through Israel. This means that any person who has U.S. citizenship and holds an American passport will be able to fly to Israel on short term visits of less than 90 days, including travel to and out of the West Bank through Ben Gurion Airport.

In October, the Israeli Ministry of Defense instituted a draconian new procedure for the entry and residence of foreigners in the West Bank. This procedure contradicts the principles of equal treatment and freedom of travel.

While the Visa Waiver Program only concerns short term visits, it is important to note that the Israeli military procedure also severely and illegally restricts long-term stays in the West Bank, preventing thousands of families from living together, and limiting Palestinian institutions from benefitting from international staff, students, and volunteers ([see here](#)).

Regarding short-term visits, the procedure is also highly restrictive. Short-term visits to the West Bank are limited to first degree relatives of Palestinians, businesspeople, investors and recognized journalists. The procedure does not allow for visits to extended family or friends in the West Bank, nor for tourists, pilgrims, or cultural visits.

Furthermore, visitors to the West Bank cannot travel via Israel's Ben Gurion airport; they can only enter the West Bank via the international border crossing with Jordan.

The new procedure completely excludes nationals of Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrein and South Sudan – and this includes dual nationals. U.S. citizens who are also citizens of, born in or hold documents from one of those five countries “will not be allowed to submit requests or receive permits under this procedure.” They can only enter the West Bank through an even more restrictive process, restricted to exceptional, humanitarian cases.

This procedure does not apply to foreigners asking to visit both the West Bank and Israel in parallel. Such visits are government by the procedures of Israel's Population and Immigration Authority. In addition, none of these restrictions apply to visits to Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Foreigners are free to visit settlements for any reason, with no restriction.



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