



## Campaign for the Right of Entry/Re-Entry to the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt)

*A Grassroots Campaign for the Protection of Foreign Passport Holders Residing in and/or visiting the oPt*

September 28, 2006

Consul General Jake Walles  
U.S. Consulate General, Jerusalem  
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Jerusalem 94190  
Phone: 02-6227230  
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Subject: Denial of entry to foreign nationals

Dear Consul General Walles:

Thank you for taking time to meet with us regarding the recent and serious development of foreign nationals, the majority of whom are U.S. citizens, destined to the occupied Palestinian territories being denied entry into Israel.

We are aware that you were briefed recently on the issue and the Consulate has been attempting to intervene to resolve some individual cases, namely those of prominent businesspersons. We also know that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was told of this issue when she met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah during the Lebanon war.

Although we encourage any intervention on individual cases that may result in a resolution, our Committee is focused on removing this new obstacle from its roots before it becomes a policy of de facto deportation. As such, we have broken down the issue into two distinct clusters, each needing a solution until the time that the Israeli occupation of the oPt ends and Palestinians can define their own immigration policy.

The two clusters are:

**Family Unification:** This refers to the more than 120,000 persons who have applied for family unification as per Israeli-defined rules and regulations but have been unable to gain permanent residency due to the Israeli refusal to process these applications. The majority of these applicants are Palestinian I.D. holders petitioning for their spouse to become a resident of the oPt. Our research tells us that a significant number of these pending applications are for U.S. citizens. A significant number of these families have children who were born in the oPt, and the absence of a residency status for their mothers also passes on to those children.

Solution: Demand Israel immediately process these applications in a transparent and accountable fashion.

**Visitors:** This point focuses on foreign nationals, whether Arab American or otherwise, destined to the occupied Palestinian territory and are being denied entry into Israel. These are typically short-term visitors coming for summer vacation, to marry, or attend a family event. Another category of visitors are longer-term and are actively involved in various productive sectors of society such as teachers, professors, businesspersons, NGO staff, etc.



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Immediate Solution: Demand that Israel introduce a visa status that allows for these persons to freely enter/exit the occupied Palestinian territory through Israel without the fear of being denied entry or the hassle of having to continuously make short-term renewals. In the case of those here for employment opportunities, demand from Israel to process and approve work visa applications from their sponsoring institutions.

There is clear indication from our direct experience that Israel is discriminating against U.S. citizens of Arab-American ethnicity. As such, American citizens cannot be comforted solely by official reference to this discrimination in the U.S. Travel Advisories. We believe it is incumbent upon our government to demand Israeli compliance with the 1951 *Treaty Of Friendship, Commerce And Navigation Between The United States Of America And Israel* which explicitly states that there "shall be freedom of transit through the territories of each Party."

At this point, hundreds of people have already been denied entry - the majority being U.S. citizens. The ramifications have been disturbing and potentially long-term: families have been separated, investment is both being disrupted and dwindling, and academic institutions are losing staff, just to name a few. The damage of forcing Palestinians to relocate will not be able to be reversed in the short and medium terms, especially if weeks and months pass with no cessation or reversal of this recent Israeli policy.

As the U.S. leads the Quartet out of these troubling times, toward renewed progress on the peace track in Palestine/Israel, it is incomprehensible that the international community turn a blind eye to Israel's latest "fact on the ground" which is emptying Palestine of its resources, both human and capital. Those being deported and denied entry are the elements required to secure a pluralistic, modern and moderate society - something we believe the U.S. has an interest in. Without these foreign national resources, Palestinians will not be able to meet the obligations that are being demanded of them by the international community.

We are confident that you will be able to raise this issue as a priority for the U.S. Government in its relations with Israel to get the practice reversed and to get, in writing, Israel's procedures to accommodate the affected communities we describe here. We look forward to your direct involvement with the Israelis to find a resolution that will not further deteriorate the situation.

In addition to the Campaign's contact information, you may reach us by way of Sam Bahour at office number 02-298-1566 or celluar 0599-378-278 or email [sbahour@palnet.com](mailto:sbahour@palnet.com).

Sincerely,

Sam Bahour  
Coordinator  
Network/Outreach Committee

Basil Ayish  
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cc: Ambassador Richard H. Jones, U.S. Ambassador To Israel, Fax: 03-517-3227