



11 May 2020

Dear American Citizens Services:

We are writing regarding information sent to US citizens on 30 April about the COVID-19 extension of Israeli visa validity and in particular the notice that the automatic extension to 30 June does not apply to visitor permits for US citizens in the West Bank. We would like to understand the source of this information as it contradicts information provided by Israel's Civil Administration and the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) to Israeli attorneys Leora Bechor and Yotam Ben Hillel in response to an "Inquiry in the matter of guidelines regarding entry to and exit from the West Bank and extension of visas and visitor permits during the period of protection from the Corona Virus." On March 31, 2020, COGAT set out the following guidelines in its response:

1. An international who resided legally in the West Bank until March 12, 2020 and whose visa expired during the current period will have his/her visa automatically extended until June 30, 2020 (in the event that the guidelines for a state of emergency continue, the period will be updated accordingly). An international who holds a visitor's permit valid until March 12, 2020 will not be considered to be illegally residing in the West Bank until June 30, 2020.
2. An international carrying a "West Bank Only" visa who enters Israel for purposes of exiting the country via Ben Gurion Airport during this period will not be considered to be breaching the terms of his/her visa. COGAT adds that the international must also act in accordance with the obligatory emergency guidelines concerning movement through Israel, travel to Ben Gurion Airport and policies regarding flights abroad.
3. At the present time, entry into Israel of internationals is not possible, except in exceptional circumstances. The international must submit an application to the Israeli representation abroad, which will be examined scrupulously. If entry into Israel is approved, entry into the West Bank will also be allowed, so long as there are no restrictions from the Palestinian Authority.

The original document in Hebrew and an unofficial translation are attached.

If you have received different information from COGAT regarding the automatic extension of visitor permits or "B2 visitor visas" for individuals lawfully present in the West Bank, could you please provide us with a copy of the COGAT document/s or statement/s relaying that visitor permits and/or "B2 visitor visas" will not be extended?

If the March 30, 2020 COGAT guidelines attached do in fact reflect COGAT's current policy regarding extensions, we would be grateful if you could publicly provide U.S. citizens with this important update.

We look forward to receiving clarity from you on this matter at your earliest convenience.

With thanks in advance and wishes for your safety and good health in these challenging times.

Ghassan Abdallah
(on behalf of the Right to Enter Campaign)