



CAMPAIGN FOR THE RIGHT TO ENTER THE
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY (OPT)

A grassroots campaign working for the right to freedom of movement and residency in the oPt
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **22 JULY, 2021**

INTERNATIONAL SPOUSES OF PALESTINIANS APPEAL FOR FAMILY UNIFICATION

Ramallah, 22 July 2021: A public letter, signed by dozens of American, European and other foreign national spouses of Palestinians, was issued last Wednesday protesting Israel's continued failure to grant entry, renew visas, and issue permanent residency rights to foreign national spouses of Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

Since 2000, Israel has essentially frozen the opportunity for a foreign spouse to obtain permanent residency in the oPt through family unification. Due to the freeze, which affects at least 30 000 families according to the human rights organisation Al Haq, families comprised of Palestinian residents of the oPt and foreign nationals have had increasing difficulties over the past two decades to live together in the oPt. Compounding these difficulties is the fact that the last four years have also seen an alarming escalation in denials of visas to foreign spouses, and in the frequency and range of arbitrary demands, conditions and restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on visas.

In addition, ever since the pandemic began, it has been difficult to near impossible for foreign spouses to obtain entry to the oPt. While some spouses have been requested by Israeli military authorities to leave and re-enter the oPt during the pandemic in order to comply with visa regulations, only a handful of foreign spouses have so far been permitted entry or re-entry to the oPt. Many foreign spouses and parents have been stuck outside for months, arbitrarily separated from their Palestinian families. They have suffered undue hardship, such as the intense pain of being separated from their families, in addition to significant travel and legal expenses.

Over the past few decades, the failure of Israeli authorities to adopt effective and internationally lawful family unification policies for Palestinian residents with foreign national spouses has led numerous families to emigrate to other countries in order to maintain their family unity, practically amounting to forced expulsion of those Palestinian residents. Moreover, it is clear that Israel's administration of entry and residency in the oPt serves its own demographic objectives, as Jewish foreign nationals eligible to reside in the State of Israel under Israel's Law of Return, as well as Israeli citizens and their foreign spouses, are granted the right to permanently reside in parts of the oPt without similar obstacles, hardships and restrictions.

The Right to Enter Campaign welcomes the letter and reiterates its longstanding demand for an end to Israel's policy of discriminatory treatment at its borders, and for the implementation of clear, transparent, and internationally lawful policies allowing the immediate entry into the oPt of spouses and families of Palestinian residents of the oPt, as well as other foreign nationals seeking to visit, study, work or live in the oPt. Permanent solutions ensuring the continued family unity, in the oPt, of Palestinian families with foreign national family members are long overdue.

The Right to Enter campaign urges third States to hold Israeli authorities accountable for their failure to perform their relevant obligations under international law, including where such instances of non-compliance affect the family rights of their own citizens.

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LINK TO LETTER OF SPOUSES: <https://bit.ly/sopletter>

PRESS CONTACT: righttoenter@gmail.com