
A grassroots campaign working for the right to freedom of movement and residency in the oPt

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

14 September 2022

People affected speak out about Israeli military's proposed entry procedures to West Bank (as revised 4 Sep. 2022)

"The draconian restrictions imposed by the Israeli military on foreigners are tearing families apart every single day. The Palestinian diaspora, spouses, and family members of Palestinians continue to suffer pain and hardship because of their inability to visit and live with their loved ones. All such entry regulations are a key component of Israel's insidious strategy to maintain a demographic majority and permanent apartheid in Palestine."

—*Sarah, US citizen spouse of Palestinian*

"The Israeli military's latest regulations regarding entry into the West Bank is nothing less than a criminal act to suffocate Palestinian society and damage its ability to develop. All of this is being imposed in broad daylight and in writing. UN member states are complicit in this crime if they do not act and pressure Israel to revoke these Kafkaesque regulations."

—*Sam Bahour, Palestinian-American business consultant*

"During interviews with COGAT [the Israeli military administration], their representatives have outright asked my husband and I, 'Why are you here? You could be in the United States.' This policy is not about security, it is about putting so many obstacles for us to build a life in Palestine that we are forced to leave - another way to ethnically cleanse Palestine of Palestinians. Allowing these policies to stand means further isolating Palestine from the rest of the world. It is about holding back Palestinian education, healthcare, the economy, so that it remains completely reliant on Israel. Had I fallen in love and married an Israeli Jew, I would already have permanent residency, if not citizenship. Our countries should never stand for such blatant discrimination against its citizens; instead, we receive complete silence in response."

—*US citizen spouse of a Palestinian*

"I have a business where the majority of my clients are in the West Bank, but I am also the spouse of a Palestinian. Under the new rules, it appears that I am only allowed to enter the West Bank for a visit accompanied by my husband and/or children, irrespective of any other relationships or meetings. I am only allowed to enter through the border with Jordan, which adds days onto the trip for my young children. Were we to move back to the West Bank to be closer to family and my clients, the process for attaining some kind of stable life remains entirely unclear under the revised procedures. Our experience tells us that Israeli 'permission' is capricious, arbitrary, and discriminatory. How can we have a normal life - one that is not fraught with anxiety, separation, or fear - under these circumstances? How can Palestinians have a normal, growing economy?"

—*US citizen spouse of a Palestinian, living abroad*

“Over a decade ago, in 2009, the US, European and other third states stridently opposed the then newly introduced [“PA Only” visitor permit](#) imposing geographic restrictions on many foreign nationals entering/staying in the West Bank. It was dropped only to be introduced again in 2013, then, again under significant diplomatic pressure, largely suspended until about 2015 when it was reintroduced as the now routine but still [unlawful](#) ‘Judea and Samaria only’ visa. How much farther can the bar be lowered?! The ‘Judea and Samaria’ geographic restriction is essentially the only permit now on offer if you’re a foreign national with ties to Palestinians wishing to visit the West Bank (historical, family, love, professional, or otherwise). When will the powers that be recognize that no amount of ‘aggressive negotiating’ on one detail or another, stops the tightening screws, the squeezing restrictions, year in and year out? Neither COGAT’s proposed procedure for West Bank entry nor the 15-year blockade on Gaza can be addressed piecemeal. No amount of tweaking will ever make right the regime of Israeli control over every aspect of Palestinian life.”

—*Jerusalem-born US citizen with no clear pathway to enter the oPt*

“The new Israeli policies leave the fate of our families in the hands of a discriminating occupying force whose interests are intrinsically opposed to our hopes and dreams of raising our families in the security of a stable Palestinian society. These policies are an attempt to create a virtual siege on the West Bank, sealing it off and hiding it away in a pale approximation of what has happened to Gaza. In any other country, I and spouses like me would have clear criteria and a transparent process to follow to gain a citizenship that we would qualify for through residency and contribution to the nation. Instead, we must live in fear of being deported, never knowing what to do to be able to remain with our families with certainty, or to return if we travel.”

—*mother of three Palestinian children living in Palestine for over 20 years on a tourist visa*

"If Israel is *really* interested in administering entry and residency to ‘benefit’ the Palestinian population, and in implementing some rules on entry and residency that should make the process ‘noticeably smoother,’ it can start by granting family unification to all Palestinians and their foreign spouses and family members as a right: something it is legally obliged to do under international law, yet is comfortable publicly refusing. Meanwhile the international community, in its failure to require nothing less than that Israel fulfills its international obligations, acquiesces. What about the quarter million Palestinians of the oPt which Israel has unlawfully removed from the Palestinian population registry between 1967 and 1994, many of whom are now not even permitted access to their own home with a ‘visitor/tourist’ visa, let alone having their residency re-instated? Of course, Israel will strongly resist doing any of the above, because it doesn't suit its unlawful demographic objectives in the oPt."

—*EU member state citizen affected by Israel’s new procedures*

“What’s missing is at least as insidious as what’s there: What about those of us who want to visit sisters, brothers, grandparents, cousins, uncles, aunts? Or visit friends and colleagues? Attend their weddings or births? Or go to a funeral? Or take care of elderly grandparents or our grandchildren? What about those of us who work with Palestinian non-profits or the public sector? What about those of us who just want to retire amongst family and friends? What about those of us who just want to go on family vacation, visit our favorite places, go hiking, attend cultural events, send our kids to summer camp? Or those of us with Jordanian or Egyptian passports? What about those of us in Gaza?”

—*Friends in conversation across multiple borders*

[RightToEnter.ps](#)

[Contact us at righttoenter@gmail.com](mailto:righttoenter@gmail.com) for more information or to interview persons affected