



Campaign for the Right to Enter the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt)

A Grassroots Campaign for the Protection of Foreign Passport Holders Residing in or Visiting the oPt

Implications of Israel's refusal to issue work permits to humanitarian and development organisations (B1/B2 visa)

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Israel has recently introduced another restrictive measure directed at international NGOs (INGOs) serving Palestinian communities in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip. The Israeli government has announced that, with the exception of 12 organisations, it will no longer issue work permits to foreign nationals working in INGOs and has begun to replace B1 work visas with B2 tourist visas for foreign nationals employed by INGOs, affecting over 100 INGOs currently providing critical humanitarian and developmental assistance to the Palestinian people.

New measures undermine territorial integrity of the oPt

Israeli reclassification of international staff of humanitarian and development agencies operating in the oPt from B1 work permits to B2 visitor permits has serious legal and political ramifications which neither INGOs nor their home countries should accept including:

1. The proposed arrangements further Israel's grip over East Jerusalem and the Israeli Government's ongoing efforts to obtain international acceptance for unlawfully extending Israeli civil law to occupied East Jerusalem
2. The proposed arrangements further Israel's fragmentation of the oPt, consolidating the physical separation of the Gaza Strip and West Bank and the separation of East Jerusalem from the West Bank with administrative measures; further consolidation of fragmentation would be possible through the application of differential treatment regarding movement of international staff in areas A, B and C.
3. The latest administrative measures proposed by Israel serve to undermine a collective solution at the policy level to all issues and problems relating to visas and entry into the oPt via Israeli-controlled border crossings for all foreign nationals by dividing those affected into categories; privileges are offered to a select few (e.g. international staff of INGOs, businesspersons, ...) at the expense of the majority, which continues to be denied a clear, transparent and lawful policy regarding movement to/from and within the oPt.

New measure undermine ability of INGOs to effectively meet their humanitarian and developmental mandates

Acceptance of B2 visitor permits instead of B1 work permits is also likely to result in a number of serious repercussions/restrictions on INGOs and their staff² including:

1. The proposed arrangements will impede the ability of INGOs to implement humanitarian and developmental assistance programmes serving Palestinian communities in Jerusalem.
2. INGO offices and international staff may be forced to relocate outside of Jerusalem.
3. International staff may be accused of working illegally and consequently face punitive measures, including long-term barring of entry into or passage through Israel due to violation of Israeli employment laws.
4. International staff may be denied entry through Ben Gurion Airport or other international Israeli crossings. Abolition of multiple entry work permits leaves INGO staff vulnerable to arbitrary decision-making regarding their entry by Israeli border personnel when returning from travel abroad for work or personal reasons.
5. International staff is likely to face increased delays and/or be barred passage through military checkpoints within the oPt.
6. Already substantial transactional costs for INGOs are likely to reach prohibitive levels since additional staff time will be required to prevent denial of entry at Israel's international border crossings and negotiate movement within the oPt and between the oPt and Israel.
7. Lack of formally recognised work permits of long duration is likely to make staffing more difficult and thus destabilize INGO effectiveness. The proposed arrangements make no clear provisions for families of international staff and are likely to affect the ability of staff to secure standard employment conditions such as being accompanied by their families or registering a car.
8. The inability to reliably maintain a presence and move freely jeopardizes foreign government investment in INGO-administered programs.
9. INGO acceptance of such less-than-satisfactory arrangements with Israel sets a dangerous precedent for standards of treatment in other countries.