

## Status of Authorizations:

### Changes to Israel's criteria on movement of people to and from the Gaza Strip

September 2019

Israel's control over the movement of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory is codified in military legislation enforced by the Israeli army in the West Bank, and in civilian legislation applying to residents of the Gaza Strip. Pursuant to these laws, Israel has established [procedures and protocols](#) restricting the movement of both people and goods within the Palestinian territory. To travel, or to coordinate movement of goods, Palestinians must submit permit applications to Israeli authorities and receive their approval. Israel's control over and restriction of Palestinians' freedom of movement violates their fundamental rights to family life, health, education, religious worship, and more.

The procedures issued by the authorities shape the lives of Palestinians both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. They determine, for example, the criteria one needs to meet in order to request a permit to visit a sick relative, attend a family celebration, relocate, take up academic studies, participate in professional training, or to receive a permit to work in Israel, import and export goods and much, much more. The great volume of procedures is indicative of Israel's ongoing and extensive control over the lives of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Thanks to a [court petition](#) submitted by Gisha under the Freedom of Information Act, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) was compelled to publish the protocols and procedures governing its operations.

The criteria set by Israel for Palestinians' travel to and from Gaza via Erez Crossing are particularly narrow, and any change made to them directly impacts the lives of countless people. All criteria set by Israeli authorities for the movement of Palestinians to and from Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, and abroad, are listed in a document called "[Unclassified Status of Authorizations for the Entry of Palestinians into Israel, their Passage between Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip and their Travel Abroad](#)." The document is updated every so often by COGAT and periodically translated to English by Gisha for the benefit of the English-speaking public. It is not published officially in English or Arabic.

The most recent dates on which Israel published updated versions of the "Status of Authorizations" document were May 6 and August 27, 2019. Below, we list some of the criteria that were adjusted by Israel in the updated versions of the document, reflecting slight changes in Israel's policy toward the Strip since the beginning of 2019. We wish to stress that this document, while noting new criteria and changes to existing criteria, does not necessarily reflect how or whether the changes are being implemented in practice.

#### Changes in criteria for exiting Gaza to receive medical treatment or to visit a sick relative

- Previous versions of this criterion referred only to single-day permits for patients seeking life-saving or life-changing medical treatment in Israel or the West Bank. The updated document stipulates that in cases of complex medical treatment requiring a prolonged recovery period, such as chemotherapy, permits may be approved on an individual basis for periods of between three to six months (p. 11, section 2/A (4)).
- Gaza residents who have a [sick first-degree relative](#) in a rehabilitation facility or receiving in-home care that requires medical monitoring and supervision will be eligible to submit permit applications

to visit their relatives. Previously, only people whose relatives were hospitalized or who were gravely ill were eligible to apply for permits (p. 12, section E).

### **Changes in criteria for travel abroad by Gaza residents**

- The 100-permit quota for travel abroad by Gaza residents via Erez Crossing and Allenby Bridge Crossing was removed, meaning that in theory there is now no limitation on the number of residents who can apply for travel abroad, subject to the existing criteria (p. 14).
- A previous version of the criterion stipulated that Gaza residents wishing to travel abroad for personal reasons that do not fall under the other limited criteria would be granted a permit on the condition that they [sign a commitment](#) whereby they would not request to return to the Strip for at least a year, subject to individual security screening. The commitment has now been reduced to at least six months (p. 14, section F/5).
- A new criterion was added allowing academics and teachers from the Gaza Strip to apply for a permit for the purpose of attending seminars or conferences abroad (p. 15, section F/6)
- The criterion for travel abroad by recipients of scholarships for academic study has been extended to include spouses and children of the recipients (p. 14, section F/4).
- The criterion for travel abroad for academic studies has been extended to include certification courses for engineers and technicians (p. 14, section F/3).

### **Changes in criteria for exiting Gaza to participate in conferences and work meetings**

- The criterion under which Gaza residents can apply for a permit to participate in conferences in Israel and the West Bank has been expanded. Where previously applications were only accepted from professionals traveling to conferences on agriculture and medicine, now the criterion includes energy, water and sewage, hi-tech, and economy (p. 15, section K).
- The criterion relating to travel by Gaza residents for work meetings in Israel and the West Bank has been expanded. Previously, only government officials and senior businessmen in the fields of energy, water and communications were able to submit applications. Under the new criterion, professionals in the fields of health, environment, and senior figures in the economic sector who are not traders and work in banking, tourism, insurance, journalism and hi-tech, are also eligible to apply for a permit. The quota of permits for work meeting was expanded from 70 to 100 valid permits at any given time (p. 16, section L and p.60, section 26).

### **Changes in the criteria for travel by traders to and from the Gaza Strip**

- The 500-permit quota for traders who are Palestinian citizens of Israel now includes Palestinian residents of east Jerusalem (p.18, section 4).
- Trader permits were previously granted to Gaza residents for periods of up to three months, and only to individuals aged 30 or over. Under the new procedure, trader permits may be issued for periods of up to six months, and for individuals aged 25 or over (p. 53, permit chart section 7).

## **Changes to the criteria for travel by staff members of international organizations to and from the Gaza Strip**

- The criterion pertaining to travel from Gaza to Israel, the West Bank, and abroad by Gaza residents employed by international organizations recognized by Israel has been expanded to include employees above the age of 24. Previously, only people aged 25-28 were eligible to apply for a permit under this criterion. The quota for this type of permit was increased from 450 to 550 permits (p. 55, permit chart section 11).
- A new criterion was introduced for staff members of international organizations from the Gaza Strip aged between 18 to 24, within a quota of 100 permits (which is included in the 550-permit quota mentioned above) (p. 55, permit chart section 13).

## **Additional changes**

- The criterion for allowing students aged 15 and under to travel for a trip to Israel has been expanded to include trips to the West Bank (on weekdays, and subject to additional conditions) (p. 15, section H/1).
- The criterion for entry of journalists from Gaza to Israel was removed in the May version of the document and returned in the August version. Gaza residents who are journalists or media personnel employed by news agencies can request permits to enter Israel for meetings with their agencies. Previously, criteria included entry for trainings and for awards ceremonies (p.42, section 44).
- Clarification was made regarding permits for travel out of Gaza for funerals. Individuals can request permits under this criterion if a first-degree relative has passed away, up to seven days from the date of the funeral (p. 59, section 22).