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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
Office of Public Affairs

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**Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken Announce Designation of Israel into the Visa Waiver Program**

WASHINGTON – Today, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas, in consultation with Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, announced the designation of Israel into the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). By November 30, 2023, the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) will be updated to allow citizens and nationals of Israel to apply to travel to the United States for tourism or business purposes for up to 90 days without first obtaining a U.S. visa, a step which further strengthens the security, economic and people-to-people ties between the United States and Israel. Following updates in Israel’s travel policies, all U.S. citizens may request entry to Israel for up to 90 days for business, tourism, or transit without obtaining a visa.

“The designation of Israel into the Visa Waiver Program is an important recognition of our shared security interests and the close cooperation between our two countries,” **said Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas.** “This designation, which represents over a decade of work and coordination between the United States and Israel, will enhance our two nations’ collaboration on counterterrorism, law enforcement, and our other common priorities. Israel’s entry into the Visa Waiver Program, and the stringent requirements it entails, will make both of our nations more secure.”

“Israel’s entry into the Visa Waiver Program represents a critical step forward in our strategic partnership with Israel that will further strengthen long-standing people-to-people engagement, economic cooperation, and security coordination between our two countries,” **said Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken.** “This important achievement will enhance freedom of movement for U.S. citizens, including those living in the Palestinian Territories or traveling to and from them.”

The Visa Waiver Program is designed to enhance the security of the United States and partner countries while encouraging legitimate travel and commerce. The program builds comprehensive security partnerships between the United States and designated countries that meet strict requirements related to counterterrorism, law enforcement, immigration enforcement, document security, and border management. These requirements include confirmation that a country issues secure travel documents; extends visa-free privileges to

all U.S. citizens without regard to national origin, religion, or ethnicity; works closely with U.S. law enforcement and counterterrorism authorities; and for initial designation, has a rate of nonimmigrant visitor visa refusals below 3% during the previous full fiscal year. Israel put forth a significant whole-of-government effort to meet all program requirements, including passing multiple new laws, establishing information sharing systems, and implementing new entry procedures for all U.S. citizens.

In advance of this designation, Israel made updates to its entry policies to meet the VWP requirement to extend reciprocal privileges to all U.S. citizens without regard to national origin, religion, or ethnicity. DHS monitored Israel's implementation of these requirements and engaged with Palestinian-Americans both living in the West Bank and living in the United States, who now have the ability to enter Israel visa free, and fly in and out of Ben Gurion airport, reducing barriers to travel for these Americans.

Today's designation is not the end of the process. As is the process with all VWP countries, the U.S. Government will continue to engage with the Government of Israel while monitoring its continued implementation of all program requirements, including the reciprocity commitments it made to the United States on July 19, 2023.

Under the VWP, on November 30, 2023, citizens and nationals of Israel will be able to apply online for authorization to travel to the United States through the ESTA. These authorizations are generally valid for two years. Israeli citizens with valid B-1/B-2 visas may continue to use them for business and tourist travel to the United States. ESTA applications may be found at [esta.cbp.dhs.gov](https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov) or download the "ESTA Mobile" app through iOS App Store or the Google Play store.

Israel is the 41<sup>st</sup> member of the VWP. More information on the VWP can be found at [www.dhs.gov/visa-waiver-program](https://www.dhs.gov/visa-waiver-program).

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