# USAID | WEST BANK/GAZA
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

January 25, 2011
2011-WBG-08


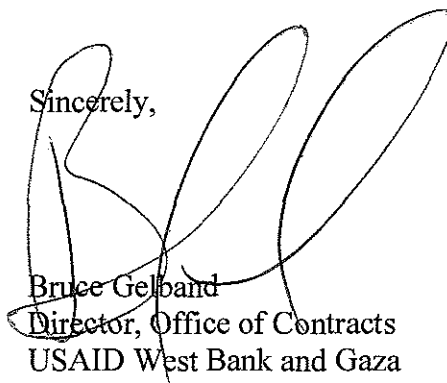To:             All USAID/ West Bank and Gaza Contractors, Grantees, and Recipients

Subject:        Issuance of Revised "Permits, Visas and Customs Clearance Guidelines"


Dear Implementing Partners,

The Office of Contract Management's Program Support Unit has issued revised
guidelines concerning the subject matters in the attached document dated January 25,
2011. This guidance is effective immediately and supersedes Mission Notices 2008-
WBG-08 and 2009-WBG-01.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mrs. Hilde Pearson at
hpearson@usaid.gov for assistance.

Sincerely,

Bruce Gelband
Director, Office of Contracts
USAID West Bank and Gaza


Attachment: a/s

# USAID | WEST BANK/GAZA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

January 25, 2011

**To:**      Implementing Partners

**Subject:**      Permits, Visas and Customs Clearance Guidelines

The purpose of this notice is to provide guidance to USAID's Implementing Partners on the procedures followed by the Program Support Unit (PSU) to obtain permits, visas, and customs clearance. Permits and visas may be delayed or denied for a variety of reasons. Implementing partners are cautioned not make program decisions assuming that a permit will be issued on a particular day.

## I. Israeli Visas:

Visas fall into three categories: B-2, B-1, and Entry Visa.

### A. B-1 Visa:

This work visa permits you to work on projects in Israel as well as the West Bank and Gaza. Complete the same steps as for a B-2 visa described below, but in addition, you must get a letter from the Israeli Ministry of Social Affairs authorizing a B-1 visa. The fee for the B-1 visa is NIS 340 and it could be valid for up to one year.

### B. B-2 Visas:

This is a multiple entry visa that can be valid for up to one year. It allows a person to stay in Israel and work in the West Bank & Gaza.

Here is how to apply for a B-2 visa:

➢ Complete the application form (we can send it to you by E-mail).
➢ Attach two recent passport photos.
➢ Attach a photo-copy of the first page of your passport.
➢ Enclose NIS 255 fee, for each application (this amount may change, so please check in advance).
➢ Attach a letter from your Chief of Party stating where you are working and your job title.
All of the above can be sent by E-mail to the COTR/AOTR for approval and then brought with the passport to our office on Mondays and Wednesdays (coordination in advance is recommended).

## C. Entry visa:

Israel requires entry visa for citizens of some countries (for example, Jordan and Egypt).
Please check with our office to see if personnel you want to work on your project will
require a visa or visit http://israel.visahq.com/.

Here is how to apply for an Entry Visa:

➢ Complete an application form (we can send it to you by E-mail).
➢ Attach a letter from the Mission or your company explaining what you will be doing and
for how long.
➢ Attach two recent passport photos.
➢ Complete the security form.
➢ Enclose NIS 85 fee, for each application (this amount may change so please check in
advance).
➢ Provide a clear copy of the first page of your passport.
➢ Processing of the Israeli security check can take up to 30 or 40 days.

However, if you are only coming for a short visit our mission can send you an invitation
letter. Take it to the Israeli embassy in your country and ask for a visa. Sometimes this is the
best arrangement.

## II. Permits

The Program Support Unit obtains and renews permits for West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza ID
holders that are required to travel to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as between the West Bank
and Gaza. The Program Support Unit obtains these travel permits (daily and monthly permits)
for USAID staff and the 400 Palestinian staff of USAID's partner organizations. We are in daily
contact with key officials in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

## The process for obtaining permits:

All permit requests should be sent directly to the COTR /AOTR. After receiving approval from
the COTR/AOTR, permit requests should be submitted by email to our email account:
psu-permit@usaid.gov

Civil Administration (COGAT) issues only one permit per person. Staff members who already
hold a permit (family reunion, merchants, etc.) will not be able to receive an additional permit.

## Permits should be requested for staff members for official duty only.

**Permit Collection** - Permits can be collected Sunday through Wednesday from the public
reception desk of the Civil Administration located in Beit El, between the hours of 1400 to 1500
PM. On Thursday, permits can be collected between the hours 1000-1100 AM.

## A. Permits for West Bank ID holders to enter Israel/Jerusalem

Permits will be given to holders of valid magnetic cards only. Each request will need 5-8 working
days in order to receive a reply. Request for staff members with a security file must be

submitted at least 10 working days in advance. Copies of the USAID cards should be sent as an attachment to the request. For those who do not hold one, please send us an official letter from COTR/AOTR and the Chief of Party with full justification of the reason for a permit request, job title and job duties. Please use the following Excel table for each individual a permit is requested for:

Normal hours to cross checkpoints with this kind of permits are 0500-1900, if you apply for hours later than normal (i.e. until 2200 PM) please send the PSU a justification letter for the

| First Name | Father's Name | Grandfather's Name | Last Name | ID # | Mobile # | Organization | Title | Destination | Duration | Holds a valid USAID card | Time Limit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | Yes/No If yes, please send us a copy of the card | |

additional hours from your Chief of Party and from your COTR/AOTR.

## B. Permits for West Bank ID holders to travel to Gaza

Approval of this kind of a permit is handled on a case by case basis. It takes significant time and effort for the Mission and often takes a number of weeks, or months, to complete. Due to the difficulty of these approvals, requests for single day permits will not be considered. The organization should be aware that their requests for staff to enter Gaza should be for significant activities. All requests should be sent directly to the COTR/AOTR with full justification using the following Excel table:

| Name | Title | Organization | Project | ID # | Mobile Number | Visit duration | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Total number of days | |

Permits are issued and should be collected at the Civil Administration Office at Beit El during the working hours mentioned above.

## C. Permits for Jerusalem ID holders to enter Gaza

Each request will need up to 15 working days to receive a reply. Please fill out the **Request for entry to the Gaza Strip – Foreigners/Israeli ID** form. Specific dates of travel are needed. Travel of **three days** maximum will be considered for approval. This should include travel days in and out of Gaza. The completed form and Excel table below should be sent directly to the COTR/AOTR for each request:

| Name | Title | Organization | Project | ID Number | Mobile Number | Dates of Travel | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Maximum 3 days | |

**D. Permits for Foreigners to enter Gaza**
Each request will need up to 10 working days to receive a reply. Please fill out the **Request for entry to the Gaza Strip – Foreigners/Israeli ID** form. In addition, an official justification letter from the USAID should be attached together with a copy of the passport.

The State Department has issued a Travel Warning discouraging American citizens from entering Gaza. For this reason, the USAID Mission cannot facilitate American Citizens entry into Gaza.

**E. Permits for Gaza ID holders to travel to Israel and West Bank**
Such permit requests are issued for specific travel dates with a maximum three-month time limit. Coordination must be made for every entry/exiting to and out of Gaza. An official letter to COGAT by the COTR/AOTR must be provided in addition to the **Palestinian Staff Request for Exiting the Gaza Strip** form which must be completed. These requests take about 10 working days to get a reply.

**F. Coordination for Gaza ID holders to cross Allenby Bridge**
Coordination must be made for every entry and exit at Allenby Crossing. For this kind of a permit request, please complete the **Palestinian Staff Request for Exiting the Gaza Strip** form in addition to a letter from your COTR/AOTR. This request takes about 10 working days to get an answer.

**III. Customs Clearance**
All materials procured for USAID projects in the West Bank/Gaza must enter via Israel's ports, via the Allenby Bridge, or via the Airport. Any application should include the following:

> ➤ **The donation number. This is very important because without it bringing materials into Israel will be almost impossible.**

**How to obtain a Donation number?**
A donation number involves the joint cooperation of the Palestinian Authority, Ministry of Finance (**Mr. Fouad Shobaki**) and the Israeli Customs and VAT office (**Mr. Eli Mor**, Coordinator and Liaison with the Palestinian Authority, Dep. Jerusalem). Therefore you need an official letter from the Project's USAID COTR and the Chief of Party, with all documents for the goods that you want to transport to the West Bank attached. Documentation should include a comprehensive list of all the items being imported, the total value of the items and the name and contact numbers of the shipping agent.

After a donation number is allocated, you must give it to your clearing agent, with one copy for the Program Support Unit at USAID/WBG. We require a copy because most of the materials entering the West Bank/Gaza need approval from the Israeli Ministry of Defense. **You should not begin the shipping of imported equipment or materials until you have the approval in writing.** Once you have the approval in writing, give the approval to your clearing agent to release the goods. **The process usually takes between 30-45 days.**

A donation number is an approval to release the goods without paying VAT and customs fees; <u>it does not waive any other fees at the port/airport (Demurrage, Transportation, Port fees...etc).</u>

### Clearing agent
➢ It is the contractor's responsibility to select a clearing agent.

### Standards institute
➢ Sometimes materials brought into Israel need to be checked by the Israeli Standards Institute. For example, all medical products, chemicals, electrical items, trucks, etc. need to be checked by the Standards Institute office. The clearing agent should be familiar with this process.

### Materials and Equipment Purchased in Israel
➢ COGAT will require a letter for coordination of the transport of materials or equipment purchased in Israel.
➢ Contractors must provide a list of all items and the names and contact numbers of the Israeli suppliers.
➢ This process can also take up to 30-45 days for clearance.
➢ Colleagues have found it helpful to include in the letter to COGAT all previous Israeli approvals given to the project importing these materials.

### Goods & Supplies into Gaza
➢ Approval COTR/AOTR providing a full list of goods and supplies needed.
➢ COGAT Approval.
➢ Coordination request form.

## IV. Temporary Import license:

The Temporary Import License is required for USAID contractors/grantees to be able to bring equipment/materials from abroad through the seaports, land crossings, and airports; to use those materials for a USAID-funded project; and then take the equipment/materials out of the country.

## How to obtain Temporary Import license?

➢ Prepare an official letter from the project's contractor/grantee Chief of Party describing the need for the materials, how they shall be used and how they will be brought into and out of the country. Attach all relevant documents for the goods that you want to bring into the West bank.
➢ Consult with USAID COTR/AOTR and USAID/OCM/PSU.
➢ Attach an official cover letter from the USAID COTR/AOTR to the Israeli Customs **(Mr. Rovin Miltzer)** and for a water project, to the Water Affairs Office at DCL-Beit El **(Mr. Yuval Nachum)** .

> ➤ The contractors/grantees need to select a clearing agent who is familiar with the Israelis Customs regulations.
> ➤ The process usually takes up to 30-40 days.

For any information in the subjects discussed above, please contact:

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