



USAID | WEST BANK/GAZA

December 1, 2006
Notice No. 2007-WBG-06

To: All USAID Contractors and Grantees
Subject: Guidance on Facilitating Transit through Airport and Crossings

Dear Contractors and Grantees,

Recently there has been an increase in the number of incidents where contractor and grantee staff are encountering problems when transiting through the Ben Gurion Airport, check points and border crossings. These difficulties have included excessive searches, extensive delays (including detainment), denial of re-entry into Israel and seizure of laptops and/or other data at the transit point.

Contractors and grantees are reminded that the Israel, the West Bank and Gaza *Consular Information Sheet* (available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1064.html) provides travel guidance which all staff should be aware of. As well, the attached Mission paper is intended to prepare your staff for conducting travel in the capacity as an employee under a USAID/WBG funded project or program. It is recommended that each contractor and grantee establish internal guidance should your staff encounter difficulties when transiting through the airport and other crossings.

To help monitor incidents encountered in official transits by contractors' and grantees' staff, you may report any incidents to Ms. Alia El Mohandes of the Mission at aelmohandes@usaid.gov and your Cognizant Technical Officer.

Should an emergency arise which cannot be resolved through normal channels please contact:

USAID Tel Aviv – Program Office	03-511-4848
USAID Jerusalem – Office Director	02-622-7297
American Embassy Tel Aviv – Duty Officer	03-519-7575
American Consulate General Jerusalem – Duty Officer	02-622-7230

You may direct questions regarding this notice to Alia El Mohandes at 03-519-8673.

Sincerely,

Roy Plucknett
Contracting Officer
USAID/West Bank & Gaza

Atch: a/s

**INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE TO USAID WEST BANK AND GAZA
CONTRACTORS/GRANTEES PERSONNEL ENTERING AND EXITING ISRAEL**

If you will be entering Israel or the West Bank for any time period to conduct official business in support of any USAID funded activity, the following information will be of interest to you. If you have previously been to Israel, you may be aware of most of the information provided in this package; however, conditions may have since changed. Given such, you are strongly encouraged to read and be familiar with the information contained in the Israel, the West Bank and Gaza *Consular Information Sheet* as well as the following information. The information contained in these documents should be read thoroughly before traveling to or departing Israel. (The Israel, the West Bank and Gaza *Consular Information Sheet* is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1064.html.)

Current Conditions and Travel Information

Although all travelers can expect routine questions about the purpose of their visit to Israel, you are cautioned that the extent and nature of these questions may change if you identify yourself as traveling to meet with or to assist the Palestinians, are of Palestinian origin, your passport has been stamped by a country that does not have diplomatic relations with Israel, or you appear to be of Arab or Asian descent. These conditions could result in lengthy questioning, a luggage search and, in some cases, a body search. There has been a recent increase of occasions of prolonged detainments, questionings and searches since the 2006 Palestinian elections. These complaints have mentioned instances happening at border crossings, military check points and at the Ben Gurion Airport when travelers are leaving and arriving in Israel.

There have been some reports of instances where the USAID Identification Card, issued by the Mission for contractor and grantee personnel, is not accepted as identification or authorization to travel into or out of the West Bank or Gaza nor into or out of Israel. American citizenship does not eliminate any such potential difficulties. In some cases American citizens have been detained for long periods of time and denied access to U.S. consular officers, lawyers or family members as well as their passports being confiscated.

Recommendations for Contractors and Grantee Employees

1. Use Ben Gurion Airport, the King Hussein Bridge if crossing from Jordan, or the Eliat crossing if entering from the south.
2. Phone a friend/employer upon disembarking the plane and again after clearing security. If the contact has not received your second call within 4 hours, he/she should alert the relevant Embassy/Consulate.
3. All members of the international community should prepare themselves for the possibility that they may not be allowed to reenter Israel and the West Bank when attempting to return. In concert with your employers, have a plan for return of rental cars, selling cars (if applicable), selling or storing personal items, terminating leases, etc.
4. If your organization has recently experienced the detention of any employee, consideration should be given to retaining legal counsel and leaving a power of attorney with a friend or co-worker to employ the lawyer if you are detained.
5. Do not become combative or insolent with the security personnel no matter how they may act. It will only make matters worse and they may detain you longer. Remember, although you may be an American citizen, you are not in America.
6. Answer questions truthfully and to the best of your ability. Try to focus your responses on the fact that you work under a U.S. Government funded contract or grant to serve on behalf of the U.S. Government with the USAID offices Tel Aviv.
7. If your questioning leads you to believe that you may be detained, ask to be allowed to call the American Embassy or American Consulate or for legal representation. Carry with you these telephone numbers when you travel and provide these names and numbers when asking to make this contact.
8. All third country nationals are encouraged to coordinate with Mr. Fouad Salman, USAID West Bank and Gaza, well before travel. The Passport and Visa process in Israel is complicated and applies differently to different groups of people. Coordination may preclude problems upon arrival. Mr. Salman's phone No. is 972-3-511-4862. His E-mail address is fsalman@usaid.gov.