WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE STOPPED AT THE ISRAELI BORDER

There is a well-documented history of discriminatory treatment of Arab Americans and politically active travelers upon arrival to Israel or Palestine. This guide seeks to ensure travelers are aware of this situation and provide information on what should be done if they are detained or denied entry.

BEFORE YOU DEPART:

Read the U.S. Department of State’s travel advisory. The alert is occasionally updated, but has long included specific cautions for Arab Americans. (i)

Know that Americans travelling abroad are subject to the local laws and legal systems of the country they are visiting. (ii)

Keep printed copies of all you travel documentation handy, including a round trip airfare confirmation if possible, and where you intend to stay. Palestinian Americans may be accused of attempting to illegally immigrate to Palestine. Having some proof that you plan to return to the U.S. may be helpful.

Give scanned copies of your passport to your family and local contacts.

Know what to expect if you are detained. Read a few stories that we have collected so you know what others have experienced when trying to enter Israel or Palestine.

Ensure you have the numbers for the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem, and local legal help. Be sure your family has the same information.

If you have health concerns, make a plan for the possible event you are detained for a long period of time. and be sure to communicate your health needs to Israeli authorities immediately if you are singled out for additional screening.

AT THE ISRAELI BORDER:

Remain calm. Arab Americans and political activists are frequently and unjustly the subject of heightened scrutiny, harassment, temporary detention, and/or deportation upon entering an Israeli border.

Upon entry to and exit from Israel, you may be asked to log into your personal, private internet accounts – most commonly Facebook, Twitter, email, and photos you have stored on any of your electronic devices (phone, camera, tablet). It is your right to refuse. However, Israeli airport authorities often harass and deny entry to Americans exercising their internationally recognized rights to privacy and freedom of speech.

If you are detained, inform someone of your situation immediately. Be aware that phones may be confiscated - do not wait to inform your family or the U.S. Embassy or Consulate of your situation.

Ask the official why you are being detained.

IF YOU ARE DENIED ENTRY:

Make note of which Israeli government agency issued your denial of entry. You may ask the individual their name and organization.

Ask for the reason why you are being denied entry.

Calmly state your protest of the denial of entry, and if you choose to appeal, state your desire to appeal the order. *Note that if you make the decision to legally appeal the denial, you may be held in a detention center until a ruling has been decided on your case. Contact local legal organizations to assist with the appeal.

When you are released, write down everything you can remember from the incident, including the reason they provided, if any. When you are ready, and if you are comfortable, report your story to AAI and we can help connect you with local media and your members of Congress to bring attention to the systematic injustices Americans face at the Israeli border.

www.AAIUSA.ORG
i. “All persons seeking to enter or depart Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza are subject to immigration and security screening, including prolonged questioning and physical searches, and may be denied entry or exit. The U.S. government seeks equal treatment and freedom to travel for all U.S. citizens regardless of national origin or ethnicity. U.S. citizens denied entry into Israel or the West Bank should receive a written explanation from Israeli authorities. Some U.S. citizens of Arab or Muslim heritage have experienced significant difficulties and unequal and hostile treatment at Israel’s borders and checkpoints. U.S. citizens should immediately report treatment by border officials that they believe is discriminatory, hostile, or unequal to the American Citizen Services (ACS) unit of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem (JerusalemACS@state.gov) or the ACS unit of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv (AMCtelaviv@state.gov).” [U.S. State Dept., Accessed 8/29/16]

ii. “Individuals expressing views, including on social media, which the Government of Israel considers incitement to violence or hate speech may face criminal penalties. Palestinian Authority security officials also arrested and abused Palestinians who posted criticism of the PA online, including on their Facebook pages. In Gaza, individuals publicly criticizing authorities risked reprisal by Hamas, including arrest, interrogation, seizure of property, and harassment.” [U.S. State Dept., Accessed 8/29/16]