



**Homeland  
Security**

Thursday, September 7, 2023

Eve Troutt Powell  
President  
Middle East Studies Association of North America  
Washington, DC 20052

Dear Ms. Powell:

Thank you for your July 31, 2023 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sharing your concerns regarding Israel's membership in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). I am responding on behalf of the Department.

Israel announced changes to travel procedures that went into effect on July 20, 2023 for U.S. citizens, including Palestinian-Americans on the Palestinian population registry, which apply to those seeking to enter Israel for short term stays, including transit. The Administration welcomes these changes, which are designed to ensure equal treatment for all U.S. citizen travelers to and through Israel without regard to national origin, religion, or ethnicity. This policy change is recognized by the Department as one of the steps Israel is taking to advance its candidacy for VWP for short-term travel for business, tourism, or transit. We will continue to carefully evaluate the Government of Israel's efforts to meet the VWP requirement for reciprocal travel privileges and all other VWP program requirements, which must be met by September 30, 2023.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The co-signer of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. If you have additional questions, please contact the DHS Office of Partnership and Engagement at [NGOEngagement@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:NGOEngagement@hq.dhs.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda F. Abdelall".

Brenda F. Abdelall  
Assistant Secretary  
Office of Partnership and Engagement