

# US State Department halts visa approvals for all Palestinian passport holders

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News reports on Sunday revealed that the US State Department has expanded its policy of suspending visa approvals for Palestinians to include all passport holders, regardless of their location or reason for travel.

The unprecedented and sweeping measure, which was formally spelled out in a cable sent by the State Department on August 18 to all US embassies and consulates worldwide, covers every type of nonimmigrant visa, including for medical treatment, university studies, visits to friends and family and business travel.

The cable instructed diplomats to halt visa approvals for all Palestinians holding passports issued by the Palestinian Authority (PA), effectively blocking any legal means for Palestinians to enter the US. Despite the extreme nature of the policy, the Trump administration did not provide an explanation for the expanded visa ban.

However, multiple news sources reported that the move is widely viewed as a preemptive response to the declaration by several countries, including France, Britain, Canada and Australia, that they intend to formally recognize an independent Palestinian state within the coming weeks. In coordination with the Zionist state of Israel, the blanket visa ban would thus isolate Palestinians diplomatically and cripple Palestinian political presence abroad.

In an earlier announcement on August 16, the State Department gave a national security justification for restricting Palestinian visas. In a tweet, the department said: “All visitor visas for individuals from Gaza are being stopped while we conduct a full and thorough review of the process and procedures used to issue a small number of temporary medical-humanitarian visas in recent days.”

Notably, individuals such as fascist blogger Laura

Loomer had earlier called for an outright and permanent blockade on all Palestinian visas, which has apparently influenced the Trump administration’s policy shift.

The State Department revoked visas for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and over 80 Palestinian officials ahead of the United Nations General Assembly scheduled for September 9, barring them from participating in UN sessions. Secretary of State Marco Rubio justified this unprecedented measure with a hypocritical statement that said the leaders of the PA and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) “must repudiate terrorism, lawfare campaigns at the ICC and ICJ, and the pursuit of unilateral recognition of statehood.”

The Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the West Bank but only as a police force on behalf of Israel, has pointed to the recognition by some Western countries of a Palestinian state. Recently, France, Britain and Canada announced plans to recognize a Palestinian state at a meeting next month, under certain conditions. They would be the first countries from the Group of 7 nations to do so. At present, 147 nations have already recognized such a state.

According to a report in the *New York Times*, the Trump administration is “using a mechanism that is normally applied more narrowly. It is typically used to demand more documentation or information from specific individuals to make decisions on their cases.”

The *Times* report continues:

In recent days, U.S. consular officers were told to invoke the mechanism—section 221-G of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952—to refuse visitor visas to anyone using a Palestinian

passport in applications, at least temporarily, the officials said. “Effective immediately, consular officers are instructed to refuse under 221(g) of the Immigration Nationality Act (INA) all otherwise eligible Palestinian Authority passport holders using that passport to apply for a nonimmigrant visa,” the State Department cable said.

However, on Friday, the US State Department said the Palestinian governing body should end its “efforts to secure the unilateral recognition of a conjectural Palestinian state.”

The US visa ban unfolds within the context of the ongoing terrorist and genocidal assaults on Gaza and the West Bank by the Israel military, where over 63,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 2023 and more than 160,000 have been wounded. According to UNICEF, more than 17,000 children have been killed during the continuous bombings and missile strikes, an average of 28 children per day.

With details of the US-Israeli plan for the “final phase” of the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza recently published, the suspension of travel to the US further implicates the Trump administration in crimes against humanity. The plan includes the “voluntary” departure from Gaza or internment into southern “humanitarian cities” within the enclave of the entire population of 2 million people.

By blocking Palestinians from access to safety or international platforms, the US government is directly participating in the genocide aimed at transforming the Gaza Strip into a US-owned seaside resort, erasing all traces of Palestinian habitation and sovereignty.

In doing so, the Trump administration is also reprising the role played by US imperialism during World War II as a facilitator of the Nazi Holocaust. By maintaining and tightening quotas on the number of Jews allowed to enter the US during the 1930s and 1940s, despite increasing evidence of atrocities, the American government assisted the Nazi extermination program.

In sum, the expanded suspension of visas for Palestinians marks an intensification of US policy aimed at criminalizing and isolating the Palestinian people amid the Israeli genocide, closing urgent

humanitarian channels, silencing political opposition and facilitating war crimes.

Charities, such as HEAL Palestine and a coalition of human rights advocates, strongly condemned the US order, warning that it would harm wounded Palestinian children who had been evacuated for life-saving treatment in the US. Journalists and advocacy groups have reported that visas for medical evacuees, including children maimed in Israeli strikes, were being denied.

Palestinian officials and international law experts have strongly condemned the measures against travel by Abbas and others as a violation of diplomatic agreements with the UN.

The suspension of all Palestinian visas and the punitive targeting of wounded children, medical evacuees and diplomatic representatives are essential elements of the Trump administration’s partnership with Israel to finalize the removal of Palestinians from Gaza.



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