



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

2023-197 | October 23, 2023



United States – Visa Waiver Program for Israeli Nationals Effective Immediately

On October 19, 2023, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that Israeli citizens and nationals will benefit from visa-free travel to the United States for short-term visits effective immediately.¹ Israeli citizens and nationals seeking entry into United States without a visa, should apply through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and must possess a biometrically-enabled passport.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Israeli nationals now may apply for visa-free business or tourism travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). The administration had previously announced that VWP travel for Israeli nationals would take effect by November 30.

This step by the U.S. government should help facilitate – earlier rather than later – travel and entry into the United States by Israeli nationals.

More Details

Under the U.S. VWP, eligible individuals of selected countries can apply for travel authorization to the United States through ESTA, an online portal. Successful ESTA applications allow individuals to attempt entry into the U.S. for tourism or business purposes for up to 90 days without obtaining a U.S. visa foil in their passport. Ultimately, an ESTA authorization does not guarantee admissibility into the U.S. as this discretion remains under the purview of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers. ESTA applications are only available in English but will expand to other languages before November 1, 2023.

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The traveler’s activities must be limited to those allowed under the B-1 category such as tourism or acceptable business activities like attending a conference or meeting with colleagues.

Interested Israeli individuals should be mindful that ESTA applications may take up to 72 hours to process.² Israeli citizens and nationals that currently possess a valid B1/B2 visa may still seek entry for tourism or business visitor purposes using their existing visa in their passport.

KPMG INSIGHTS

Individuals and employers are encouraged to work closely with immigration counsel to assess whether seeking entry under the VWP program is appropriate given the business and traveler’s needs. Traveling on a visa may still be the best option for some travelers such as those who would like to stay in the United States longer than 90 days.

KPMG Law LLP in Canada is tracking this matter closely. We will endeavor to keep readers of *GMS Flash Alert* posted on any important developments as and when they occur.

FOOTNOTES:

1 See Department of Homeland Security, “[DHS Announces Start of Applications for Visa-Free Travel to U.S. for Eligible Israeli Citizens and Nationals](#)” (October 19, 2023).

2 See the official ESTA application webpage on the website of U.S. Customs and Border Protection at: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/> .

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Contact Us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Canada:



Laura Wong
Associate Attorney,
U.S. Immigration
Tel. + 1 416-468-7166
laurawong1@kpmg.ca



Kirsten Kelly
Partner,
U.S. Immigration
Tel. +1 416-777-3688
kirstenkelly@kpmg.ca

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The information contained in this newsletter was submitted by the KPMG International member firm in Canada.

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GMS Flash Alert is a publication of the KPMG LLP Washington National Tax practice.