

Consular Round Up



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Happy New Year and Best Wishes for 2011!

The staff of the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy are happy to extend to all our Israeli and American friends and customers our best wishes for a peaceful and prosperous new year!

We look forward to serving you in the year ahead and welcome your feedback so we can do better.

Visit our Facebook page to leave feedback today!



All-Hands Meeting with Jerusalem a Success



On Oct. 29, 2010, the Consular Section of U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv traveled to Jerusalem for an all-hands meeting with the Consular Section of the [U.S. Consulate General](#). The meeting was the first all-staff gathering in more than six years.

Staff from Embassy Tel Aviv toured the Consulate General's new facility and learned about the Consular Section's visa operations, as well as American citizen services. The event also included break-out sessions among various departments to discuss best practices, fraud trends and opportunities for partnership on joint projects.

"The meeting was a wonderful opportunity to renew our commitment to teamwork with our colleagues," said Consul General Andrew Parker. "Several joint projects have already resulted from our visit and we welcome the opportunity for future collaborations."

U.S. Embassy Plans Temporary Closure of Consular Section in February for Renovations

The Consular Section will close temporarily for renovations in February 2011. Dates for the renovations are still to be determined and it will likely occur over a period of several weeks from mid-February to early March. Specific closure dates will be released to the public in the coming weeks.

No interviews for visas, passports, notarials, or Consular Reports of Birth Abroad will be conducted during this time. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply well in advance of travel plans. Current wait time for appointments is only a few days.

"We encourage Israelis and Americans who want to travel to the United States for Passover to apply as early as possible," said Andrew Parker, Consul General. "To accommodate our customers, we're opening up additional interview appointments in early February."

To make an appointment for a visa interview, visit <https://visainfo.us-visaservices.com>. For American Citizen Services, visit: <http://israel.usembassy.gov/consular/acs/appointments.html>.



Message to Applicants: Beware of Dishonest Visa Vendors

The Consular Section has learned that many visa vendors in Israel have charged applicants exorbitant fees to schedule emergency appointments. This is a fraudulent business practice the Embassy strongly condemns.

The Embassy **does not charge a fee** for emergency visa interview appointments. This is a free service provided to applicants who have a legitimate reason for emergency travel to the United States. All requests are considered on the individual merits of the case, in accordance with U.S. law.

Pleasure travel does not qualify as emergency travel. For more details about what qualifies as an emergency, visit the Embassy website at: <http://israel.usembassy.gov/emergency-appointment2.html>.



How to Request an Emergency Visa Appointment

To request an emergency appointment, applicants should first apply through the Visa-Point website at <https://visainfo.us-visaservices.com>. If you have less than three business days left until your departure, you may submit the request to the Embassy via the email address NIVTelAviv@state.gov and put the word 'emergency' in the subject line of the email.

If you are granted an emergency appointment, the Consular Section reminds applicants that this is only an appointment for an interview—it is not a visa approval. Only a consular officer may decide if an applicant is qualified for a visa.

Once the consular officer approves a visa, it generally takes at least 24 hours to process the request. Applicants should never buy plane tickets in advance or expect that they will receive a visa the same day of an interview. Typically, passports are returned by mail within seven to ten days, depending on the location within Israel.

Updated and Expanded FAQs for the DS-160 Application Form

Still have questions about how to fill out the new DS-160 electronic visa application form?

Check out the State Department's newly updated and expanded FAQ webpage for answers to all your questions.

Visit the FAQ page at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4401.html.



Israeli Foreign Ministry Calls Mall Carts an Embarrassment



In a Nov. 23 story published by YNet-news.com, the Israeli Foreign Ministry urged young Israelis not to break the law by working illegally in the United States and other countries.

Dozens of Israelis are arrested every year in malls worldwide. The message from the Foreign Ministry is clear: "Going abroad? Respect local laws and avoid staying and working in the country illegally... We won't be able to help Israeli detainees."

Read the story: www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-3988502.00.htm.

New Border Security Fee for Petition-Based Visas

As of Aug. 13, 2010, some applicants for Blanket L1 and H1B work visas may be subject to a new border security fee. In most cases, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will collect these fees as part of the petition process. Only in the case of Blanket L1 visas will the fee be collected at the Embassy.

How does this affect applicants? If the petitioning employer has more than 50 employees in the United States and more than 50 percent are on H1B or L status, the company will be subject to the following fees: USD 2,000 for H1B and USD 2,250 for L1 cases. After Jan. 7, 2011, the I-129S form will state whether the petitioning employer is subject to the new fee.

More information about the new fee is available on the USCIS website at: www.uscis.gov.



Consular Section Visits Kfar Chabad

Staff from the Embassy's Consular Section visited Kfar Chabad on Dec. 3, 2010, to learn more about the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. Each year, the Consular Section issues visas to thousands of Israelis traveling to visit or study at the Lubavitch World Headquarters in Brooklyn, New York.

The Consular Section visited the replica of the Lubavitch headquarters "770," where staff learned about the life of Rebbe Lubavitch. Next, staff visited the Roeber Company for a demonstration of the binding and imprinting of leather torah covers. Staff also learned about the agricultural side of Kfar Chabad by touring the town's etrog orchards.

The visit concluded with a tour of Ohr Simcha, a home for at-risk children, where staff enjoyed a kosher lunch and discussed the origins and philosophies of chabad with the hosts of the visit, Rabbi Benjamin Lifshitz, mayor of Kfar Chabad, and Rabbi Slavin, director of Ohr Simcha.



Consular Section staff visit the "770" replica of the Lubavitch headquarters.



Embassy staff answer visa questions at Hebrew University, Nov. 30, 2010.

Consular Section Combats Visa Fraud with Social Media Outreach

Last fall, the Consular Section launched a social media outreach tour to combat visa fraud.

Staff visited several Israeli universities to speak to young people about visas and correct common misperceptions about traveling, working and studying in the United States. The tour included a visit to Haifa University on Oct. 19, Ben Gurion University on Nov. 1 and Hebrew University on Nov. 30.

In addition to answering students' visa questions face-to-face in each university's student union building, Embassy staff live "tweeted" the students' questions on Twitter and encouraged them to become fans of the Consular Section's Facebook page.

Embassy Warns of Dishonest Job Recruiters Outside Army Release Conference

On Nov. 4, 2010, staff from the Embassy Consular Section visited the Israel Defense Force conference, *kenes mistechrerim*, to educate young Israelis recently released from the army about visas and legal ways to work in and travel to the United States.

Embassy staff witnessed many job recruiters outside of the conference providing inaccurate information to soldiers about working in the United States. The Consular Section reminds all young Israelis that the primary source for accurate information about visas is the U.S. Embassy and the State Department.

"Young Israelis should beware that many unscrupulous job recruiters don't have your best interests at heart and may not be following the laws of the United States," warns Consul General Andrew Parker. "We encourage all young Israelis to visit the Embassy website for timely and accurate information about visas and how to legally work in the U.S."

Consular Section's Facebook Page Reaches 1,000 Fans



The Consular Section says a big *todah raba* to everyone who has liked our Facebook page this year.

Thanks to you, our fanbase has increased by 500 percent, and we have reached our goal of more than 1,000 fans!

During the past year, we have responded to hundreds of questions on our Facebook page and we look forward to interacting with you in 2011.

Become a fan today at: www.facebook.com/ConsularSectionUSEmbassyTelAviv.

Spotlight on Haifa's Rambam Hospital



On Oct. 6, 2010, Consul General Andrew Parker, ICE Attaché Rich Jolles, and Consular Agent Jonathan Friedland visited the Rambam Health Care Campus in Haifa as guests of Dr. Shlomo Israelit, M.D., the acting director of the emergency department. The campus is northern Israel's largest hospital and one of the premier Level 1 trauma centers in the world.

"I was impressed by the capacity of the hospital to act as an exemplar of emergency medicine in peacetime," Parker said. "Especially the potential to transform into an Intensive Care Unit capable of dealing with mass casualties during a variety of emergencies, such as the recent Carmel forest fire."

Many American tourists arriving from cruise trips have been treated at the facility for heart issues and neurological problems. Additionally, American sailors and marines who have taken ill near Haifa have been treated at the hospital, sometimes airlifted from U.S. carriers.

Last October, workers began pouring the concrete foundation for an expansion that will transform the center into the world's largest underground emergency hospital.

Vice Consuls Meet with Weizmann Researchers

On Oct. 5, 2010, two Vice Consuls visited the Weizmann Institute of Science for a presentation on exchange visas for postdoctoral research in the United States. The two officers received a warm welcome from Weizmann staff and organizers from the Alumni Organization of the Weizmann Institute.

The consular officers presented visa information to about 100 students and their spouses, answering questions about the visa application process. The students were interested to learn that the spouses of the exchange visitors, who qualify for a derivative J2 visa, are allowed to apply for employment authorization once in the United States.

Consul General Speaks to HR Professionals

On Nov. 22, 2010, Consul General Andrew Parker gave a panel presentation on petition-based work visas at a conference for Israeli human resource professionals. The Israel-America Chamber of Commerce sponsored the panel.

Parker's presentation was aimed at professionals managing human resources departments of U.S. subsidiaries in Israel and covered a wide range of topics, from the appropriate uses of B1/B2 visas to the qualifications for petition-based L, H1B, and E visas.

For more information about work visas, visit: <http://israel.usembassy.gov/consular/niv/petitionhome.html>.



Voter Survey for American Citizens

Attention U.S. citizen voters! The Department of State and Federal Voting Assistance Program need your help to make overseas voting easier.

Click the link below to take a survey about your voting experience. The details you provide will help the State Department improve future voting experiences for U.S. citizens.

Website: http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/living/overseas_voting/overseas_voting_4754.html.

Vice Consul Speaks to Israeli-Arab Students

On Dec. 1, 2010, a Vice Consul spoke to Israeli-Arab students at the Tabeetha School in Jaffa about student visas and study opportunities in the United States.

In partnership with [EducationUSA](#) and the [American Corner Jaffa](#), the program helped explain the college application process and the student visa application process to many students who had never traveled to the U.S. before.

The event responded to Secretary Clinton's recent video message about International Education Week, in which she stressed the importance of promoting study in the United States to underrepresented populations.

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