

Translated by AI and not reviewed – mistakes and inaccuracies may be present. Read at your own risk.

For context, and the official Hebrew paper, please visit aic.org.il:

<https://aic.org.il/aic-makes-history-knesset-to-address-systemic-issues-in-partner-visa-process/>

Subject: Request for a discussion on unreasonable waiting times and other failures in the status regularization process based on partnership

Dear Sir,

This letter is submitted on behalf of the **Israeli Association for International Couples (RA)**, requesting the scheduling of a discussion on the issue of unreasonable processing and waiting times, as well as additional failures in the process of status regularization for foreign partners by the Population and Immigration Authority:

1. **According to Population Authority data**, approximately 5,250 new applications for status regularization of foreign partners of Israelis are submitted each year. The procedures that define the regularization process grant the Authority almost unlimited discretion and do not specify maximum timeframes for processing applications or issuing decisions. Consequently, international couples face requirements, delays, and waiting periods that often exceed the bounds of reasonable administrative conduct. For example, in many cases, couples experience cumulative waiting periods of over a year from the date of application submission until the actual granting of status—resulting from various causes such as staff shortages, lack of communication with applicants, the sudden introduction of new requirements, misapplication of procedures, and more.
2. **Long waiting times, various delays, and deficient service** infringe upon the rights of Israeli–international couples and family units. These failures lead, among other things, to prolonged separation between spouses and parents from children; financial harm to families due to lengthy periods under a status that does not permit employment; denial of eligibility for national health insurance and other social rights; inability to leave the country during interim periods due to lack of clarity regarding entry policies; repeated payments for temporary visa extensions; and more. The lack of transparency and defined processing times for applications are perceived as

some of the most harmful aspects of the status regularization process, preventing couples from planning their futures and their lives.

3. The **Israeli Association for International Couples**, as a body representing tens of thousands of couples undergoing status regularization procedures with the Population Authority, wishes to take part in formulating practical solutions to these severe hardships. Below are our proposals for relatively simple measures that could improve the efficiency of the graduated process and the quality of service:

A. Proper processing at embassies and issuance of the first visa there – According to the procedure, couples abroad must submit their application for status regularization at an Israeli mission overseas. In practice, many missions direct couples to come to Israel and submit their application locally—in contradiction to the procedure's instructions. In cases where the missions do handle the applications, the consulates forward them to the Population Authority headquarters in Jerusalem, which reviews the case and authorizes entry to Israel on a B/2 tourist visa. Afterwards, couples are instructed to submit a new online application, including documents already provided, and must wait again for responses—as if nothing had been done. This bureaucratic duplication harms both couples and state resources. It is proposed to allow couples living together abroad to begin the process and receive the initial visa already at the embassy, so that upon arrival and adjustment in Israel they may approach a local office near the visa's expiration to continue the procedure.

B. Granting visas for 18 months instead of one year – Visas in the graduated process are currently issued for a period of up to one year only. To reduce the workload in local offices and decrease appointment frequency, it is proposed to extend the validity of temporary visas throughout the graduated process to 18 months each time. This change would significantly free up appointments and streamline office operations, without impairing the ability to monitor the authenticity of the relationship over time.

C. Allowing a tourist visa option for couples in a short and efficient verification process – Many international couples do not wish, at the initial stage, to establish Israel as their center of life. However, currently there is no option for prolonged residence in Israel outside the graduated process. It is proposed to allow a simple route for granting a tourist status for up to 18 months to couples who are not seeking a work or residency permit. This would help reduce the Population Authority's workload. Eligibility could be limited to nationals of countries posing no illegal immigration risk, or conditioned upon depositing a financial guarantee to ensure departure from Israel on time.

D. Automatic shortening of the process for couples who married after a period under B/1 status –

Currently, married couples must undergo a four-year graduated process, while unmarried couples are required to complete a seven-year process. However, couples who married after a long period under B/1 status are not entitled to a shorter process, even though they have already proven a long-term partnership. It is proposed to stipulate that the period during which the couple resided in Israel under B/1 status before marriage be counted toward the graduated process following marriage.

E. Limiting processing times and regulating workload among offices –

The State Comptroller's 2016 report identified the lack of maximum processing timeframes for status applications as a key failure in the system. Currently, waiting times are unreasonably long, with significant disparities between offices. It is proposed to establish maximum processing times for applications—especially for initiating the graduated process—in accordance with proper administrative conduct. In addition, it is proposed to allow couples to submit applications at any office in the country, or alternatively, for the Authority to distribute applications based on workload among offices, to ensure efficient and equitable processing regardless of place of residence.

F. Abolishing the Nativ procedure – According to Population Authority procedures, when the foreign partner is a citizen of one of the former Soviet Union countries, the couple must contact Nativ, complete a questionnaire (available only in Russian), and undergo an interview as a prerequisite for initiating the graduated process. This procedure lasts months and causes significant delays. Nativ's authority to handle status regularization procedures based on partnership is not anchored in law or in any government decision, and its legal basis is unclear. Based on appeals to our association, the Nativ interview appears superficial, as Nativ's area of expertise is in verifying eligibility for aliyah (immigration under the Law of Return)—a matter unrelated to international couples. Therefore, it is proposed to abolish the requirement to contact Nativ for partners from former Soviet countries and to equalize their treatment conditions with those of couples from other countries.

G. Notarial certification of translations – Procedure 1.3.0001 ("Verification of a public certificate issued abroad") states that "*a notarial confirmation of a translation made by another person does not constitute a notarial translation.*" This provision contradicts Section 15 of the Notaries Law, which allows a notary to certify the correctness of a translation even if it was not performed by the notary personally, provided that the notary is proficient in both languages and has verified the translation's accuracy. The Authority's requirement that the notary personally perform the translation causes delays and imposes additional financial burdens on applicants. It is proposed to amend the procedure to align with the law and allow a bilingual notary to certify the accuracy of a translation performed by another person.

4. In light of the above, we request that a **committee discussion** be held with the participation of representatives of the Population Authority, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nativ, and other relevant parties, with the goal of improving the situation and formulating practical, collaborative solutions. We believe that direct and open dialogue will contribute to understanding the challenges and enable the development of appropriate solutions that will ease the burden both on applicants and on the Population Authority itself.

Sincerely,

Lior Beres, Adv.

Chairperson, *Israeli Association for International Couples*