



Mission permanente d'Israël
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies
et des Organisations Internationales à Genève

משלחת ישראל
ליד משרד האומות המאוחדות
והארגונים הבינלאומיים בג'נבה

Mr. Michel Forst
Special Rapporteur
On the Situation of Human Rights Defenders
OHCHR
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10

Geneva, 24 May 2017

Dear Sir,

We have received your letter dated March 3rd 2017, regarding Human Rights Watch's request for a work permit for one of its staff members, Mr. [REDACTED].

According to the information we have received, as was also acknowledged in your letter, the Israeli Authorities allowed Mr. [REDACTED] to enter Israel and noted that denial of a work permit may be appealed. Therefore there was a way for reconsideration as the process was not final yet. Indeed after a short while Mr. [REDACTED] was granted a work permit.

We would like to emphasize that the right of freedom of speech and expression is enshrined in Israel's basic laws and is protected by our courts. This right has long been recognized as a supreme, constitutional norm, and any limitations on its exercise for reasons related to public order or the rights and reputation of others must meet strict standards of scrutiny regarding their justification and scope.

Consequently, citizens and NGOs in Israel continue to play an active role in the extremely vibrant and broad debate in Israeli society and do not hesitate to express views critical of government activity or policy.

Freedom of speech and International Human Rights Law do not impose an obligation on States to permit everyone into their territory, including non-citizens. According to international law, each state retains the absolute right to determine who enters its territory. Every country has different criteria for that and Israel is not different.

Your letter was sent when the issue was practically still under consideration and before the final decision was taken by the Israeli Authorities. It was therefore unjustified and unnecessary.

Yours sincerely,

Aviva Raz Shechter
Ambassador
Permanent Representative