

Registering children

Regulation 12 of the Entry into Israel Regulations stipulates:

“A child born in Israel... shall have in Israel the status of his or her parents. Where the parents do not have the same status, the child will receive the father's or guardian's status unless the other parent objects in writing; where the second parent objects, the child will receive the status of one of the parents, as the minister shall decide.”

A central condition for registering a child with the Interior Ministry is that the child is born in Israel. When the father is a resident, the child is registered immediately. The problem arises when the child is born to a mother who is a resident of East Jerusalem, and the father is not. In this case, the ministry's declared policy is to register the child if the father does not object, and if it is proven that the mother and the child live in Jerusalem.

When the child is born outside of Israel, the parents must submit a request for family unification, which entails payment and an extended wait. This applies even when both parents are residents of Jerusalem.

As in other matters, the Interior Ministry operates according to procedures unknown to the applicant. For example, the Interior Ministry requires that Palestinians who apply to register a child prove that their “center of life” is in Jerusalem. However, it appears that proving “center of life” when registering a child entails even stricter criteria. In response to its requests to the Interior Ministry concerning registration of children of Palestinian women residents of Jerusalem, **HaMoked** received a standard reply that the registration of the child was approved based on the assumption that “from June 1967 to the present time, her or her parents’ place of permanent residence was and is the same part of the neighborhood or area located within Jerusalem.”¹ Women whose children's registration was authorized were also required to sign, at the time of registration, a declaration that they have lived in Jerusalem since they were married.

Another unclear point relates to the manner in which the application is decided. In 1994, when the policy concerning family unification changed, the authorities demanded that registration of children be made together with the application for family unification on behalf of their father. This demand is problematic because while the father is subject to security considerations, these considerations are irrelevant to his children. Also, decisions on requests for family unification are made slowly, and while the family is waiting, the children cannot receive identity card numbers and the birth certificate necessary to receive various services. In January 1996, the Interior Ministry stated that it would review requests separately; however, it has not implemented this policy. Many women who have gone to the ministry to register their children are required to annex their application to that of the application for family unification on behalf of their husbands.

¹ Letter of 30 October 1996 from Aharon Luzon, head of the Population Administration Office in East Jerusalem, to **HaMoked**.

According to data of Physicians for Human Rights, there are now some 10,000 children who are not registered at the Interior Ministry.

As long as a child is not registered, he or she does not receive an identity card number, and the authorities do not recognize the child as a resident of Jerusalem. By law, if the National Insurance Institute recognizes the mother to be a resident, her children are entitled to allotments and health insurance even if they are not registered. In most instances, the NII ignores its obligation to provide these benefits.