

# The Israel-Saudi Overflight Headache

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**Trying to work out the exact rules for flights through Israel and Saudi airspace is a tricky business.** We think we've got it sussed – but if you know something we don't, please let us know so we can update this info!

## The basic rules - the 20 second rundown

- From Oct 2020, Israel started allowing international flights to overfly its airspace. This new option shortened flight times between Europe and the Middle East as these can now go direct via Jordan/Saudi, rather than having to route through Turkey and then across Iran.
- Flights can overfly Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, regardless of *destination* – though you have to be *departing* from one of the airports on Israel's approved list for them to give you an overflight permit.
- If you're going to/from Israel itself (i.e. LLBG/Tel Aviv), Saudi Arabia will only let you overfly its airspace if headed to/from the UAE or Bahrain – and these overflight permissions are considered on a case by case basis.
- **UPDATE 15 July 2022:** Saudi Arabia has announced it will soon open its airspace to all carriers, in line with international conventions that say there should be no discrimination between civil aircraft. Essentially what this means is that flights to/from Israel overflying Saudi Arabia will be able to go anywhere – not just to/from the UAE and Bahrain, as is currently the case.

## Israel overflights

Israel allows overflights **at night on weekdays**, and then **all weekend from Thursday mornings through to Sunday mornings**. Check the LLLL Notams for exact timings. Westbound flights must be on airway L53 between TALMI-TAPUZ, Eastbound on N134 between VOLFO-SALAM.



Israel have published AIC 1/21 listing **the airports they will allow you to depart from** if you want to fly to Israel, or overfly Israeli airspace. The important change from the previous versions of this list is that it **now includes OMDB/Dubai and OMAA/Abu Dhabi**. If you want to operate anywhere not on the list, you can request overflight permits 30 days in advance (if a commercial flight) or 10 days in advance if non-commercial. Jordan also requires overflight permits, which should be requested via an agent.

## How to get an Israel overflight permit

Israel have published a very specific guide on how to do this, which you can download [here](#).

Here's a summary:

1. You must be **departing** from one of the approved airports in AIC 1/21. Your destination airport doesn't matter.
2. Unlike for landing permits, **you don't need a 'local sponsor'** for overflight permits – i.e. a contact person in Israel who can vouch for you. *(For landing permits, this person must be Israeli, and personally acquainted with all passengers – not just a travel agent or hotel representative. They will be contacted by the security services before any approval is given).*
3. You must provide passport copies of the crew and passengers, who **must be nationals of countries that have diplomatic relations with Israel**. The same rule applies to the **country your aircraft is registered in**.
4. Fill in the permit application form, and send it back to ASOC at [asoc@int.gov.il](mailto:asoc@int.gov.il).

The next step is where it can get a bit confusing. Get ready for some jargon. Check out the full guidance on ASOC's website, but here's the lowdown on how it works and what to do:

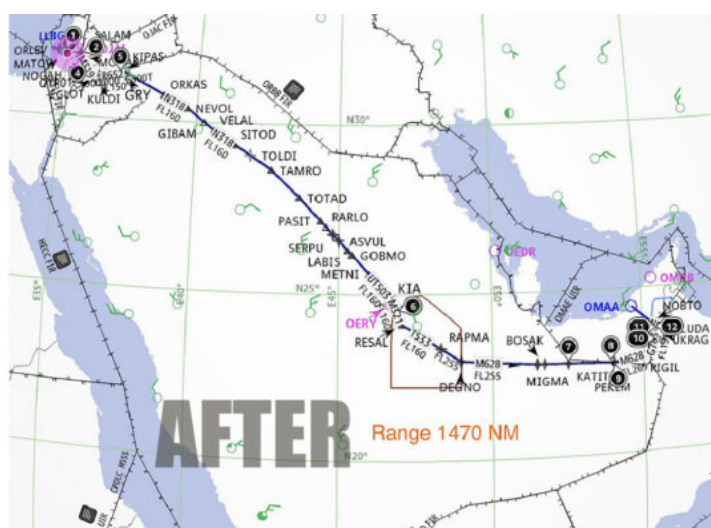
1. ASOC will check your permit request, and if approved, will reply to you with a **Pending Permission Notification**.

2. The Captain must then call or log in to the ASOC website to submit an **Entry Code**. The **Pending Permission Notification** then becomes a **Final Security Arrival Permit**.
3. You're good to go! On entering Israeli airspace, you've then got to follow the **Arrival Identification Procedure**. This bit is easier than it sounds – ATC will basically just ask for your **Entry Code** to approve you for entry. ASOC have published an example of how you can expect that conversation to go, plus what happens if they can't hear you, or if your deets don't match up to what they've got on file – in which case, expect to have to tell them your *favorite color* and your *pet's name* (seriously).

## Bottom line

**Flights between Europe and the Middle East** – should be able to overfly both Israeli and Saudi airspace, regardless of destination.

**Flights between Israel and the UAE/Bahrain** – should also be able to overfly Saudi Arabia, making use of a significant track saving.



**Flights between Israel and Asia (or anywhere else other than the UAE and Bahrain)** – will hopefully soon be able to overfly Saudi Arabia, as per the Saudi authorities' announcement on 15 July 2022 (see the "basic rules" at the top of this post).

In the meantime, these flights have to continue to operate via the narrow corridor available down through the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and across the Indian Ocean. There is no airway available in the Red Sea between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, so you have to **fly a direct route between the FIRs**. As reported by an OPSGROUP member, here's how it works:

*"FL290 for southbound traffic, and FL300 for northbound. ATC at both Cairo and Saudi FIRs are used to that. When departing from Israel and going southbound, after losing radar contact with Cairo, you are on your own. Report on Africa VHF freq that you are 'over International waters southbound / northbound etc'. Listen to Saudi control and try to call them – but do not expect an answer. You will need to maintain your own separation visually, although the Saudis will see you on their radar and they are used to jets flying there. Keep your landing lights on 'pulse' for any opposite traffic. Contact Asmara (Eritrea) control 10NM before entering their FIR. Use SAT phone if no one answers on VHF."*