



Council on American-Islamic Relations

CAIR Office in Maryland

6120 Baltimore National Pike, Suite 2D

Baltimore, MD 21228

Tele 443-251-2132 Fax 202-488-0833

E-mail: mdoutreach@cair.com URL www.cair.com

May 21, 2024

Mr. Dellon Phillips
Branch Manager, Beltsville
Motor Vehicle Administration
11760 Baltimore Avenue
Beltsville, MD 20705

RE: Denial of Service Investigation - Authentication of Palestinian Driver's License

Dear Mr. Phillips,

On behalf of the Maryland Office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and civil liberties organization, I am writing to formally request an investigation into a matter that has recently come to my office's attention involving the authentication of a foreign driver's license.

A woman who recently arrived in the United States and holds a valid Palestinian driver's license was informed by an employee at your branch of the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) that her driver's license could not be authenticated. As a result, she has been unable to obtain a Maryland driver's license, which is critical for her daily activities and integration into her new state of residence.

Background:

On March 22, 2024, Ms. [REDACTED] went to the Beltsville MVA to transfer her valid Palestinian driver's license (See Attachment A) by undergoing a knowledge and driving test. She was reportedly asked to check-in and present her documents at the counter. The representative at the counter, Mr. Caesar, examined her driver's license and informed her that her license "could not be verified."

The MVA's website lists the occupied Palestinian territories as a state from which one can transfer their driver's license (See attachment B). Despite her proof of identity, the Beltsville MVA failed to provide legitimate justification for why Ms. [REDACTED]'s driver's license could not be authenticated.

Instead, Ms. [REDACTED] was reportedly informed that she would have to undergo the knowledge test and driving test and receive a driving school certification. This places an additional financial burden on Ms. [REDACTED] on top of mandatory expenses she has already paid for transferring a foreign license, such as completing the Drug and Alcohol course.

You may be aware that the USCIS recognized Ms. [REDACTED]'s documentation as authentic before issuing her immigration papers. It is odd that the federal government has a framework to recognize the validity of Palestinian documentation, yet Maryland's Motor Vehicle Administration has reportedly failed to do so. **State agencies should be following the lead of federal agencies in upholding the designated policies and practices for validating foreign documents.**

Washington D.C.

Alabama Arizona California Colorado Connecticut Florida Georgia Illinois Iowa Kansas Kentucky Maryland Massachusetts
Michigan Minnesota Missouri New Jersey New York Ohio Oklahoma Oregon Pennsylvania Texas Washington State

CAIR is concerned that the MVA has potentially violated Ms. [REDACTED]'s rights to fair and equal treatment by arbitrarily enforcing discriminatory policies regarding Palestinian Authority-issued driver's licenses.

Our attempts to reach you by phone have been unsuccessful. **We are respectfully calling on your branch to promptly investigate the circumstances under which the MVA failed to recognize Ms. [REDACTED]'s Palestinian driver's license, and to rectify this error within 5-7 business days.**

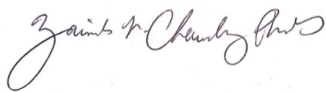
In addition, given the importance of this matter and its potential impact on other community members, CAIR is seeking the following:

1. **Verification Process:** Describe the credentials, procedures and criteria necessary to authenticate foreign driver's licenses, particularly those issued by the Palestinian Authority.
2. **Communication and Assistance:** Explain the communication provided to Ms. [REDACTED] regarding the reasons her license could not be authenticated, and what guidance or assistance was offered.

It is essential to ensure that your document verification process is transparent, equitable, and accommodating, particularly for new residents who may face unique challenges. Addressing this issue promptly will not only help in this case, but also improve the overall experience for other newcomers to Maryland.

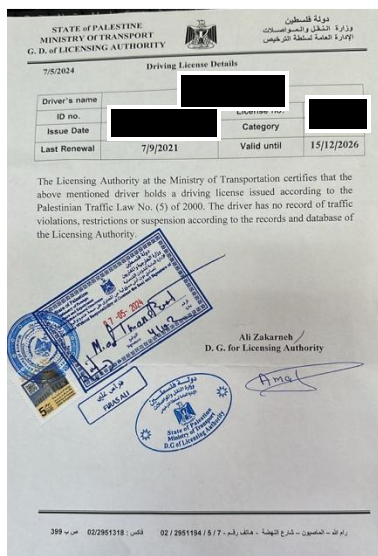
I appreciate your attention to this matter, and look forward to your prompt response.

Regards,

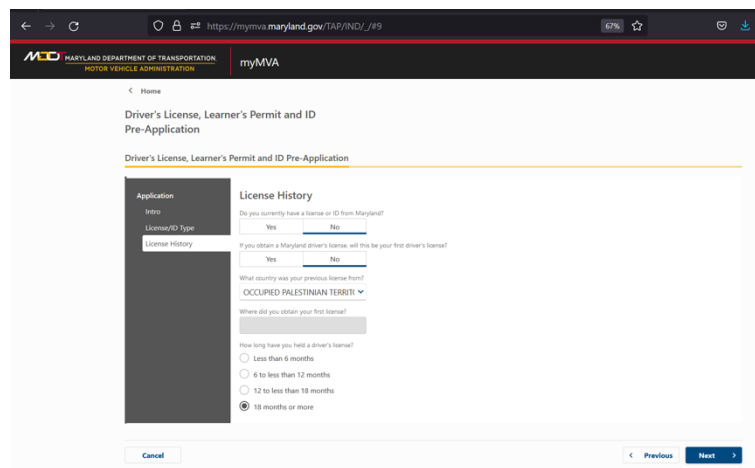


Zainab Chaudry, Pharm.D.
Director, CAIR Office in Maryland
Council on American-Islamic Relations

Attachment A:



Attachment B:



Washington D.C.

Alabama Arizona California Colorado Connecticut Florida Georgia Illinois Iowa Kansas Kentucky Maryland Massachusetts Michigan Minnesota Missouri New Jersey New York Ohio Oklahoma Oregon Pennsylvania Texas Washington State