

**Hamas sets Gaza entry restrictions for foreigners  
Reuters  
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GAZA, Oct 10 – Hamas said today foreigners wishing to enter the Gaza Strip would require visas, enabling its Islamist administration to monitor aid workers and pro-Palestinian activists more closely.

The new rules will take effect from tomorrow. Separate visa requirements for foreign journalists are still being worked out.

Hamas's Gaza-based Interior Ministry said the visa requirements were aimed at keeping foreigners safe in the coastal enclave where militants have kidnapped some in the past.

It said foreigners should "coordinate their entry a week in advance" and that those staying for more than a week will have to register with the Interior Ministry.

The rules will enable Hamas, which is shunned by Western governments over its refusal to recognise Israel and renounce violence, to keep closer track of foreigners both for their own safety and to make life easier for Hamas security services.

Hamas seized the Gaza Strip from forces loyal to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement in a brief civil war in 2007. Several foreigners have been kidnapped by Hamas's more radical Islamist rivals in the territory, and one of them, an Italian pro-Palestinian activist, was killed in April.

Foreigners do not now have to apply in advance for entry. After crossing into the Gaza Strip from Egypt or Israel, they fill in a form at a Hamas security office near the frontier and do not have to register further if they stay more than a week. – Reuters

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