

**ISTANBUL, TURKEY  
AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL**

*By Marsha Edelman*

**KEY PERSONNEL**

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Time Difference**

Istanbul is seven hours ahead of Eastern Time.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

***Street Address***

Kaplicalar Mevkii Sokak No. 2

Istinye Istanbul 34460

New Consulate General Telephone: 212-335-9000

***Mailing Address***

American Consulate General Istanbul

PSC 97, Box 2

APO, AE 09827-0002

***Web Site***

[www.usconsulate-istanbul.org.tr](http://www.usconsulate-istanbul.org.tr)

The consulate is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm, and 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm. The consulate can receive fax messages 24 hours a day. The best time to call the nonimmigrant visa section is from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm. The post will accept documents by regular mail, courier service, and fax. The best way to deliver documents to the post is via DHL and Federal Express. Visa applicants should bring their documents in person when they apply for their visa.

**ATTORNEY REPRESENTATION**

For nonimmigrant visa cases, attorneys are not permitted to be physically present at the interview window with clients. Attorneys can discuss cases with the consular officers after the interview, but the attorneys must

file a Form G-28. For telephone inquiries, it is advisable to fax or email a letter in advance of your call to the consul advising the Consul of the date, time, and subject of your call. The heavy workload of the post precludes consular officers from responding to all inquiries made by attorneys. The post does not have a Farsi speaking consul, although Farsi speaking staff members are now available to assist with visa interviews. Translators are permitted in the Consular Section.

## NONIMMIGRANT VISAS

### Processing Times and Procedures

There is no provision for visas by mail, and passports with U.S. visas are returned via a courier service at a cost of \$2.00 for each passport and will be delivered to an address in Turkey, normally on the second day after the visa interview.

All applicants require an appointment. *All visa applicants except children under 14 and individuals over age 79 must apply in person.* Parents should apply on behalf of children under 14, and immediate family members may apply on behalf of a relative over the age of 79. However, third country nationals who are not resident in post's consular district must bring their children, including those under age 14, to the Consulate. The post no longer offers drop-box services.

To schedule an interview, you may telephone the Visa Information and Appointment Service at (+90) (212) 340-4444 on any business day from 08:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. You must first visit any Türkiye İş Bankası branch and purchase a PIN number for \$16. The PIN number will allow you to call the Visa Information and Appointment Service, the only authorized source of official visa information.

There are three consular officers who interview regularly. Nonimmigrant visas are approved the day of the interview but the passports are delivered two days later. At present there is no limit as to the number of times an applicant can apply for a visa. All applicants must present a valid passport, a completed original application Form DS-156, a photograph no older than six months and a receipt for the \$100 application fee, which must be paid at any branch of Disbank. All males between ages 16 and 45 must complete Form DS-157, as must all Iranian citizens age 16 and older. Students and exchange visitor applicants must complete Form DS-158. All applicants for visitor visas must demonstrate strong economic, familial, social and other compelling ties to Turkey. Necessary documents to present in support of an application for a visitor visa (B-1/B-2) are an employment letter, property deeds, salary statements, company tax statements and old passports. B-1 visitors for business should present a letter from the Turkish employer showing length of employment and monthly salary, reason for the trip to the United States, an invitation from the United States, registration with Chamber of Commerce, tax statement, insurance page, payroll, and list of employees. Company net worth and annual income statements are also useful.

All Iranian applicants, regardless of visa type, require an interview. Iranian applicants who can show strong economic, business and social ties to Iran may qualify for visitor visas for business and pleasure or student and research exchange visas. Iranians likely to qualify for a visitor visa are elderly parents (over 65 years old) of American citizens who have previously visited the United States. Iranian students more likely to receive visas include PhD candidates accepted to accredited post-secondary institutions. There is a four-to-six week clearance period for Iranian applicants age 16 and older. Married applicants should present children's IDs, spouse's financial statement, work documents, and bank documents. Widows should present evidence of support.

### Visas by Mail and Waiver of Interview

The post does not accept visa applications by mail.

The post does not waive the interview requirement. All visa applicants except children under 14 and individuals over 79 years must apply in person. In cases of severe illness, an immediate family member may come to an interview on behalf of the applicant.

### **Reapplication Policy After Refusals**

The post recommends that third country nationals (TCN) who have been denied a visa at another post return to the post where they first made their application. The consul will entertain a prior denial of a TCN from another post in Turkey and from posts outside of Turkey if the applicant is physically present in the consular district. TCNs, aside from those legally residing in Turkey, should have a good reason as to why they are applying in Istanbul. The consul has access to information regarding previous applications, regardless of location of application. Visa shoppers are discouraged. The post entertains applications from Istanbul, Edirne, Eskisehir, Bursa and Canakkale. Upon request, applicants from any area of Turkey may apply for a visa in Istanbul. If, however, they have recently been denied a visa at Embassy Ankara, they should continue to pursue their application there.

### **For B-1 in Lieu of H-1**

The post follows the *Foreign Affairs Manual*. For performers, the post will not issue a B-1 visa. An I-797 approval is required for issuance of a P visa.

### **Additional Documents and Special Forms**

All Iranians age 16 and older, both male and female, must submit the DS-157 forms. They require personal interviews.

### **B-2 Visitors for Pleasure**

B-2 applicants must have a valid passport, DS-156, one passport photo and the Disbank receipt. The post's Visa Information and Appointment Service can provide a list of documents that are helpful at the time of the interview. These documents may include bank statements, tax statements, employer letters, business ownership, and car registration. Retirees, unemployed people and elderly people must show family and financial ties to Turkey and submit evidence regarding income.

### **B-1 Visitors for Business**

B-1 applicants must have a valid passport, DS-156, one passport photo and the Disbank receipt. Turkish applicants should present a business letter, preferably in English, from their employer indicating their position, length of employment, salary statement, a tax statement of company or Chamber of Commerce registration. Turkish applicants must have a company letter showing destination in the United States, length of stay and purpose of travel to United States, and additionally provide information about their business contacts in the United States.

### **Treaty Trader/Treaty Investor Visas, E-1, and E-2 Visas**

E-1 (Treaty Trader) and E-2 (Treaty Investor) visa applicants should submit both the Form DS-156 and DS-156E supplement. E-1 or E-2 supplement forms are accessible from post's website. Accompanying family members are required to complete only the standard DS-156. All E-1 and E-2 visa applicants require an interview. The applicant should come to the Consulate, with all the supporting documents, at his/her scheduled appointment time.

### **Exchange Visitor Visas ("J" category)**

Exchange visitors must present a valid Form DS-2019 (formerly IAP-66), issued by the sponsoring agency or institution in the U.S. This category includes U.S. Government-sponsored exchange visitors, visiting scholars, researchers, fellowships, medical residencies, au pairs, and high school exchange students. J visas cannot be issued to students who are not enrolled in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). It is the responsibility of the U.S. educational institution or exchange sponsor to enter the student's personal data into SEVIS. If the consular officer is unable to locate your information in the SEVIS system, issuance of the student visa and visas for the accompanying family members will be delayed. Note that the name on the DS-

2019 must match exactly the name on the applicant's passport.

Please be aware that United States Department of Homeland Security regulations state that holders of F, M, or J nonimmigrant visas will not be admitted to the United States until a date thirty days or less prior to the beginning of the program date, or start date, as given on the Form I-20 (for F or M visas) or DS-2019 (for J visas). Please consider that date carefully when making the travel plans to the United States.

Exchange visitor visa applicants and their accompanying family members must fill out Form DS-158, in addition to Form DS-156.

Applicants for Work/Travel programs should bring their transcripts from all university studies, proof of enrollment in the current semester and a letter from the university indicating that that the student will enroll for the next semester.

Applicants should bring evidence of social and economic ties to overcome INA Section 214(b).

### **P (Performer) Visa**

Professional entertainers or performers who are giving shows in the United States must have prior approval from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). The organizers of the performance in the United States should submit a petition to CIS well in advance of the planned event. This includes performers who are not receiving payment, if the audience must pay admission. No visa will be issued for performances in the United States without the required immigration service approvals. Applicants for visas should submit the original CIS approval notice (Form I-797A) unless otherwise instructed by the consulate. Applicants for P Visas should bring evidence of social and economic ties to overcome INA Section 214(b).

### **Intracompany Transfer: L-1 Visa**

L-1 applicants must present the original INS Approval Notice, Form I-797, with an attorney certified copy of the I-129 petition submitted to CIS, as well as Form DS-156, a valid passport, a photo and the Disbank receipt. Applicants must provide copies of supporting documents presented to the CIS, Turkish company tax sheet, and a letter from a company in Turkey regarding the L-1's executive, managerial function in the company. If possible, applicant should provide a letter from the Chamber of Commerce.

### **H-1B Visa Applicants**

H-1B visa applicants must present the original INS Approval Notice, Form I-797, with an attorney certified copy of the I-129 petition submitted to CIS, as well as Form DS-156, a valid passport, a photo, the Disbank receipt, and supporting documents. They will require a personal interview. The applicant should present a company letter from the U.S. business enterprise setting forth the terms of temporary employment.

### **Student Visas ("F" and "M" categories)**

Applicants for student visas must present a valid Form I-20 (issued by the school in the U.S.), along with evidence of the necessary financial resources required for the course of study. F and M visas cannot be issued to students who are not enrolled in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). It is the responsibility of the U.S. educational institution to enter the student's personal data into SEVIS. If the Consul is unable to locate your information in the SEVIS system issuance of the student visa and visas for the accompanying family members will be delayed.

Please be aware that United States Department of Homeland Security regulations state that holders of F, M, or J nonimmigrant visas will not be admitted to the United States until a date thirty days or less prior to the beginning of the program date, or start date, as given on the Form I-20 (for F or M visas) or DS-2019 (for J visas). Please consider that date carefully when making the travel plans to the United States.

Student visa applicants and their accompanying family members must also fill out Form DS-158.

All returning students should bring their transcripts to the visa interview.

### **Practice Tips for Students**

During an interview for students (F and M Categories), Consuls will assess the following information:

- history of serious academic credentials;
- knowledge of English language;
- age of applicant;
- well-defined educational objective;
- evidence of financial resources to pay tuition;
- family background, such as salary sheet, property deeds, bank accounts, or business ownership; and
- overall compelling ties to the home country.

Consular officers prefer that students intending to enroll in English language schools in the U.S. have already studied some English in Turkey. Students must have sufficient funds for first year's tuition and evidence of continued source of funding for future years' tuition.

### **Media Visas ("I")**

"I" Visas are issued to "representatives of the foreign media" who are representatives of foreign press, radio, television, film, or other foreign information media including media reporters, media film crews, video tape editors. An applicant for an "I" visa must possess a valid employment contract. An "I" visa is required for any and all professional, journalistic travel, including interviews, familiarization and research trips. Individuals intending to participate in any journalistic activity may not enter the U.S. with a valid visitor (B1/B2) visa.

## **IMMIGRANT VISAS**

The post no longer processes immigrant visas and fiancé(e) visas. Ankara is processing all immigrant visas and similar.

## **SPECIAL INFORMATION**

Applicants who do not speak English, Turkish or Farsi must provide their own interpreter. Please be advised that the consulate does not always have a Farsi-speaking consular officer.

U.S. immigration law requires that all applicants for nonimmigrant visas demonstrate that they have social, familial, work, and/or other compelling circumstances that will obligate them to return to their home country after a temporary visit in the United States. Because of the difficulty of evaluating the ties of most third-country nationals, non-residents of Turkey often have difficulty demonstrating their eligibility for visas.

The spouse and unmarried minor children of E, L, H, J and F visa applicants must present proof of their relationship to principal. The spouse and unmarried minor children of principal in the United States who has received a change of status but does not have a visa are eligible to receive E, L, H, J or F visas in their passports. Proof of change of status must be presented at the interview.

Department of State guidelines require additional administrative processing or clearances before a visa can be issued to all Iranian nationals age 16 and older.

Cases requiring administrative processing generally take four-to-six weeks after the date of application. If other clearances are required, more time may be necessary.

For nonimmigrant visa applicants who have remained in the United States out-of-status for more than 180 days, the consular officer, if exceptional circumstances warrant it, will consider recommending a waiver of the three- or ten-year bar to the CIS. This determination will be made by the consulate on a case-by-case basis.

Athens is the CIS post that processes waivers for Istanbul. The turnaround time for a waiver is several weeks. The Consul follows State Department policy of not looking for the bar, unless the Consul has reason to believe the applicant is inadmissible.