

Israel tightens COVID 'green pass' rules, sparking protest

October 3 2021



A convoy of cars slow down the traffic as they staged demonstration against the Health Ministry's "green pass" restrictions, on Ayalon highway, in Tel Aviv, Israel, Sunday, Oct. 3, 2021. Israel restricted its coronavirus "green pass" on Sunday to allow only those who have received a COVID-19 booster or recently recovered to enter indoor events, sparking protests by opponents who say the system is a form of forced vaccination. Credit: AP Photo/Oded Balilty

Israel restricted its COVID Green Pass on Sunday to allow only those who have received a vaccine booster dose or recently recuperated from coronavirus to enter indoor venues. The new criteria mean that nearly 2 million people will lose their vaccination passport in the coming days.

Israel is the first country to make a [booster](#) shot a requirement for its digital vaccination passport. The move is widely seen as a step to encourage booster vaccination among those who have yet to receive a [third dose](#).

Under the new guidelines, people must have received a booster shot to be eligible for a green pass. Those who have received two vaccine doses, and those who have recovered from coronavirus, will be issued passes valid for six months after the date of their vaccination or recovery.

The government's advisory cabinet on coronavirus was set to convene Sunday to discuss existing restrictions and guidelines.

Technical problems hamstrung the Health Ministry's rollout of the updated green pass as millions of Israelis tried to reissue digital documentation that would allow entry to shops, restaurants, cultural events, gyms and other indoor venues.

Scores of Israelis staged demonstrations around the country in protest of the green pass system, with convoys of cars clogging morning commutes as many Israelis returned to work Sunday after September's Jewish High Holidays. Opponents of the system said it is a form of forced vaccination.



A man places a green flag on his car as he prepares to join a convoy of cars and protest against the Health Ministry's "green pass" restrictions, in Tel Aviv, Israel, Sunday, Oct. 3, 2021. Israel restricted its coronavirus "green pass" on Sunday to allow only those who have received a COVID-19 booster or recently recovered to enter indoor events, sparking protests by opponents who say the system is a form of forced vaccination. AP Photo/Oded Balilty)



A woman wears a yellow Star of David, like the ones Jews were obligated to wear during World War II, with Hebrew reads "not vaccinated" during a protest against the Health Ministry's "green pass" system, in Tel Aviv, Israel, Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021. Israel restricted its coronavirus "green pass" on Sunday to those who have received a COVID-19 booster or recently recovered, sparking protests by opponents who say the system is a form of forced vaccination. Credit: AP Photo/Oded Balilty

"We are totally against any forced vaccinations, or any forced medications, and we are totally against doing anything to our children and grandchildren that we don't agree with," said Sarah Felt, who protested along the main highway connecting Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Israel raced out of the gate early this year to vaccinate most of its [adult](#)

[population](#) after striking a deal with Pfizer to trade [medical data](#) in exchange for a steady supply of doses.

This summer Israel launched an aggressive booster campaign to shore up waning vaccine efficacy in its population. Over 60% of Israel's population has received two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and nearly 3.5 million of Israel's 9.3 million citizens have received a booster dose of the [vaccine](#). But at least 2 million more have received just two doses, and many will lose the privileges bestowed by the green pass.

Recent months have seen a surge in new cases of coronavirus in Israel. As of Sunday, over 70% of the 588 serious coronavirus cases in Israeli hospitals were unvaccinated individuals, according to Health Ministry data.

The ministry issued a statement Sunday morning that because of [heavy traffic](#) on its green pass website and app, previously existing certificates would be valid in the coming few days.

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Citation: Israel tightens COVID 'green pass' rules, sparking protest (2021, October 3) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-10-israel-tightens-covid-green-protest.html>

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