

Saudi Arabia temporarily closes airspace to Israeli flights



Olivier Fitoussi/Flash90A worker wearing protective clothing disinfects an Israir plane at the Ben Gurion International Airport near Tel Aviv, on August 17, 2020. Israir flight delayed five hours at Ben Gurion Airport before departing for Dubai

Saudi Arabia reportedly closed its airspace to Israeli flights on Tuesday morning for unknown reasons, delaying an Israir airlines flight for five hours at Ben Gurion Airport before departing for Dubai.

Israir flight 661, scheduled to take off at 9 am local time, was apparently held up because Saudi Arabia refused to grant the necessary permits even though an El Al flight took off for Dubai on Tuesday afternoon with permission to fly through Saudi airspace.



In November, Saudi Arabia said that they would allow Israeli flights to use their airspace en route to Dubai. The decision was made hours before the first Tel Aviv-Dubai flight was scheduled to take off.

Without permission to fly over Saudi Arabia, the Tel Aviv-Dubai route would be unsustainable with flights from Israel to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) taking over eight hours instead of three.

Commercial flights between Israel and the UAE began shortly after the signing of the Abraham Accords which normalized relations between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain with Morocco and Sudan later joining the historic deal.