

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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> Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the [Knowledge and Information Management Unit](#).

17 March 2016

SOM105248.E

Somalia: Identification documents, including national identity cards, passports, driver's licenses, and any other document required to access government services; information on the issuing agencies and the requirements to obtain documents (2013-July 2015)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Accessibility of Official Documentation in Somalia

According to the US Department of State's Country Reciprocity Schedule for Somalia, "[t]here are no circumstances under which immigrant visa applicants can reasonably be expected to recover original documents held by the former Government of Somalia" due to a lack of "competent civil authority to issue civil documents" and the destruction of most records over the course of the civil war (US n.d.). Other sources report that the Somali government is issuing passports and identity cards under the authority of the Benadir administration in Mogadishu (Lawyer 24 July 2015; EU Aug. 2014, 40) in the district of Cabulcasiis (ibid.). Citizens from other regions of Somalia are reportedly eligible to obtain these documents (ibid.; Lawyer 24 July 2015). According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014* for Somalia, "[f]ew citizens had the means to obtain passports" (25 June 2015, 22). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a lawyer from the Mogadishu Law Office [1] also stated that, due to associated costs with application procedures and travel to Mogadishu, the Somali passport and the identity card remain inaccessible to most citizens (Lawyer 21 July 2015).

2. Passport

Sources state that the Somali government has been issuing biometric passports since December 2013 (Sabahi 26 Dec. 2013; Lawyer 24 July 2015). Sources further indicate that applicants must provide an ID card, the birth certificate (ibid.; Somali Current 22 Dec. 2013; EU Aug. 2014, 40), and a criminal background check (ibid.; Lawyer 24 July 2015). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the lawyer from the Mogadishu Law Office also indicated that fingerprints must be given to authorities on application for a passport (ibid.). Sources indicate that the Somali Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIC) [also referred to as the Department of Immigration and Nationality (Somali Current 26 Oct. 2013)], with an office in Mogadishu, is the government agency responsible for the issuance of the biometric passport (Lawyer 24 July 2015; EU Aug. 2014, 40). According to sources, the application cost for a Somali passport is US\$83 (ibid.; Lawyer 24 July 2015). The lawyer further stated that the passport must be applied for at the DIC in person and the application process takes over thirty days (ibid.). The same source noted that the passport is valid for 5 years from date of issuance (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to sources, the most recent Somali passport was designed by the international identity firm HID Global [2] in partnership with Oman-based Al Madina Group [3] and Ebtikart Smart System [4]

(Humanipo 23 Apr. 2014; Secure ID News 21 Apr. 2014). The lawyer provided the following information on the physical features of the Somali passport:

- The passports have retained the same colour as older versions: blue for ordinary, red for diplomatic, and brown for federal government employees. The biographic data page is yellow/beige with an identical photo as the one present on the ID card;
- The individual's photograph appears twice: once as a clear photograph and once as part of the background;
- The physical dimensions are consistent with typical international passports;
- The following information appears on the Biographic Data Page: *Nooca* (Type), *Astaanta Dalka* (Country Code), *L. Bassaboorka* (Passport Number), *Magaca* (Full Name), *Magaca Hooyada* (Mother's Name), *L. Qaranka* (National Identification Number), *Jinsiyada* (Nationality), *Shaqada* (Occupation), *Taariikhda Dhalashada* (Date of Birth), *Meesha laga Bixiyey* (Place of Issuance), *Lab Dheddig* (Gender), *Meesha Dhaleshada* (Place of Birth), *Taariikhda La Bixiyay* (Date of Issuance), *Xafiliska laga Bixiyey* (Issuing Authority), *Taariikhda uu Dhacayo* (Date of Expiration), *Saxiixa Qofka* (Bearer's Signature);
- The passport contains a 14-digit National Identity Number. The first number is random, the next two numbers are the individual's year of birth, the following four numbers are the individual's month and day of birth, and the remaining seven numbers are randomly assigned (24 July 2015).

A copy of a Somali passport provided by the lawyer from the Mogadishu Law Office is attached to this Response (Attachment 1).

The US *Country Reports 2014* indicates that "[i]n view of widespread passport fraud, many foreign governments did not recognize Somali passports as valid travel documents" (US 25 June 2015, 22). According to the US Reciprocity Schedule for Somalia, "Somali passports are not valid for visa-issuance purposes" (ibid. n.d.). With regard to the eligibility of Somalis to enter Canada as tourists, Citizenship and Immigration Canada notes on their website that "passports supposedly issued by Somalia" are "not considered reliable" and therefore cannot be utilized for entry into Canada (Canada n.d.). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at Global Affairs Canada similarly reported that the Government of Canada "does not recognize [Somali passports] as there are no credible or verifiable registrars for issuance of primary or seed documents (birth or citizenship records)" (ibid. 5 Aug. 2015). The lawyer indicated that it is still uncertain whether or not the Somali passport will be accepted internationally "due to questions of security, transparency, monitoring, and evaluation of the documents' issuance" (24 July 2015).

3. National Identity Cards

Sources state that Somalia commenced issuing a national identity card in December 2013 (Sabahi 26 Dec. 2013; Lawyer 24 July 2015). According to the lawyer, previous versions of the identity cards issued before December 2013 are no longer considered valid, and the Banaadir Regional Administration (BRA) "oversees the application and issuance process" of the new cards (ibid.). The same source reported that [t]he BRA has stated that it will issue identification documents to all citizens from regions not under government control, employing a process to verify the information of each applicant. However, this would be difficult for anyone not from Mogadishu as an applicant's identity (i.e., birth) can only be verified by local testamentary evidence. (ibid.)

According to sources, individuals must provide fingerprints, pictures, and undergo a criminal reference check in order to obtain the ID card (ibid.; EU Aug. 2014, 40). Sources further indicate that the cost for the card is US\$12.50 as well as US\$5.00 for an accompanying certificate of birth (ibid.; Lawyer 24 July 2015). The lawyer notes that the identity card can only be applied for in person in the Abdilaziz District of Banaadir and the application process is over 30 days long (ibid.). According to Hiiraan Online, a Somali online news service, the identification centre received funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and sees traffic of between 200 and 500 people each day (Hiiraan Online 5 Feb. 2014). The lawyer indicated that the identity card is valid for 5 years from the date of issuance (24 July 2015). Hiiraan Online reports that the legal age for one to acquire an ID card in Somalia is 15 (5 Feb. 2014). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The lawyer indicated that the national identity card is required to apply for a Somali passport and to undertake the following activities:

- purchase land and cars;
- open bank accounts;
- register for university;

- travel within Somalia by plane;
- import goods and services;
- obtain a driver's license;
- purchase a SIM card; and
- prove one's identity at security checkpoints found throughout Mogadishu (Lawyer 24 July 2015).

The same source noted that, in practice, the identity card "is rarely used to do anything other than [serve] as a precursor to obtaining a passport" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The lawyer provided the following information on the physical appearance of the ID card:

- The card has a yellow background with a blue seal of the Somali Republic, and pale green/pink ribbons which appear at the top and bottom of the card;
- It is made of plastic and has dimensions similar to those of a credit card;
- Information on the surface of the card includes: *L. Qaranka* (National Identification Number), *Magaca* (Full Name), *Taariikhda Dhalashada* (Date and Place of Birth), *Taariikhda La Bixiyay* (Date and Place of Issuance), *Taariikhda uu Dhacayo* (Date of Expiration), *Lab Dheddig* (Gender);
- There is a 14-digit national identity number: the first number is random, the next two numbers are the individual's year of birth, the next four numbers are the individual's month and day of birth, and the remaining seven numbers are randomly assigned (ibid.).

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. A copy of a Somali identification card provided by the lawyer from the Mogadishu Law Office is attached to this Response (Attachment 2).

Sources state that the identification card has an electronic chip which contains biometric data (Lawyer 24 July 2015; Hiiraan Online 5 Feb. 2014) in order to protect against forgery (ibid.). The Official from Global Affairs Canada indicated that Canadian immigration authorities do not give "too much weight to documents issued in Somalia," as there are no credible or verifiable registrars for issuing identification cards (5 Aug. 2015).

4. Driver's Licences

For information on driver's licences, see Response to Information Request SOM104445.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Mogadishu Law Office is a Mogadishu-based firm which specializes in commercial disputes, foreign trade and investment, and civil and criminal litigation, among other fields of practice (Mogadishu Law Office n.d.).

[2] The website of HID Global indicates that it is headquartered in Austin, Texas, and that it provides "highly secure government and citizen ID" cards (HID Global 21 Apr. 2014).

[3] The website of HID Global indicates that Al Madina Group is a company that provides "[h]igh-level security products," including secure printing of identification cards and passports (21 Apr. 2014).

[4] Ebtokrat Smart Systems is a "professional system integration company" with a "strong" presence in Somalia (HID Global 21 Apr. 2014).

References

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HID Global. 21 April 2014. "Somalia Introduces New Secure National ID and E-Passport with HID Global and Their Partners." <<http://www.hidglobal.com/press-releases/somalia-introduces-new-secure-national-id-and-e-passport-hid-global-and-their>> [Accessed 10 July 2015]

Hiiraan Online. 5 February 2014. "Somalia Introduces Biometric ID Cards." <http://www.hiiraan.ca/news4/2014/Feb/53175/somalia_introduces_biometric_id_cards.aspx> [Accessed 17 July 2015]

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_____. N.d. Department of State. "Somalia Reciprocity Schedule." <<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/fees/reciprocity-by-country/SO.html>> [Accessed 6 July 2015]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: African Union Mission in Somalia; Centre for Research and Dialogue Somalia; International Organization for Migration in Somalia; Professor of development studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Somalia – Office of the Somalia Special Envoy to the United States of America, Permanent Mission to the United Nations; United Kingdom – Embassy in Somalia; United Nations – Development Programme, High Commissioner for Refugees, Mogadishu Protection Team.

Internet sites, including: *Africa Confidential*; Africa Research Bulletin; Al Jazeera; BBC; Denmark – Danish Immigration Service; ecoinet; European Union – European Commission, European Migration Network; Factiva; Norway – Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre.

Attachments

1. Somalia. N.d. Passport of the Somali Republic. Copy sent to the Research Directorate by the lawyer, Mogadishu Law Office, Mogadishu.
2. Somalia. N.d. National ID Card of the Somali Republic. Copy sent to the Research Directorate by the lawyer, Mogadishu Law Office, Mogadishu.

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