

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## 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 May 2016

### UZH105489.E

Uzbekistan: Information on the *propiska* residence registration system and impact on a person's ability to relocate; requirements and procedures to relocate within the country, including deregistration; role of the *Mahalla* (neighbourhood) Committee in relocation process, including whether the Committee can refuse to de-register a person; recourse and appeal mechanisms to authorize relocation (2015-April 2016)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### 1. Overview

According to sources, residence registration (*propiska*) is compulsory for people residing permanently and temporarily in Uzbekistan (UGF and Human Rights Alliance June 2015, 14; Norway 2013, para. 6.7). Sources further indicate that Uzbekistan enforces permanent and temporary propiskas and that both types are "recorded in the passport" (ibid; UGF 2010, 3). A report by the government of Norway's Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) notes that all Uzbek citizens are required to have passports from the age of 16 (Norway 2013, para. 2).

According to sources, de-registration (*vipiska*) from a previous place of residence is compulsory before an application for a new residence registration can be filed (Austria May 2014, para. 7.3; UGF 2010, 3).

#### 2. Legislation

Chapter III of the 1999 Provisions on Passport System of the Republic of Uzbekistan, titled "Signing in, registration, signing out" contains the following provisions on residence registration:

26. Citizens are signed in (registered) in the place of permanent or temporary residence.

The following persons will be signed in (registered):

- citizens having passports - according to their passport;
- minor children under 16 years of age living apart of their parents (guardians, trustees) - according to birth certificates;
- servicemen residing outside barracks, ships and steamers - according to certificates granted by military units and military institutions;
- foreign citizens and stateless persons arriving for temporary and permanent residence in the Republic of Uzbekistan, living constantly abroad - according to foreign passport or residency permit in the Republic of Uzbekistan.
- Registration of children under 16 years of age living together with their parents (guardians, trustees) is made through entering the information of them into the proper documents of one of the parents (guardian, trustee).

- Citizens who have arrived for temporary residence from one region into another for the term of more than 6 months are registered temporarily and those who arrived for the term of less than 6 months are registered in the established order without records in passports.

[...]

29. Citizens changing the place of residence and also going to another region for temporary residence for the term of more than 6 months except' those going on business, holidays, to the country house, rest or treatment should sign out before the departure. (Uzbekistan 1999, Sec. 26, 29)

### 3. Process to Relocate Within the Country

Section 30 of the 1999 Provisions on Passport System of the Republic of Uzbekistan states that

[s]igning in and out [registration and deregistration] of persons in cities, regions, small towns and also settlements located in the frontier zone is carried out by the bodies of internal affairs and by self governing bodies in the rural regions. (Uzbekistan 1999, Sec. 30)

According to a 2015 report by the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights (UGF) and the Human Rights Alliance [1], residence registration falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior's Office of Visas and Registration (OVIR) (UGF and Human Rights Alliance June 2015, 14). A Landinfo report from 2013 similarly refers to OVIR (Otdel Viz i Registratsii, also known as OVViOG in Uzbek) as a "civilian police department" under the authority of the "Uzbek Department of the Interior" which is responsible for the issuance of passports, entry/exit visas and residence registration (Norway 2013, Sec. 4.1.2). The same source states that OVIR "is probably represented in each city/district" (ibid.).

Sections 31 and 32 of the 1999 Provisions on Passport System of the Republic of Uzbekistan provide information on documents to be submitted for registration, indicating that:

31. To be registered (or signed in) citizens should submit:

- letter on a standard form;
- passport or one of the documents envisaged in p. 26 of the Provisions;
- military-registration documents.

To be signed in or registered in the settlements located in the frontier zone the permit to enter that area received in the established order at the internal affairs office in the place of residence before leaving for the frontier zone should also be submitted.

32. Citizens liable to registration will submit documents for signing in to the officials in charge of passport work within 3 days after their arrival. Documents for signing out are submitted to the same officials (in the place of signing out).

Documents received from the citizens should be passed over to the body in charge of registration (signing in and out) within 3 days. (Uzbekistan 1999, Sec. 31, 32)

According to UGF and the Human Rights Alliance, registration in a location outside of one's residence is not required for stays shorter than three days (UGF et al., 14). For further details on registration, see Section III of the 1999 Provisions on Passport System of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which is attached to this Response.

According to a 2014 country fact sheet on Uzbekistan prepared by the International Organisation for Migration for the Austrian Country of Origin Information Department, residence registration "is associated with heavy expenses and much time" (Austria May 2014, section 7.3).

In her book on migration and identity in Uzbekistan, R. Turaeva, a visiting researcher at the Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde (IfL) in Germany with research experience on Uzbekistan (IfL n.d.), writes that requirements to obtain a propiska in Tashkent include a letter from an employer or a marriage to a person with a Tashkent propiska, as well as proof of accommodation (Turaeva 2016, 77). Concerning securing proof of accommodation, the same source notes that,

[i]t is highly inadvisable to let someone register in your house or flat, because any registered person has legal rights to claim part of the accommodation. ... [E]ither you find a person who can trust you or who has his own flat or house, or you have a relative who owns a flat or house in Tashkent. (ibid.)

In her article on the propiska registration system in Central Asia, Malika Tukmadiyeva, a past visiting fellow with the Central Asia Program at the George Washington University (GW) (GWU n.d.), cites an Uzbek human rights activist as stating that in Tashkent, even for persons with relatives who allow them to register as residents at their property, the waiting time for a propiska can be up to six years (Jan. 2016, 8).

The Austrian Country of Origin Information Department indicates that a state duty of 20 percent of the minimum wage is charged for registration and deregistration at rates set by the Cabinet of Ministers and the Decree of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan from 29 March 1999 (Austria May 2014, para 7.3). However, according to the UGF, the fee for receiving a residency or withdrawal permit is "without limit" as "ordinary citizens often have to pay bribes just to get documents issued without delays" (2010, 4).

#### **4. The Role of *Mahalla* Committees in Deregistration Processes**

According to sources, *Mahallas* are administrative neighbourhood committees, which are still part of the government apparatus in Uzbekistan (Urinboyev 10 Dec. 2011, 117, 119; Norway 2013, 4.1.3) and have "legal status as local self-governing authorities" (ibid.). In his article on the Mahalla system in Uzbekistan, Rustamjon Urinboyev, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Lund who specialises in migration governance issues in post-Soviet societies (Lund University n.d.), writes that Mahallas in Uzbekistan "have become the government's main agency responsible for implementing social welfare programs and maintaining social order and stability" (Urinboyev 10 Dec. 2011, 116). According to the author, "[t]he failure to comply with mahalla norms might lead to harsh non-legal sanctions, and therefore, every resident tries to conform to norms established within the mahalla" (ibid., 126). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The 2010 report by UGF states that "documents on the withdrawal of registration" are issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs at a place of permanent residence (UGF 2010, 3). Similarly, the Austrian fact sheet states that "confirmations of de-registering" are issued by offices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the place of persons permanent residence (Austria May 2014; para 7.3.). However, UGF also notes that every resident of "remote regions," who intends to withdraw their residency, "must obtain ... a vipiska ... in the form of stamped certificate from the mahalla" (UGF 2010, 6).

According to UGF and the Human Rights Alliance, "Mahalla committees play a role in surveillance by monitoring the activities of people who live in their neighbourhoods and [by] providing regular reports to the authorities" (UGF and Human Rights Alliance June 2015, 17). Tukmadiyeva further quotes an Uzbek human rights activist as indicating that Mahallas have a "semi-policing" function while also noting that the functions of such committees include "identifying every newcomer and reporting him or her scrupulously to the state authorities" (Tukmadiyeva Jan. 2016, 7-8).

According to Urinboyev,

Mahalla norms ... condemn those residents who use legal means of dispute resolution. Residents who turn to courts are regarded as uncooperative partners. (Urinboyev, 127)

Information on available recourse and appeal mechanisms to authorize relocation could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### **5. Impact on Relocation**

UGF reports that persons residing in a locale without a registered propiska are considered to be illegal residents under "the established passport regime" (UGF 2010, 5). According to the Austrian government's Country of Origin Information Department, "the overwhelming majority of migrants and returnees" in Uzbekistan "live and work illegally" (Austria May 2014, Sec. 7.3). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. UGF further indicates that persons residing in an area without a propiska are deprived of socio-economic rights, including access to employment, healthcare, education, housing, and marriage (UGF 2010, 3). Tukmadiyeva similarly writes that persons without a proper registration in Uzbekistan are unable to apply for identification documents, social benefits or public housing, register a marriage, access employment or register a business, access public education or healthcare, purchase a property or a vehicle, participate in elections, or have equal access to justice (Jan. 2016, p. 11-12).

##### **5.1 Relocation to Tashkent**

Sources indicate that the government introduced restrictions on residence registration in Tashkent City and in the Tashkent region (Austria May 2014, para. 7.3; Tukmadiyeva Jan 2016, 7) in 2011 (ibid.). The Austrian report states that these have "complicated the lives of many socially vulnerable groups" (Austria May 2014, para. 7.3). According to Turaeva, registration for a permanent propiska in Tashkent is "almost impossible" and the city has been "unofficially closed" (Turaeva 2016, 66). Tukmadiyeva also indicates that Tashkent has become "a virtually closed city, where only public servants ... and the families of citizens already residing there are permitted to move legally" (Tukmadiyeva Jan 2016, 7). However, UGF notes that even relatives of Tashkent homeowners are not able to register their relatives "by lawful means" (UGF 2010, 4).

According to Turaeva, obtaining a temporary propiska in Tashkent, which since 2014 must be renewed every three months, also remains difficult (Turaeva 2016, 66). The same source notes that securing a temporary propiska requires submitting a "long list of documents, including the official agreement of the flat owner and proof of the reason to reside in Tashkent (e.g. employer's request)" (ibid.).

According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015*, "[p]ermission from local authorities was required to move to Tashkent City or Tashkent Region [and] authorities rarely granted such permission without the payment of bribes" (US 13 Apr. 2016, 21). Turaeva writes that the fee for registering a propiska in Tashkent is several thousand US dollars (Turaeva 2016, 66). Similarly, the report by UGF and the Human Rights Alliance indicates that bribes of US\$4,000 to 8,000 were required to obtain propiska in the city of Tashkent or the surrounding region (UGF and Human Rights Alliance June 2015, 14). UGF estimates that there are over one million internal migrant workers in Tashkent without a proper registration (UGF 2010, 5). Of the persons surveyed for the purpose of their report, UGF indicates that 98 percent declared that they were "constantly required" to pay bribes to the police in order to live and work in the capital (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the 2014 fact sheet published by Austria's Country of Origin Information Department, "law enforcement bodies always apply sanctions against migrants" who infringe on the rules of registration and "at any time they can be deported to the places of their permanent residence" (Austria May 2014, para. 7.3). According to information obtained by Landinfo in 2012 from the independent Uzbek news portal Uznews.net [which is no longer operational (Freedom House 2015, 1)], Uzbek citizens were also subject to propiska requirements set out in "secret decrees" by the government (Norway 2013, para. 6.1). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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.

#### Note

[1] The UGF is "a Berlin-based human rights organization that researches, reports, and advocates extensively on human rights issues in Uzbekistan" (UGF et al. June 2015, 4). The Human Rights Alliance is "a Tashkent-based group of activists that monitors the human rights situation in Uzbekistan" (ibid.).

### References

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Uzbekistan. 1999. "[Provisions on Passport System of the Republic of Uzbekistan](#)." [Accessed 23 Mar. 2016]

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Association for Human Rights in Central Asia; Human Rights Alliance; Human Rights Watch; International Partnership for Human Rights; Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Professor of political science, Carleton University; researcher, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Zurich; research fellow, Center for Business and Economic Research, Ball State University; research fellow, Sociology of Law Department, Lund University; UGF; visiting fellow at George Washington University.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; Council of Europe; ecoi.net; Eurasia Foundation; euroasianet; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Factiva; International Organisation for Migration; Open Society Institute; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development; Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty; Transparency International; United Nations – UNDP; United States – Agency for International Development, Department of State; Uzbekistan – Embassy in Brussels, Government Portal, Mahalla Foundation, Ministry of Internal Affairs; World Bank.

## Attachment

[Uzbekistan. 1999. Provisions on Passport System of the Republic of Uzbekistan](#). [Accessed 23 Mar. 2016]

[Tips on how to use this search engine](#).

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