

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](#).

28 July 2017

SOM105843.E

Somalia: Requirements and procedures to obtain a driver's license; appearance of driver's licenses (2015-July 2017)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Issuance of Driver's Licenses in Somalia

A March 2014 article from Al Jazeera reports that in 2013, "Somalia's traffic service" began issuing driver's licenses "for the first time in more than two decades," and made their possession mandatory (Al Jazeera 17 Mar. 2014). A January 2015 article by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) reports that in Kismayo, under the Interim Juba Administration in Southern Somalia [1], "local drivers and vehicle owners have been given a 40-day ultimatum to apply for a driving license and other vehicle passes and permits" (African Union 8 Jan. 2015).

A July 2016 informational booklet by the Government of Alberta on its Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Program states that the "Federal Republic of Somalia has recently begun issuing a new driver's license through the Ministry of Transportation" (Alberta July 2016, 22). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.1 Somaliland

A July 2014 article from the Somaliland Sun, an "independent news source" in Somaliland, reports that the Minister of Public Works and Public Housing in Somaliland announced that as of 1 January 2014, the "booklet type driver['s] license" would be replaced by a new license in the form of a "plastic ID card" (Somaliland Sun 17 July 2014). The article further indicates that, according to the Minister, drivers in Somaliland caught without the new licenses as of 1 January 2015 will "be liable for prosecution in a court of law," and adds that the new licenses are divided among classes A, B, and C to denote the class of vehicle the driver is permitted to drive (Somaliland Sun 17 July 2014). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Requirements and Procedures to Obtain a Driver's License

Information on the requirements and procedures to obtain a driver's license in Somalia was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. A January 2014 article by Sabahi, a news source sponsored by the United States Africa Command that focuses on the Horn of Africa region (AllAfrica n.d.), cites the Mayor of Mogadishu as stating that a national identification card is required to obtain a driver's license (Sabahi 6 Jan. 2014).

Without providing further information, the March 2014 Al Jazeera article reports that five driving schools were licensed to operate in Mogadishu over the previous year, and notes that one of the schools had graduated more than 500 students over a nine-month period since opening (Al Jazeera 17 Mar. 2014).

2.1 Somaliland

Information on the requirements and procedures to obtain a driver's license in Somaliland was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. A December 2013 article from Sabahi cites a Somaliland traffic police officer as stating that "all drivers are verified and tested before they are issued a license" (Sabahi 26 Dec. 2013). The same source, however, quotes the chairman of Hornwatch, a "Hargeisa-based human rights organisation" as stating that "corrupt or improper issuance of driving licenses by the agencies that are responsible for road safety" are linked to an increase in accidents (Sabahi 26 Dec. 2013).

3. Locations to Obtain a Driver's License

A March 2014 report by the Danish Immigration Service and the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo, "an independent body within the Norwegian Immigration Authorities" (Norway n.d.), based on a November 2013 fact-finding mission to Nairobi and Mogadishu, cites an international NGO based in Nairobi as indicating that driver's licenses are being issued in Mogadishu (Denmark and Norway Mar. 2014, 65). The March 2014 Al Jazeera article reports that the capacity of the traffic service in Mogadishu is limited to issuing 20 new driver's licenses per day, in "a city of more than a million people" (Al Jazeera 17 Mar. 2014).

The January 2015 AMISOM article reports that the Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications opened an office in Kismayo, and locals can access "government documents, licenses, and passes" (African Union 8 Jan. 2015). Information on the specific location of this office in Kismayo could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3.1 Somaliland

Without providing further information, the July 2014 Somaliland Sun article indicates that the licenses are available "in all relevant offices" throughout Somaliland (Somaliland Sun 17 July 2014). Further and corroborating information about the locations to obtain a driver's license within Somaliland could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4. Appearance of Driver's Licenses

The Alberta GDL booklet describes the licenses issued by the Ministry of Transportation as "credit-card style," and, without providing further information, indicates that "these licenses possess sufficient security features" to allow for the granting of a "date first licensed" (Alberta July 2016, 22). A sample photograph of a driver's license issued by the Federal Republic of Somalia's Ministry of Transportation as contained in the GDL booklet is attached to this Response (Attachment 1). The Alberta information booklet indicates that "[m]any older Somalia and Somaliland driver's licenses are outright fabrications, however, completely unverifiable by any recognized governing body" (Alberta July 2016, 22). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Photographs and details of a sample of a driver's license issued by the Jubaland State of Somalia, as contained within the Keesing Reference Systems' Document Checker database, are attached to this Response (Attachment 2). According to Keesing, "this driving license was first issued in January 2015 and contains a contact chip," and is 86 millimetres by 54 millimetres, or 3.4 inches by 2.1 inches in size (Keesing Reference Systems n.d.). The source further indicates that the license contains the following information: name, first names, street, residence, date of birth, place of birth, bearer's signature, document number, date valid until, date of issue, issuing country, and place of issuance (Keesing Reference Systems n.d.).

4.1 Somaliland

The July 2014 Somaliland Sun article describes previously-issued licenses in Somaliland as "designed in a booklet form and containing several pages," and describes the new license as being "a simple plastic ID card" with "computerized" card data (Somaliland Sun 17 July 2014). A photograph of examples of the A, B, and C class licenses as included in the Somaliland Sun article, is attached to this Response (Attachment 3). Further and 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 Interim Juba Administration is a [f]ederal [s]tate in southern Somalia formed on 15 May 2013 and brings together Middle Juba, Lower Juba and Gedo regions under one [f]ederal [s]tate recognized locally and internationally in line with the federal constitution of Somalia" (African Union 8 Jan. 2015).

References

Al Jazeera. 17 March 2014. Hamza Mohamed. "[Somali Traffic Cops Battle Gridlock and Chaos.](#)" [Accessed 28 June 2017]

Alberta. July 2016. Special Investigations Unit (SIU). "[Somalia and Somaliland.](#)" *Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Exemption Program.* [Accessed 12 July 2017]

AllAfrica. N.d. "[Sabahi \(Washington, DC\).](#)" [Accessed 13 July 2017]

African Union. 8 January 2015. African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). "[Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications Opens Office in Kismayo.](#)" [Accessed 28 June 2017]

Denmark and Norway. March 2014. Danish Immigration Service and Landinfo. "[Update on Security and Protection Issues in Mogadishu and South-Central Somalia.](#)" Joint Report from the Danish Immigration Service's and the Norwegian Landinfo's Fact Finding Mission to Nairobi, Kenya and Mogadishu, Somalia. [Accessed 13 July 2017]

Keesing Reference Systems. N.d. "[Somalia - SOM - Driving License.](#)" [Accessed 13 July 2017]

[Norway. N.d. "English."](#) [Accessed 27 July 2017]

Sabahi. 6 January 2014. Abdi Moalim. "Somalia Faces Logistical Challenges in Issuing New Passports." (Factiva) [Accessed 28 June 2017]

Sabahi. 26 December 2013. Barkhad Dahir. "Uptick in Road Accidents in Somaliland Causes Concern." (Factiva) [Accessed 28 June 2017]

Somaliland Sun. 17 July 2014. Latifa Yusuf Masai. "[Somaliland: State Launches New Generation Driving License.](#)" [Accessed 12 July 2017]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: African Union – Mission in Somalia; International Organization for Migration – office in Somalia; Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke; Somali Centre for Family Services, Ottawa; Somalia – Embassy in Washington, D.C., Ministry of Public Works and Transportation; UN – UNHCR office in Kenya.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; BBC; ecoi.net; Factiva; Human Rights Watch; IRIN; Jowhar; Mareeg; Radio Bar-Kulan; Radio Dalsan; Radio Shabelle; Raxanreeb; Reuters; SlateAfrique; UN – Refworld; US – Department of State.

Attachments

1. Alberta. July 2016. Special Investigations Unit (SIU). "Somalia and Somaliland." [Graduated Driver Licensing \(GDL\) Exemption Program: Somalia and Somaliland.](#) Page 22. [Accessed 12 July 2017]
2. Keesing Reference Systems. N.d. "[Somalia - SOM - Driving License.](#)" [Accessed 13 July 2017]
3. Somaliland Sun. 17 July 2014. Latifa Yusuf Masai. "[Somaliland: State Launches New Generation Driving License.](#)" [Accessed 12 July 2017]

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