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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](#).

6 March 2017

SOM105755.E

Somalia: Ability to obtain documentation, including medical, education, and employment records; effectiveness of the postal service, on both the domestic and international level
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Availability of and Ability to Obtain Documentation

According to a 2015 report on Somalia by the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "[t]here are no good record-keeping systems in place in Somalia" (UK 21 Jan. 2015). According to the United States (US) Department of State's Country Reciprocity Schedule for Somalia,

there continues to be no recognized competent civil authority to issue civil documents. The Government of Somalia ceased to exist in December of 1990, and the country underwent a destructive and brutal civil war, in the course of which most records were destroyed. Those few records not destroyed are in the hands of private individuals or are otherwise not retrievable. (US n.d.a.)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Executive Director of the Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke [1] stated that

due to the civil war all personal records were destroyed. Therefore, an infrastructure [of documentation] does not exist in Somalia that is comparable to Canada. Regarding current personal records, the Somali government is working on proper record keeping; however, they are not fully functional like Canada. (Executive Director 21 Feb. 2017)

In further correspondence, the Executive Director explained that "the standard norm" when seeking to obtain Somali documentation, from within Somalia or from abroad, is that "you have to apply in person, fill out forms and pay the ... fee" (Executive Director 27 Feb. 2017). The same source added that "since there is no good infrastructure and strong government in Somalia, [documentation] can be obtain[ed] ... by [a] third party who knows you, someone who knows the department, [or] high level government officials who [know] you or your family" (Executive Director 27 Feb. 2017). The Executive Director further stated that "the level of corruption and the lack of good infrastructure in Somalia make [Somali documents] vulnerable to [be] obtain[ed] ... by anybody who wants to get them" (Executive Director 27 Feb. 2017).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a Somali-based representative of the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated, based on his own knowledge and personal opinion, that

[i]n the absence of [a] proper functioning government, it was easy to obtain documents [on the] Somali market place, however, that has stopped in 2014 when the government did [a] major crackdown on markets and associated people.

Currently all documents and certificates are issued by Mogadishu Municipality and it relies on information provided by the individual concerned (with witnesses when appropriate) or relatives. (Representative of OCHA 19 Feb. 2017)

In further correspondence, the same source explained that "there were black markets in and around the capital, [which tended] to produce counterfeit documents including birth certificates" (Representative of OCHA 26 Feb. 2017). The same source added that to his knowledge "this has stopped, at least in Mogadishu; now, the Mogadishu Municipality produces birth, marriage [and] related docs" (Representative of OCHA 26 Feb. 2017).

The OCHA representative further stated, based on his own knowledge and personal opinion, that "[p]rior to 1991, birth certificates were only issued in urban areas" (Representative of OCHA 19 Feb. 2017). The same source added that "birth certificates are rarely issued, and in principle, [a birth certificate] is only issued if the child is born in a hospital. It's worth [noting that] the majority of babies are born at home" (Representative of OCHA 19 Feb. 2017).

The US Country Reciprocity Schedule indicates that the following documents are "unavailable": birth certificates; death certificates; marriage certificates; divorce certificates; adoption certificates; identity card; police, court, prison records; and military records (US n.d.a.).

The OCHA representative indicated that "medical, educational, and employment records [are] issued by various private agencies, such as private hospitals, companies, universities, etcetera" (Representative of OCHA 19 Feb. 2017). The Executive Director of the Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke stated that "[i]t is feasible to obtain documentation from Somalia such as passports, medical, educational and employment records. However, these records can only be obtained in major cities, for a fee" (Executive Director 21 Feb. 2017).

For more information on the accessibility of official documentation in Somalia, see Response to Information Request SOM104445 of June 2013.

1.1 Education Records

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Admission and Enrollment Office of Mogadishu University stated that "Mogadishu University issues to its students who have attended a certificate of graduation and a transcript" (Mogadishu University 20 Feb. 2017). Sample copies of an "old certificate," an "updated certificate," and a "transcript" (Mogadishu University 20 Feb. 2017), sent to the Research Directorate by the representative of the Admission and Enrollment Office, are attached to this Response (Attachment 1, 2 and 3, respectively). The representative of Mogadishu University further indicated that "[a] former student who has attended the university can request documents after such former student satisfies the conditions of the Admissions and Enrollment [Department] that issues such documents" (Mogadishu University 20 Feb. 2017). In further correspondence, the same source explained that such conditions include the completion of the clearance form that consists of:

- a. financial clearance to check his/[her] balance;
- b. departmental clearance to check his/her marks;
- c. library clearance to check if he/she borrowed books from the library [which have not been returned]. (Mogadishu University 26 Feb. 2017)

A sample copy of a clearance form, sent to the Research Directorate by the representative of the Admission and Enrollment Office, is attached to this Response (Attachment 4). The representative of Mogadishu University stated that the student must also "enroll [in] the alumni club of the university graduates" and obtain an alumni ID (Mogadishu University 26 Feb. 2017). According to the same source, students who are out of the country can send an "official e-mail" to the Admission and Enrollment Office of the University indicating that a representative can obtain his/her certificate (Mogadishu University 26 Feb. 2017).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Somalia stated that "it is possible upon the request of the students and payment of any fees required" to obtain a university transcript or other educational records from abroad (University of Somalia 22 Feb. 2017). The Vice Chancellor stated that "students or alumni can send such requests to the University Registrar and Deputy VC for Academic Affairs using their official email I.D." (University of Somalia 22 Feb. 2017). The Vice Chancellor further stated that the University of Somalia issues the following "main documents" to students of the university:

- a. Degree certificate, upon successful completion of the required academic, financial, and other requirements;
- b. Official transcript;

- c. Bona Fide student certification;
- d. Other documents (financial clearance, registration papers, receipts, academic credit transfer documents, etc.). (University of Somalia 22 Feb. 2017)

The Vice Chancellor indicated that the "University documents are issued in English and on standard forms with the University logo" (University of Somalia 22 Feb. 2017).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Head of International Relations at Plasma University stated that Plasma University, which has "regional campuses in the main cities in Somalia," issues the following "academic rewards" to its graduates in "hard copy" form: "Masters, postgraduate diploma, Bachelor degrees, Post basic diploma, Associate degree and professional certificates" (Plasma University 1 Mar. 2017). The same source further stated that a graduate has the "right to apply or request [a] transcript from abroad if he/she has fully completed all the program requirements" by

- a. Fill[ing in a] transcript request form;
- b. Following the student] verification process from the record office. (Plasma University 1 Mar. 2017)

Further and corroborating information on the availability of and the ability to obtain education records in Somalia could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2 Medical Records

Information on the availability of medical records was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A December 2006 article by IRIN reports an incident in Dinsore, where "Somali government and Ethiopian troops entered a hospital run by the medical charity, Médecins Sans Frontières" and confiscated "all patients' medical records" (UN 29 Dec. 2006). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2015*, "Al-Shabaab restricted medical care, including restricting civilian travel to other areas for medical care, destroying medications provided by humanitarian agencies, and closing medical clinics" (US 13 Apr. 2016, 17).

According to the website of Mogadishu City Hospital, the hospital has a "Medical Records and Information Department" and the hospital has

records and information services for [the] management of hospital information[,], including filing and retrieval of patient's records and statistical evaluation of hospital performance (Mogadishu City Hospital n.d.)

Information on procedures to obtain medical records in Somalia could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Availability and Effectiveness of Postal Services

According to the telecommunications section of the Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA) [2] for Somalia, which was carried out between September and December 2013 (UN 7 June 2016), and updated in 2014, "[t]he postal service of Somalia has been un-functional for a long time now" (UN 24 Mar. 2014). A 2013 Reuters article reports that "the challenges to bringing [Somalia] back into the global postal community are manifold - there are no functioning post offices, only the main roads are named and most houses do not have a number" (Reuters 26 Apr. 2013). The same source indicates that the ongoing struggle with "al Qaeda-linked insurgents" and the prevalence of pirates in "parts of the coastline" are additional factors (Reuters 26 Apr. 2013).

The same source further cites the spokesman of Universal Postal Union (UPU) [3] as stating that "Somalia had created an office at the airport to handle mail moving in and out of the country, initially to service the government, embassies and universities" (Reuters 26 Apr. 2013). According to an October 2013 press release of the UPU, "[i]n 1991, Somalia had some 100 post offices and a postal staff of 2,165. Today there is one general post office in the capital and some 25 staff" (UPU 31 Oct. 2013). According to the same source, "[a]fter 23 years without postal services," Somalia's international mailing services were set to resume "from 1 November 2013, thanks to an agreement concluded with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and its postal operator, Emirates Post" (UPU 31 Oct. 2013). According to the same source, "[t]he agreement [reached in April] ... covers the forwarding and processing of inbound and outbound letter post until 31 December 2014" (UPU 31 Oct. 2013). Similarly, the LCA indicates that

[in] mid-2013 the [M]inister of [I]nformation [P]osts and Telecommunication signed an agreement with the [UAE] Posts to process mail to and from Somalia. Emirates Post's mail transit hub at Dubai International Airport was then used to forward mail from Somalia to various destinations. (UN 24 Mar. 2014)

According to an October 2014 article by the BBC, "Somalia's government has launched its first postal service in more than two decades" and it has "introduced postcodes nationwide for the first time in the country's history" (BBC 13 Oct. 2014). The same source cites the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications as stating that "Somalis would now be able to receive letters from abroad" and that the "next phase would be to make it possible for them to send letters to friends and relatives who live abroad" (BBC 13 Oct. 2014). The BBC reports that "[m]ost Somalis communicate via email and mobile phone or send handwritten letters via friends" (BBC 13 Oct. 2014). A 2015 news article by the Emirates Post Group cites the Somali Minister of Information, Posts and Telecommunications as stating that "a lot remains to be done to restore the country's unused postal infrastructure" and that "reviving the parcel service [is] a priority" (UAE 5 Nov. 2015). Further and corroborating information on the reinstatement of the postal services, or their functionality could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.1 International Postal and Courier Service Providers

In a "Country Regulations Topics" article regarding import and export to Iran, United Parcel Service (UPS) indicates that Somalia is "subject to complicated [US Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control] economic sanctions that force UPS to suspend service completely" (UPS Jan. 2011). According to UPS, "[t]he service suspension applies to exports and imports" and the "service ban ... includes the transport of mail or parcels to individuals, institutions, organizations, embassies and consulates of the restricted country in a non-restricted third country" (UPS Jan. 2011). The same source further notes that

[a]n exception is permitted for approved shipments transported via [Supply Chain Solutions] air/ocean forwarding services. Request for approval can be made by the UPS salesperson via the Embargoed and Sanctioned Country Matrix and Approval Form found on the UPS Customs and Trade Compliance intranet site. (UPS Jan. 2011)

Further information on the availability of UPS services to and from Somalia could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

When selecting Somalia on the Fedex website, a pop up alert states that, "[d]ue to the current trade embargo, we currently do not offer services to or from this country" (Fedex n.d.). The website of the United States Postal Service (USPS) indicates, regarding country conditions for mailing to Somalia, that "[a]ll mail services are suspended" (US n.d.b.).

According to the LCA, Deutsche Post DHL (DHL) operates in Mogadishu and "provides postal services" (UN 24 Mar. 2014). The website of DHL provides the address for a DHL Express location in Mogadishu (DHL Express n.d.). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the DHL Express Vice President and Head of Legal Services East Europe Middle East Africa, who obtained information from the DHL Express Agent for Somalia, stated that

DHL does not classify our services as "postal services", but rather "express courier services" which are distinct from basic postal services. That said, [DHL does] offer as part of those "express courier services" the ability to carry documents from all parts of Somalia to the rest of the world (including Canada), and from the rest of the world (including Canada) to Somalia. In terms of shipments of parcels, [DHL] also offer[s] as part of those express courier services the ability to carry parcels from all parts of the rest of the world (including Canada) to Somalia, though certain outbound destinations have restrictions on them in terms of carriage of outbound parcels from Somalia. (DHL Express 21 Feb. 2017)

The same source further indicated that

DHL does not focus on the carriage of domestic express courier services within Somalia, however [DHL does] offer services between major cities/towns, being primarily Mogadishu, Bossaso, Gardo, Garowe, Galkayo. [DHL] sometime[s] do[es] deliveries to Kismayo, Baidoa, Giohar and Beletwayne. (DHL Express 21 Feb. 2017)

LCA further reports that Australia Post operates in Mogadishu and "mostly provides sea mail parcel delivery services to Somalia destinations" (UN 24 Mar. 2014). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of Australia Post's customer service indicated that to his knowledge "Australia Post does not have any staff in Somalia. [Australia Post] offer[s] one postal service which is a Sea Mail taking two to three months. When the item arrives in Somalia, delivery is handled by the local postal service" (Representative of Australia Post 13 Feb. 2017). According to the website of Australia Post, "International Express and all Air Mail services to Somalia remain suspended, including International Registered Post. Sea mail parcel service is still available" (Australia Post n.d.). According to the same source, "Somalia does not accept International Express - Parcels merchandise. It only accepts [International] Express

documents or business papers" (Australia Post n.d.). The website further states that "International Express (carried via the [Express Mail Service] network) - Parcels delivers only to Mogadishu, Berbera (via Djibouti) and Hargeysa (via Djibouti)" (Australia Post n.d.).

According to the website of Canada Post, the following international postal services are not available to Somalia: air service, including letter-post, parcels and "*Priority™ Worldwide*", and surface service, including letter-post and parcels (Canada n.d. italics in original).

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.

Notes

[1] The Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke is a "non-profit community based organization estab[li]shed in 1987. The association is engaged in the provision of a wide range of services to Somali immigrants and refugees. These services are aimed at assisting Somali newcomers adjust to the new way of life in Canada" (Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke n.d.).

[2] The LCA is a "long-standing tool of WFP [World Food Programme] Logistics. Since 2008, it has provided an important source of information related to the logistics infrastructure and services in a given country[.] It is a tool for organising that information in a standard way across multiple countries and a means of sharing that information both within WFP and with the humanitarian community globally" (UN 1 Feb. 2016).

[3] According to its website, the UPU is an international organization with 192 member countries, which is the "primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players. It helps to ensure a truly universal network of up-to-date products and services" (UPU n.d.).

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Plasma University. 1 March 2017. Correspondence of the Head of International Relations to the Research Directorate.

Representative, Australia Post. 13 February 2017. Customer Service. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

Representative, United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Somalia. 26 February 2017. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

Representative, United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Somalia. 19 February 2017. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

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United States (US). N.d.b. United States Postal Service. "[Country Conditions for Mailing - Somalia.](#)" [Accessed 8 Feb. 2017]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Banadir Hospital; Canadian Association of Somali Lawyers; International Medical Corps; International Organization for Migration Mission in Somalia, Nairobi Office; Mogadishu City Hospital; Somali Medical Association; Somalia – Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Embassy in Washington, D.C., Ministry of Information and Communication; Universal Postal Union.

Internet sites, including: Banadir Hospital; Canadian Association of Somali Lawyers; Diplomat News Network; ecoinet; Factiva; International Medical Corps; International Organization for Migration Mission for East and Horn of Africa; Keesing's Document Checker; Médecins Sans Frontières; Mogadishu University; Plasma University; Postal Technology International; Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke; Somali Medical Association; Somalia – Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Embassy in Washington, D.C., Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunication; UN – Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Reliefweb, High Commissioner for Refugees; University of Somalia; US – Department of State, CIA.

Attachments

1. Mogadishu University. N.d. Copy of an old certificate. Sent to the Research Directorate by a representative of the Admission and Enrollment Office of Mogadishu University, 20 February 2017.
2. Mogadishu University. N.d. Copy of an updated certificate. Sent to the Research Directorate by a representative of the Admission and Enrollment Office of Mogadishu University, 20 February 2017.

3. Mogadishu University. N.d. Copy of a transcript. Sent to the Research Directorate by a representative of the Admission and Enrollment Office of Mogadishu University, 20 February 2017.
4. Mogadishu University. N.d. Copy of clearance form. Sent to the Research Directorate by a representative of the Admission and Enrollment Office of Mogadishu University, 26 February 2017.

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