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Liberia: Passport appearance and security features; how to obtain a passport; passport specimen (2015-July 2017)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Liberian Passports

The Liberia Online Passport Service explains that the Liberia Passport Office, which falls under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), issues Liberian passports (Liberia n.d.a).

According to the Liberia Reciprocity Schedule of the United States (US) Department of State, the “primary passport” currently issued by the Government of Liberia to its nationals is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) passport (US n.d.). A 2015 study on nationality, migration and statelessness in West Africa, prepared by a consultant for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), indicates that the ECOWAS passport is a common format passport that ECOWAS Member states have gradually been introducing since 2000 (Manby June 2015, 81, 87). According to sources, Liberia adopted the ECOWAS passport in 2007 (The Inquirer 15 Feb. 2007; New Liberian 5 Nov. 2009).


The Internet site of the Liberian daily Front Page Africa indicates that the Liberian Biometric ECOWAS Passport Application Center in the Schengen Zone opened its doors to the Liberian embassy in Brussels on 14 Mar. 2015, to serve Liberians in Europe (Front Page Africa 18 Mar. 2015). Similarly, the Internet site of the embassy of Liberia in Berlin informs nationals of Liberia under its jurisdiction, namely, those residing in Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Germany, that the ECOWAS biometric passport was officially launched on 14 Mar. 2015, at the embassy of Liberia in Brussels (Liberia n.d.b).

shall be issued for five years, while Diplomatic, Official and Service Passports shall be issued for two
years” (Liberia Dec. 2012, art. 3(6)). The Internet site of the Public Register of Authentic Travel and Identity
Documents Online (PRADO) of the European Union (EU) reports that ordinary, diplomatic and service/official
passports are valid for five years (EU 27 June 2017).

According to the Liberia Reciprocity Schedule of the US Department of State, Liberia has certified that
“all passports issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hand written, biometric and ECOWAS) are valid for
international travel” (US. n.d.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by
the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Appearance and Security Features

According to the Liberia Online Passport Service, the Liberian ordinary passport is: “Dark Green in color.
It has the ECOWAS emblem on the front page and that of Liberia on the back page” (Liberia n.d.a). A research
article titled Promoting Integration Through Mobility: Free Movement and the ECOWAS Protocol, prepared by
Aderanto Adepoju, Alistair Boulton and Mariah Levin [1] and published in December 2007 by the UNHCR,
reports that the ECOWAS passport has the ECOWAS emblem on the front cover (Adepoju et al. Dec. 2007, 6).
The PRADO Internet site provides, for Liberia, three specimen of the following passports, which were first
issued on 1 July 2010: the ordinary passport, the diplomatic passport and the service/official passport (EU
27 June 2017). Copies of the specimen provided by PRADO, including security features, are attached to this
Response (attachments 2, 3 and 4). On the Internet site of the Dutch national police database, the Electronic
Document Information System on Network (EDISON TD), the same specimens have been struck out with a red
X, and some indicate the date “04-2010” (EDISON TD n.d.).

3. How to Obtain a Passport

According to the MOFA Internet site, Liberians who want to apply for a passport in person must first
obtain an application from the MOFA Division of Passports and Visas [in Monrovia (Liberia n.d.d)] or download
the form from the following Internet site: www.mofa.gov.lr (Liberia 25 Oct. 2013). A copy of the application
form is attached to this Response (Attachment 5). The MOFA Internet site reports that, after completing the
application form, applicants must attach a passport size photograph and one of the following documents: birth
certificate, old or existing passport, travel certificate or laissez-passer, certificate of citizenship or
naturalization or court decree of oath of allegiance (Liberia 25 Oct. 2013). Without providing any further
details, the same source indicates that applicants must submit everything between 8:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.,
from Monday to Friday, that an interview date is then scheduled (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for adults
aged 18 and above, and Tuesdays and Thursdays for children aged 17 years and below), that payment must
be made on site upon completion of the interview and that the passports will be ready for pickup within seven
to ten working days (Liberia 25 Oct. 2013).

According to the Regulations, ECOWAS passport application fees were US$23 in 2012 (Liberia Dec. 2012,
art. 5). In 2015, sources reported that the fee for a biometric ECOWAS passport application was increasing to

3.1 Applying for a Passport Online

The Liberia Online Passport Service explains that applicants can apply for a passport online by
completing the online application form and by making an online payment (Liberia n.d.a). According to the
same source, upon completion of payment for the application, applicants will be given a transaction number
and must book an appointment for an inperson interview at an application centre, and, after printing the online
application receipt, they must attach the required documents [a passport size photograph and proof of
citizenship (birth certificate, old passport, national ID or naturalization documents)] (Liberia n.d.a). Article 2 of the Regulations, attached to this Response (Attachment 1), refers to the documents that
attest to Liberian citizenship.

The Liberia Online Passport Service reports that the documents must be presented to the application
centre at the time of the interview, where a photograph, fingerprints and signature will be taken; applicants
will then be issued a passport application receipt with the passport collection date (Liberia n.d.a). According to
the same source, Liberians living abroad must present a prepaid mailing envelopment for the return of the
passport (Liberia n.d.a).

3.2 Applying for a Passport Abroad

According to the Liberia Online Passport Service, Liberians abroad can apply for a passport at the
following offices:
• embassy of Liberia in London;
• embassy of Liberia in Washington;
• consulate general of Liberia in New York;
• embassy of Liberia in Brussels;
• embassy of Liberia in Accra (Liberia n.d.d).

According to the Internet site of the embassy of Liberia in Brussels, applicants who want to obtain a passport must complete their application on the Internet site of the Liberia Online Passport Service, make payment of US$205 and obtain a confirmation (Liberia s.d.e). According to the same source, they must then contact the embassy by telephone or email to arrange an interview, at which they must bring the following documents: birth certificate, previous passport, naturalization certificate; passports are then issued within four to six weeks (Liberia n.d.e).

The embassy of Liberia in Washington refers applicants to the Liberia Online Passport Service (Liberia n.d.f). The consulate general of Liberia in New York provides an email address for any inquiries regarding the Liberian ECOWAS biometric passport (Liberia n.d.g). Information on the procedures of the embassies of Accra and London could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the Regulations, the fee for an ECOWAS passport application filed at a mission outside Liberia is US$200 (Liberia Dec. 2012, art. 5).

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 Promoting Integration Through Mobility: Free Movement and the ECOWAS Protocol research article presents the authors as follows: "Aderanto Adepoju, Chief Executive, Human Resources Development Centre, Lagos, Nigeria ... Alistair Boulton, UNHCR, Switzerland ... Mariah Levin, Harvard University and Tufts University ... " (Adepoju et al. Dec. 2007)

References


Front Page Africa. 18 March 2015. "Liberia Unveils Biometric Ecowas Passports in Europe." (Factiva)

The Inquirer. 15 February 2007. "Ecowas Passport Introduced." (Factiva) [24 Nov. 2016]


Additional Sources Consulted


Internet sites, including: ecoli.net; Factiva; Keesing Reference Systems; United Nations – Refworld.

Attachments


