

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.

14 May 2013

ZZZ104428.E

Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia: Description of the Ethiopian Kebele/citizenship card; whether Saudi Arabia issues identity cards for Ethiopian nationals, including description
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. The Ethiopian Kebele Card

The US Department of State Country Reciprocity Schedule for Ethiopia states that "[i]dentity cards are issued by 'kebeles' ['neighbourhoods or wards' (US 19 Apr. 2013)] to those eighteen and older, and by schools to students. There is no uniform identification document" (n.d.). Further information on kebele cards could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

An undated document on the Ethiopian e-services website states that all residents of Addis Ababa over the age of 18 must carry a "resident ID card" that "describes the owner of the card in terms of name, gender, domicile, ethnicity, date of birth, identification number and the like" (Ethiopia n.d.). A news article published on 25 October 2012 by *Addis Fortune*, a weekly English-language business newspaper based in Addis Ababa (*Addis Fortune* n.d.), states that Ethiopia "is in the process of launching an ultramodern national identification card issuance system" to replace the "manual identification cards issued at Kebeles - and mo[re] recently Woredas" [districts, each comprising a varying number of kebeles (Human Rights Watch Mar. 2010, 17)] (*Addis Fortune* 25 Oct. 2012). Further information on the new cards could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information on whether Saudi Arabia issues identity cards that are specifically for Ethiopian nationals could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. However, the following information on Saudi Arabian Residence Permits and Ethiopian origin ID cards issued by Ethiopian authorities may be of interest.

2. The Saudi Arabian Residence Permit (Iqama)

An official at the Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington, D.C., stated in an interview with the Research Directorate on 10 May 2013 that there is a document, called an iqama, which is a residency document issued to non-Saudi nationals living in Saudi Arabia. The document is the same regardless of the individual's country of origin (Saudi Arabia 10 May 2013). Keesing Reference Systems indicates that the document is valid for a maximum of two years (n.d.a). The Saudi Arabia national e-government portal states that the iqama is obligatory and must be renewed every one or two years (Saudi Arabia n.d.a).

The US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011* states that "[t]he government requires noncitizen legal residents to carry an identity card containing a religious designation for 'Muslim' or 'non-Muslim.' Older residency cards bear more specific religious designations such as 'Christian'" (30 July 2012, 7). Keesing Reference Systems indicates that the residence permit includes the holder's name, the document number, and the issuing authority (n.d.b). A moving management company based in Dubai that provides international relocation services (Move One Inc. n.d.), whose website includes information for non-Saudi Arabian nationals relocating to Saudi Arabia, indicates that the following information appears on the iqama:

the holder's name, the card expiration date, the holder's job position, the holder's nationality, and the holder's employer (Move One Inc. 8 May 2012).

The information provided on the website of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of the Interior indicates that the residence permit for the head of a household "includes [the] permit for his wife and legal minors (sons and daughters)" (n.d.b). Children above the age of 18 "must be a passport holder and obtain a separate visa" (ibid.). The Ministry of the Interior also notes that "[i]f minor children to be added were born in Saudi Arabia, the original birth certificates and copies of them should be submitted" in order to add them to the residence permit (n.d.c). A photo of a Saudi Arabian residence permit, from Keesing Reference Systems, is attached to this Response.

3. The Ethiopian Origin ID Card

The Ethiopian Origin ID Card (also referred to as "Yellow Card") is a document issued by the Ethiopian authorities to

identify foreign nationals of Ethiopian [o]rigin who have acquired foreign nationality and to entitle them to various rights and privileges of Ethiopian nationals by lifting the legal restrictions imposed on them when they lost their Ethiopian nationality. (Ethiopia Sept. 2011, 25)

Application for this card requires that the applicant provides proof of their Ethiopian origin (ibid., 26). The Ethiopian Origin ID Card is issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to people of Ethiopian origin who are abroad and by the Authority for Security, Immigration and Refugee Affairs to people of Ethiopian origin who are in Ethiopia (ibid.).

Further information on the issuance procedure for the Ethiopian Origin ID Card and on the rights of the holder is available in Section 8 of the document entitled *Basic Information for Ethiopians in the Diaspora*, which was published by the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and attached to 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.

References

Addis Fortune. 25 October 2012. Mahlet Mesfin. "'Big-Brother' Comes to Ethiopia for Nearly One Billion Birr." <<http://addisfortune.net/articles/big-brother-comes-toethiopiafor-nearly-one-billion-birr/>> [Accessed 10 May 2013]

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Keesing Reference Systems. N.d.a. "Saudi Arabia - SAU - Residence Permits - General." <www.documentchecker.com/rdo.dll/id> [Accessed 10 May 2013]

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The following source was unable to provide information: Saudi Arabia – Embassy in Canada. The Ethiopian Consulate in Canada was unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: AllAfrica.com; Arab News; British Broadcasting Corporation; ecoi.net; Ethiopia – Consulate in Canada, Embassy in Australia, Embassy in United Kingdom, Embassy in United States; Factiva; Saudi Arabia – Embassy in United States; United Nations – Refworld.

Attachments

1. Keesing Reference Systems. N.d.a. "Saudi Arabia - SAU - Residence Permits - General." <www.documentchecker.com/rdo.dll/id> [Accessed 10 May 2013]

2. Ethiopia. September 2011. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Basic Information for Ethiopians in the Diaspora*. Section 8. <<http://www.ethiopianembassy.org/PDF/doc-information-book-diaspora-2012.pdf>> [Accessed 10 May 2013]

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