

Somalia

Response to Information Request Number:	SOM00003.ZNK
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Subject:	Somalia: Birth certificates
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, D.C.
Keywords:	Somalia

Query:

1. Do any of the self-proclaimed governments and/or militias, e.g. Somaliland, Puntland, issue birth certificates?
2. Is clan or sub-clan identity, or the clan/sub-clan identity of one or both parents, documented on Somali birth certificates?
3. Are (were) Somali birth certificates issued in English?

Response:

- 1. Do any of the self-proclaimed governments and militias, e.g. Somaliland, Puntland, issue birth certificates?**

A professor at California State University, Chico, states that because there has been no official national government structure in Somalia since the deposition of Barre in 1991, it is difficult to know whether birth certificates are currently issued to the citizens of what was once Somalia, but it is not probable (23 March, 26 May 2000). Prior to 1991, birth certificates were only issued in urban areas in Somalia (Professor 23 March 2000; Researcher 27 March 2000).

A researcher at CERI in France states that people often resort to buying documents "on the market place through private traders" because "there is no alternative" and they must show documents in order to travel (27 March, 4 April 2000). In the absence of an official government in Somalia, it is very easy to obtain documents in Somali marketplaces such as Bakara, Karan, and Monopolio in Mogadishu, and Bosaso and Hargeysa, but these documents are for purposes such as international travel and are worthless in Somalia (Professor 23 March 2000; Researcher 27 March, 4 April 2000).

- 2. Is clan or sub-clan identity, or the clan/sub-clan identity of one or both parents, documented on Somali birth certificates?**

Maintaining that they do not believe birth certificates are officially produced today in Somalia, the country experts contacted by the RIC state that as far as they know, clan and/or sub-clan identity was not documented on Somali birth certificates which were issued under the Barre government (prior to 1991) (Professor 23 March 2000; Researcher 27 March, 4 April 2000).

- 3. Are (were) Somali birth certificates issued in English?**

Until the official adoption of Somali orthography in the early 1970s, Somali birth certificates were issued in English or Italian, according to where people lived (Researcher 4 April 2000). One source states that by 1973, and the other that by 1975-76, and until 1991 when official issuance of birth certificates most likely ceased with the overthrow of Barre, birth certificates issued in Somalia would most likely be in the Somali language (*Af-somaaligga*), whereas Italian and English would have been used only by a small elite (Professor 23 March, 26 May 2000; Researcher 4 April 2000).

The shift to the Somali language in all official correspondence and documentation in Somalia in the early to mid-1970s would render English "quite unusual" on a Somali birth certificate issued between 1973 and 1991 (Professor 23 March 2000; Researcher 4 April 2000).

This response was prepared after contacting country condition experts and researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC, including the World Wide Web, within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

References:

Professor of African history, California State University, Chico. 23 March, 26 May 2000. Telephone interviews.

Researcher, CERI. 27 March, 4 April 2000. Email correspondence.

Last Modified 06/14/2002