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Iran: Types of exit permits issued to individuals for travel abroad; the difference between an exit permit and an exit stamp; how these permits are obtained and whether they are placed inside the passport or take some other form; restrictions applied to certain categories of applicants; the criteria for multiple and single-exit permission; exit fees; whether exit permission is set for a specified time period and the penalties, if any, for overstay; countries that Iranians can travel to without a visa (2004 - February 2006)

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Current information on exit permits and visas was limited among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. Accordingly, the most recent information available is presented even if it predates the research period.

Difference between exit permit and exit stamp

In a 1 March 2006 telephone interview, an official at the Embassy for Iran in Ottawa provided the following information about the difference between exit permits and exit stamps. Iranians who wish to travel abroad must apply for an exit permit. After verification of the applicant's background, an exit permit is stamped in the applicant's passport indicating that the applicant is permitted to leave the country. However, the entry/exit stamp, which indicates the date of entry into and exit from Iran, is different from the exit permit stamp. This entry/exit stamp is similar to what is used in other countries to indicate the date of departure or return of a passport holder.

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Exit permits

According to the March 2006 *Travel Information Manual* (TIM) published by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), exit permits are required for:

1. non-nationals of Iran whose entry visa - issued abroad - is not provided with a combined entry/exit permit. They must obtain an exit permit from the Foreigners Service of the Ministry of Interior. Foreigners must have registered within 48 hours after entry [into] Iran.
2. nationals of Iran, who must obtain passport endorsed with exit permit from

the police department. There are 3 types of exit permits: a) Green exit stamp: valid as long as passport validity; b) Blue exit stamp: valid for the period mentioned; c) Red exit stamp: valid for one exit only (TIM Mar. 2006, 228).

Similarly, the August 2005 United States (US) Department of State *Consular Information Sheet* for Iran noted that

[a]ll Iranian nationals, including American-Iranian nationals, should have an exit permit stamped in their passports. The stamp is affixed to page 11 or 13 of the Iranian passport when it is issued and remains valid until the expiration date of the passport (25 Aug. 2005).

A 2000 Danish Immigration Service report on Iran explained that all Iranian passport holders require "exit visa" stamps to travel abroad (Denmark 1 Oct. 2000, 9-10). The report added that this "exit visa" is stamped on page 10 of an Iranian passport (ibid.).

In March 2006 correspondence to the Research Directorate, however, an official from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that exit visas were not required for Iranian nationals, but that individuals "who work in sensitive fields, such as atomic energy or military industries" should apply for an exit permit "each time they want to leave Iran" (31 Mar. 2006, Sec. 3). Furthermore, in applying for a passport, married women require their husband's written consent, which also outlines the frequency of exits from Iran that he allows his wife (UNHCR 31 Mar. 2006).

According to information provided on the Website of the Embassy of Iran in Paris, the following documents must be submitted in order to obtain an "exit stamp":

1. Two recent photos;
2. Copies of the passport pages 2-11 and original passport issued by other centers and representative;
3. Original work permit and copies of its back and front;
4. Document and its copy showing military service has been carried out (Iran n.d.c).

Additionally, the abovementioned Website explained that a married woman must have written consent from her husband authorizing her travel (ibid.). For a divorced woman, the date when the couple separated should be recorded in the woman's passport, and if she has been granted child custody, "the relevant ruling paper should be enclosed" (ibid.).

Restrictions to certain applicants

With regard to restrictions applied to certain categories of applicants, *Country Reports 2005* claimed that "[t]he Government required exit permits for foreign travel for draft-age men and citizens who were politically suspect" (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 2.d). Moreover, the same report added that "[s]ome citizens, particularly those whose skills were in short supply and who were educated at

government expense, must post bonds to obtain exit permits" (*Country Reports 2005* 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 2.d).

The US Department of State also noted that Iranian citizens with US passports are considered Iranian nationals within Iran and as such are subject to Iranian law (25 Aug. 2005). Consequently, Iranian nationals must enter and exit Iran with an Iranian passport and can be denied exit permits for failing to comply with "special obligations" outlined within state law such as military service or payment of taxes (US 25 Aug. 2005).

Single and multiple-exit permission

The Website for the Embassy of Iran in Frankfurt, Germany provided the following information regarding individuals wishing to apply for a multiple exit stamp. The Website stated that both Iranian citizens who indicate in their passport that Germany is their place of residence and Iranian citizens who indicate in their passport that Iran is their place of residence may apply for multiple exit permits (Iran n.d.b). Applicants in the latter case must either "obtain an exit stamp from [the] Passport Department, Law Enforcement Forces [LEF] in Iran" or "change their residency status from Iran [to] Germany and then apply to the Consulate General for the insertion of [a] multiple exit stamp in their passport" (ibid.).

The Website added that military draftees must conform to certain "exit rules and regulations" relevant to their status (ibid.). Specifically, military draftees who moved away from Iran before 19 March 2004 and resided abroad for at least two years are permitted to travel to Iran once a year and remain there for up to three months (ibid.). However, the Website noted that in cases of emergency such as marriage or death of a family member, a draftee may "apply for the issuance of an exit stamp for the second time in the same year" (ibid.).

Corroborating the preceding information, a 2000 Danish Immigration Service report on Iran noted that

[a] single-journey permit is typically issued to young men who have not completed their military service, and to women whose husbands have given them permission to make only one journey. According to a Western embassy, a single-journey permit may be issued to persons who have some outstanding score with the authorities, e.g. tax arrears, provided that a guarantee is provided for the amount outstanding (Denmark 1 Oct. 2000, 9).

According to the *International Religious Freedom Report 2005*, individuals of Jewish backgrounds are reportedly "denied the multiple-exit permits normally issued to other citizens" (8 Nov. 2005, Sec. II). Moreover, the report concludes that "[t]he Government appears concerned about the emigration of Jewish citizens and permission generally is not granted for all members of a Jewish family to travel outside the country at the same time" (*International Religious Freedom Report 2005* 8 Nov. 2005, Sec. II).

Exit fees

The *Travel Information Manual* reported that "all passengers leaving Iran on international flights" must pay an airport tax of rials 70,000 [CAN\$8.89 (XE.com 9 Mar. 2006a)] (Mar. 2006, 228). In addition to the airport tax, Iranian

nationals travelling abroad must pay an exit tax of rials 100,000 [CAN\$12.70 (XE.com 9 Mar. 2006b)] "for the first exit in an Iranian calendar year" and rials 150,000 [CAN\$19.05 (XE.com 9 Mar. 2006c)] for all subsequent exits during the same calendar year (*Travel Information Manual* Mar. 2006, 228). Moreover, Iranian nationals departing on international flights must pay a tourism tax of rials 30,000 [CAN\$3.81 (XE.com 9 Mar. 2006d)] (ibid.).

However, a US consular report for Iran noted that while Iranians permanently residing in Iran must pay the exit tax when leaving the country, "Iranian nationals residing abroad are exempted from paying exit taxes if their stay in Iran does not exceed four months" (25 Aug. 2005).

Exit permit time restrictions and penalties for overstay

Without providing details, a UNHCR official stated that, regarding time restrictions on exit permits, the "Passport Act does not give any indication regarding people working in specific fields but the administrations that employ them have specific regulations" (31 Mar. 2006).

The 2000 Danish Immigration Service report on Iran noted that

exit visas [permits] for single journeys indicate that the return journey to Iran must be made within a specifically defined period, typically 3 to 6 months after the outward journey. If the return journey to Iran is made after that period has expired, the person concerned risks reaction from the Iranian authorities unless he can justify his late return (Denmark 1 Oct. 2000, 10).

This report added that the government's reaction to exit permit overstay would "probably take the form of fines," while military draftees overstaying an exit permit would be required to complete their military service (ibid.). On the other hand, an individual bearing a multiple exit permit is reportedly not bound by any time restrictions to return to Iran (ibid.).

According to a United Kingdom (UK) government source, UK visas, foreign nationals located in Iran who are refugees or stateless persons are provided with a "Laissez-Passer" travel document that is "usually valid for one year and states that the bearer must leave Iran within a specified period (normally three months from the date of issue) and it may also be valid for return within three or twelve months" (UK 4 Mar. 2003). This source also noted that "[i]n exceptional cases, a Laissez-Passer may be issued outside Iran"; however, these travel documents are limited to 20 days and are retrieved from the holder when he or she returns to Iran (ibid.).

Non-visa countries

In a 22 February 2006 telephone interview, a representative with IranAir stated that Turkey and Russia do not require visas for Iranian travellers. In correspondence to the Research Directorate, a UNHCR official also stated that Iranians may travel to Turkey without a visa, but added that the only other country to which Iranians can travel without any requirement to obtain a visa is Sri Lanka (31 Mar. 2006).

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The following sources did not respond or could not provide information within time constraints: Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ottawa, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Interests Section of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Embassy of Pakistan, Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), the Iranian Refugees' Alliance.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), Derechos Human Rights, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ottawa, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Factiva, Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme (FIDH), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Interests Section of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Embassy of Pakistan, International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), IranAir, Iran Aseman Airlines (IAA), Iranian Civil Rights Committee (IranCRC), Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), Iran Mania, Iranian Refugees' Alliance, Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Migration Information Source, Student Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran (SMCCDI), United Kingdom (UK) Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), UNHCR, World News Connection (WNC).

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