



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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10 July 2008

### SLV102871.E

El Salvador: Changes to and implementation of the Sole Identity Document (Documento Único de Identidad, DUI)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### **Sole Identity Document (Documento Único de Identidad, DUI)**

The Special Law Regulating the Issue of the Sole Identity Document (*Ley Especial Reguladora de la Emisión del Documento Único de Identidad*), published in October 2001, governs the provision of the DUI, which has replaced the Personal Identity Card (Cédula de Identidad Personal, CIP) (El Salvador 18 Oct. 2001, Art. 5). The Special Law states that the DUI, mandatory for all adult Salvadorians (*ibid.*, Art. 4), is the official document necessary to identify Salvadorians - in both private and public domains, at home and abroad - in matters related to El Salvador (*ibid.*, Art. 3), including voting (NOTIMEX 10 Oct. 2006).

In a 12 June 2008 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a consular official at the Embassy of El Salvador in Ottawa described the appearance and content of the DUI. The card is multicoloured, contains several security features, and a coat of arms, a Salvadorian flag and a photo of the bearer (El Salvador 12 June 2008). The card also contains a number and expiration date, as well as the bearer's full name (and the names of his or her parents), place of birth, home address, profession, marital status and blood type (*ibid.*). The consular official added that the card can be read electronically (*ibid.*).

#### **Validity of the DUI**

The Special Law required the National Register of Individuals (Registro Nacional de las Personas Naturales, RNPN) to begin issuing the DUI on 1 November 2001 (El Salvador 18 Oct. 2001, Art. 5). The Special Law establishes a period of validity of the DUI of five years from the month of its issuance (*ibid.*, Art. 4). Citizens must submit requests to issue or renew a DUI in the month corresponding to their birth (*ibid.*).

In November 2006, the Legislative Assembly issued a decree extending the DUI's validity for a further three years, until 31 December 2009 (*El Diario de Hoy* 7 July 2007; *La Prensa Gráfica* 24 Sept. 2007). In July 2007, some deputies voiced a concern over this decree because some Salvadorians were claiming difficulty travelling with DUIs that were [translation] "technically expired" (*ibid.* 24 July 2007).

According to the Salvadorian Consular Official, the DUI can be used to travel to neighbouring countries, such as Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua (El Salvador 12 June 2008).

### **Application Procedures**

The Special Law permitted citizens to obtain a DUI free of charge if they applied during the month of their birth between 1 November 2001 and 31 October 2002; afterwards, they were to pay an application fee of eight US dollars (El Salvador 18 Oct. 2001, Art. 7).

DOCUSAL, the private company that the government has contracted to produce and distribute DUIs, has been issuing the documents in El Salvador since November 2001 and in the United States (US) since September 2006 (*La Prensa Gráfica* 24 July 2007). In El Salvador, DUIs are issued free of charge for first-time applicants, after which there is a fee of 10.31 US dollars for a replacement or modified card (DOCUSAL n.d.b). All DUIs issued in the US cost 35 US dollars (ibid.).

Salvadorians who have just reached the age of majority (18 years), and are thus applying for a DUI for the first time, must submit a completed application form and an original birth certificate (issued within one year preceding the date of application) to a DUI dispensing centre, otherwise known as a Duicentro (ibid. n.d.c). Applicants must also submit any one of the following documents: a minor identity card (Carné de Minoridad); a passport (if it is a foreign passport, the applicant must present the original and a copy as well as two relatives as witnesses with their respective DUIs); or a valid driver's licence (ibid.). Applicants without any of the three preceding documents must be accompanied by a parent with a DUI (ibid.).

Applicants who wish to obtain their first DUI but who are older than 18 years of age must submit the following: a completed application form; an original birth certificate (issued within one year preceding the date of application); and one of the following four documents: a CIP or an Identity Card Certificate (Certificación de Cédula de Identidad); an Electoral Identity Card (Carné Electoral); a valid driver's licence; or a passport (if it is a foreign passport, the applicant must present the original and a copy as well as two relatives as witnesses with their respective DUIs) (ibid.). Applicants in this category who are over 25 years of age and have never had a CIP must submit a signed and stamped document from the municipality that issued their birth certificate, and present two relatives as witnesses with their respective DUIs (ibid.).

Persons who wish to amend or replace their DUI must present: a receipt of payment of the fee (available at financial institutions); a completed application form; and the former DUI (ibid.). Applicants wishing to amend their DUI must also provide appropriate supporting documents, such as a marriage or divorce certificate, proof of blood type issued by a clinical laboratory or accreditation issued by a professional association (ibid.).

The DOCUSAL website lists 15 Duicentros in El Salvador, in the following cities: Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Cojutepeque, San Francisco Gotera, San Miguel, San Salvador, Santa Ana, Santa Tecla, San Vicente, Sensuntepeque, Sonsonate, Soyapango, La Unión, Usulután and Zacatecoluca (DOCUSAL n.d.a). The website lists a further three Duicentros in the US: Central Islip (New York), Los Angeles and Woodbridge (Virginia) (ibid.). A 2006 article by ACAN-EFE, an

independent news agency linked to the Central American Press Agency (Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias, ACAN) and Spain's EFE, noted that more Duicentros were to be opened in other US cities such as San Francisco, Chicago and Houston (ACAN-EFE 17 Aug. 2006).

The Consular Official from the Embassy of El Salvador in Ottawa stated that DUIs cannot be obtained at the embassy or at any consulate in Canada (12 June 2008).

### **Implementation of DUI**

In 2005, criticism began to be directed at DOCUSAL because in that year the RNPN had to replace 68,227 DUIs that were considered of substandard quality (*La Prensa Gráfica* 24 July 2007). Criticism was also levied against DOCUSAL because of the lengthy waits for applicants to obtain their DUIs at a Duicentro (ibid.). In February 2008, the San Salvador daily *Diario Co Latino* cited complaints by citizens and legislators that DOCUSAL was charging Salvadorians who wished to replace their damaged DUIs despite protests that the documents were of [translation] "poor quality" and that DOCUSAL was legally required to replace poor quality documents (8 Feb. 2008).

### **DUI distribution problems**

In March 2006, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported that police had arrested eight people for presenting two DUIs and voting in two different places, Apopa and San Cayetano Istepeque (AFP 12 Mar. 2006).

In May 2008, *La Prensa Gráfica* reported that while the RNPN recorded 4,101,937 Salvadorians in possession of a DUI, the national census recorded only 3,265,021 Salvadorians with DUIs, a discrepancy of 836,916 persons that RNPN President Juan José Guerrero suggested was partially due to technical deficiencies (22 May 2008).

In May 2008, an investigation found that more than 100,000 of the DUIs listed in the Electoral Registry (Registro Electoral) were not associated with an individual on the electoral list drawn up by the Election Monitoring Board (Junta de Vigilancia Electoral, JVE), which is a list that contains data on every Salvadorian who is eligible to vote (*La Prensa Gráfica* 27 May 2008). Authorities responded that these gaps were normal, but the Salvadorian Democratic Front (Frente Democrático Salvadoreño, FDR) has asked that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral) investigate the discrepancy (ibid.). Further or corroborating information on this issue could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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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**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI); British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS); Embassy of El Salvador in Washington, DC; European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net); Human Rights Watch (HRW); Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de El Salvador; Registro Nacional de las Personas Nacionales (RNPN); United States (US) Department of State, World News Connection (WNC).

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