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Zimbabwe: Procedures and security checks done by the Embassy and consular offices of Zimbabwe in the United States when a national of Zimbabwe wishes to acquire a new passport or to renew/replace an old one (May 2006)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In 25 April 2006 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a Counsellor (political, economic, and consular) at the Embassy of Zimbabwe in the United States, stated that when a Zimbabwean national wishes to acquire a new passport or renew an old one, he/she must come to the embassy in person to have his or her "fingerprints taken by trained Zimbabwe government officers." The application is then forwarded to Head office in Harare by diplomatic bag for processing and issuance of a new passport. The Counsellor stated that the Website of the Embassy of Zimbabwe in the United States lists the following documents as being required when applying for a Zimbabwean passport and must be provided in their "original" version, along with their "clear photocopies:"

- Long [form] Birth Certificate;
- National Identity Card;
- Two (2) passport colour photos (size 3,5 x 4,5 cm) - photo requirements: white background, appearance - dark shirt/top/dress, facing front, no eyeglasses, hair pulled back, both ears visible;
- Marriage Certificate/National Identity Card in married name/Divorce Order/Spouse's Death Certificate, if applicable;
- Old passport or Emergency Travel Document, if any: Old-type passport (big) - copies of pages 1-5; New-type passport (small) copy of inside back cover;
- Citizenship Certificate - applicants who were born outside Zimbabwe or whose one or both parent(s) was/were born outside Zimbabwe must renounce the other citizenship by having that country issue a Renunciation Certificate, which should be notarized by an attorney;
- Police report (for lost passport);

Fees (payable in cash): Ordinary Passport US\$195; Replacement of Lost Passport US\$245;

If a child under 16 yrs is applying for passport, Section 5 of the form must be completed by the father. The mother can only sign Section 5 if the child is using her maiden name. A legal guardian can also sign Section 5 if he/she can produce documentary proof of guardianship (Embassy of Zimbabwe (n.d.)).

In a subsequent telephone interview on 11 May 2006, the Counsellor at the Embassy of Zimbabwe in the United States indicated that the entire process to acquire a new passport takes approximately three months. He also explained that the applicant must pick up his/her passport in person by showing the payment receipt and any identity document (Zimbabwe 11 May 2006).

In 26 April and 8 May 2006 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a practicing human rights lawyer who is also the executive director of Zimbabwe Exiles Forum (ZEF) provided information that is summarized in the following paragraphs on the procedures for issuing a Zimbabwean passport. ZEF is a non-partisan and non-profit organization based in South Africa, the main objective of which is to "help victims of torture and other abuses who have fled Zimbabwe for fear of prosecution. Its central focus is the recording of evidence of abuses, [and] humanitarian and legal support for refugees" (Rights & Democracy n.d.).

The Registrar General's Office under the Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for issuing Zimbabwean passports, which can be obtained in major cities like Harare, Gweru, Bulawayo, Chinhoyi. Zimbabwean embassies and consular offices abroad may also issue passports but the process may take up to six months as the completed application forms must first be sent back to Zimbabwe for processing.

The human rights lawyer corroborated the information available on the Website of the Embassy of Zimbabwe in the United States on the required documents for acquiring or renewing a Zimbabwean passport. Concerning the security checks done by the Zimbabwean authorities, he explained that they are limited to checking that the passport photo matches the one submitted by the applicant and verifying whether the photocopies of documents submitted are authentic and match the originals. The human rights lawyer identified a long delay (up to two years) in obtaining the proper-sized birth certificate from Zimbabwe as an obstacle faced by Zimbabwean nationals who apply for a passport from abroad.

Corroborating information 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.

References

Rights & Democracy. N.d. "International Advocacy and Litigation on Human Rights Abuses in Zimbabwe." << http://www.dd-rd.ca/site/what_we_do/index.php?subsection=projects&id=1556&lang=en> [Accessed 15 May 2006]

Practising human rights lawyer and executive director of Zimbabwe Exiles Forum (ZEF). 8 May 2006. Correspondence.

_____. 26 April 2006. Correspondence.

Zimbabwe. 11 May 2006. Embassy of Zimbabwe in the United States. Telephone interview with a counsellor.

_____. 25 April 2006. Correspondence from a counsellor.

_____. N.d. "Passport Application Requirements." << <http://www.zimbabwe-embassy.us/pdf/newpass.pdf>> [Accessed 25 Apr. 2006]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Canadian Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe and the Executive Director of the Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa (SAHRIT) did not provide information within time constraints.

Websites, including: European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI.net), Factiva, International Crisis Group (ICG), IRIN, ReliefWeb, UNHCR, United Kingdom Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), United States Department of State, Passports Plus, *Zimbabwe Daily*, Zimbabwe Government Online, *Zimbabwe Independent*.

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