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7 May 2007

### SOM102471.E

Somalia: Passports and other documentation that could assist with identification  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In a February 2007 report on Somalia, the United Kingdom (UK) Border and Immigration Agency states that "[t]here is little information on the present availability of passports and other documents" (UK 28 Feb. 2007, para. 27.11). According to the United States (US) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*, few Somalis have the requisite documents for international travel (6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2d).

A media article reports that the Somali government has not issued passports since the internal conflict began in 1991 (AlJazeera 17 Jan. 2007). A statement from the Government of Canada explaining why Canada will not accept the Somali passport as a valid travel document states that, since 1991, Somalia has been functioning with virtually no government, and that satellite "Somali embassies" with no oversight from a central government have sold blank passport stock to finance their operations (16 Dec. 1999). Numerous sources report serious concerns about the integrity and reliability of Somali passports (ibid.; AlJazeera 17 Jan. 2007; *The Ethiopian Reporter* 10 Feb. 2007; Reuters 16 Feb. 2007).

According to media sources, the creation of a new electronic passport was approved by Somali government officials in late 2006 (Shabelle 11 Oct. 2006; Reuters 16 Feb. 2007). The new passport is to contain a computer chip (ibid.) and biometric technology to prevent duplication and forgery (Afrol News 28 Mar. 2007; Security Document World 22 Feb. 2007). Electronic identity cards will supplement the new passport (ibid.; Afrol News 28 Mar. 2007). The cost of the passport is USD 100 for Somalis in Somalia and USD 150 for Somalis outside Somalia (ibid.; Shabelle 10 Oct. 2006). Media articles report that the old passport will be invalid beginning in July 2007 (AlJazeera 17 Jan. 2007; *The Ethiopian Reporter* 10 Feb. 2007).

According to the Executive Director of the Somali Centre for Family Services in Ottawa, the new passport has been produced by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia but is not yet in active circulation (12 Apr. 2007). In contrast, the Director of Somali Immigration and Naturalisation states in a media article that Somali embassies in Kenya and Ethiopia have already started to distribute the new passports and that passport offices have been opened in the Somali centres of Baidoa, Bossaso, Garowe and Laas Anod (Afrol News 28 Mar. 2007). The Director claims that many countries, including Canada, recognize the new passport (ibid.). However, in a 25 April 2007 correspondence

with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the Director of Identity and Document Policy in the Risk and Mitigation Branch stated that "for the purposes of seeking entry to Canada ... any passport issued by the government of Somalia is not valid for travel to Canada" (Canada 25 Apr. 2007).

With respect to other documentation that could assist with identification, the Executive Director of the Somali Centre for Family Services stated that there is no birth certificate, identification document or driver's license available to Somalis (12 Apr. 2007; see also US 20 Feb. 2003).

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

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Canada and the Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** Keesing's Reference Systems, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI).

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