



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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16 April 2008

SOM102797.E

Somalia: Information on the types of identity documents which have been issued in Mogadishu within the past two years, including the authority responsible for their issuance, and any significant physical and security features; availability of fraudulent documents

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The Senior Protection Officer of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Representation in Canada informed the Research Directorate that the issuance of birth and death certificates has not been addressed by the Transitional Government in Mogadishu (UN 8 Apr. 2008). He continued that the responsible authority would normally be the Mogadishu Municipal Council led by the Mayor (*ibid.*). The United States (US) Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs notes that most official records including birth certificates, unless they were in the hands of private individuals, were destroyed during the course of the civil war in Somalia which began in 1990 (US n.d.). The Senior Protection Officer of the UNHCR Representation in Canada stressed that no "legal documents" have been issued in Mogadishu since 1991 (UN 8 Apr. 2008). However, Somalis continue to use documents issued by ex-Municipality officials such as ID cards and birth certificates which are similar to documents issued prior to the civil war (*ibid.*).

In its Country of Origin Information Report on Somalia, the United Kingdom (UK) Border and Immigration Agency provides information from the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) regarding a new electronic passport issued in 2007 with contactless chip technology and biometric security features (UK 15 Feb. 2008, 134; see also JSL 8 Feb. 2007; Security Document World 22 Feb. 2007), including facial and fingerprint recognition. New electronic National Identity Cards were also released in 2007 (JSL 8 Feb. 2007). In a press release dated 8 February 2007, Just Solutions Ltd. (JSL), the company contracted to provide the documents, reported that the first E-Passport and electronic National Identity Card were presented at the Somali Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.

In correspondence received from Just Solutions Ltd. on 3 April 2008, the General Manager of the company explained that the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic is the issuing authority for the new Somali National Identity Card and E-Passport documents and he listed the following five enrolment and issuance centres: Mogadishu, Garowe, Baidoa, Bosaso and Galkaio (JSL 3 Apr. 2008). He added that enrolment centres have also been opened at Somali embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, with the next one scheduled to open at the Somali embassy in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (*ibid.*). The UK Border and Immigration Agency reports that the EIU expects that

the new passport will be "sold" in only a few locations but it does not specify where (UK 15 Feb. 2008, 134). It is expected to cost 100 US dollars in Somalia or 150 US dollars outside of Somalia (ibid.).

Despite the new electronic documentation initiative, the Senior Protection Officer of the UNHCR Representation in Canada advised the Research Directorate that the E-Passport is the only identification document initiated by the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu since 2006 when the Islamic Union Court was ousted from power, and he stressed that the E-Passport has not been fully implemented (UN 8 Apr. 2008). The Transitional Federal Government does not have control over the whole country (UK 15 Feb. 2008, 134), nor even all of the city of Mogadishu according to the UNHCR (8 Apr. 2008). Samples of the E-Passport and the National Identity Card indicating security features are attached to this Response to Information Request (JSL 3 Apr. 2008).

Security Document World refers to the old Somali passports as "the most forged in the world" (22 Feb. 2007). The General Manager of Just Solutions Ltd. adds that unofficial passports can be obtained within minutes in "every back alley in big cities such as Mogadishu" for \$100 US dollars (JSL 3 Apr. 2008). He describes them as "generally larger in size than the standard ISO passport size" with handwritten information and a photograph "glued in" (ibid.).

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

Just Solutions Ltd. (JSL). 3 April 2008. Correspondence received from the General Manager.

_____. 8 February 2007. "Somalia Issues ePassports and National Identity Cards." <<http://justsolutionsltd.com/pdf/08082007.pdf>> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2008]

Security Document World. 22 February 2007. "Somalia Leads in Africa with ePassport Rollout." <http://www.securitydocumentworld.com/public/news_all.cfm?&m1=c_10&m2=c_4&m3=e_0&m4=e_0&subItemID=917#> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2008]

United Kingdom (UK). 15 February 2008. Border and Immigration Agency. *Somalia: Country of Origin Information Report*. <<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/08/somalia-120308.doc>> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2008]

United Nations (UN). 8 April 2008. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Representation in Canada. Correspondence received from the Senior Protection Officer.

United States (US). N.d. Department of State. Bureau of Consular Affairs. "Somalia Reciprocity Schedule."

<http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/reciprocity/reciprocity_3671.html> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2008]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral Sources, including: The Canadian High Commission in Nairobi, Kenya did not respond to requests for information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet Sources, including: Keesing's Document Checker, Jane's Information Group.

Attachment

Just Solutions Ltd. (JSL). 3 April 2008. Samples received courtesy of the General Manager. 5 pp. <www.justsolutionsltd.com>.

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