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Somalia/Canada: The "traditional way" used by Somali organizations in Canada to determine who is a Somali citizen; the methodology used by these organizations to determine identity (2000-July 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

In a 13 July 2005 telephone interview, a representative of the Somali-Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton provided the following information about the "traditional way" of identifying whether someone is a Somali citizen.

The traditional way of identifying a Somali citizen involves interviewing the individual claiming to be a Somali citizen to obtain personal information about the person's background, such as the town or village they came from and the family clan or network they belong to. Then, the organization contacts elders in the Somali community in Edmonton to ascertain whether the information provided by the individual claiming to be a Somali citizen is consistent with the elders' knowledge. With the individual's information, the organization, in collaboration with the elders' guidance, would determine whether this person is a Somali citizen.

The representative was unaware of whether other Somali organizations in Canada used a similar methodology to identify a Somali citizen.

In a 21 July 2005 telephone interview, a representative from Dejinta Beesha Somali Multi-Service Centre based in Etobicoke, Ontario, provided the following information about the determination of Somali identity for an individual who does not possess identification documents.

Generally, when an individual comes to this organization for assistance regarding identification documentation, Dejinta Beesha first examines the information that is required of the individual. The request for identification usually comes in the form of a letter from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and because many of the clients do not understand English, the organization assists them in understanding the letter.

The process of identifying whether a client of the organization is a Somali commonly begins with advising the client to bring a relative, friend, or neighbour who knew them in Somalia to the organization in order to vouch for the client's identity.

The client would then appear in front of a lawyer with the person vouching for their identity to formally swear an oath and sign an affidavit to the effect that the individual is from Somalia. The sworn declaration would then sent back to CIC.

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

Dejinta Beesha Somali Multi-Service Centre, Etobicoke, Ontario. 21 July 2005. Telephone interview with representative.

Somali-Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton. 13 July 2005. Telephone interview with representative.

Additional Sources Consulted

One oral source could not provide the requested information.

Internet sites, including: Canadian Council for Refugees, Citizens for Public Justice, Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

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