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Afghanistan: The criteria and verifications used/established by passport offices in Afghanistan in order to issue a passport to individuals who do not possess identification Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In a telephone interview conducted by the Research Directorate, the Counsellor of the Embassy of the Republic of Afghanistan in Ottawa indicated that to apply for an ordinary passport, Afghan citizens must go to passport services in Afghanistan with their identity card (*tazkira*) (Afghanistan 7 Apr. 2006). According to a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan conducted by the government of Finland, Afghans apply for passports at their provincial police station (Sept. 2006, 36). If a passport applicant in Afghanistan lacks a *tazkira* (spelled in the report as *tashkera*), the police will "make enquiries" with the relevant authorities in the district where the applicant lives to determine her or his identity (Finland Sept. 2006, 36). The report of a Danish fact-finding mission to Afghanistan states that applicants without identity documents can have their identity established using a range of methods, including a personal interview (Denmark Nov. 2004, 63). Information about exactly what is asked in the personal interview was not available among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Afghan citizens can also obtain a passport in the consulate or in the consular services of an embassy (Afghanistan 7 Apr. 2006). To do so, they must present their *tazkira* and regulated papers in the country in which they live (*ibid.*). If applicants are not in possession of such documentation, the embassy establishes their identity by conducting a personal interview (*ibid.*). The embassy also verifies their address, profession and other personal information (*ibid.*). No information about what is asked in the personal interview could be obtained by the Research Directorate.

However, the website of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington DC indicates the following requirements for Afghan citizens wishing to apply for a new passports:

One passport application form.

Three passport-sized photos (with name written at the back and attached with cellophane tape).

If you are a U.S. alien resident, provide a copy of your Green Card (front and back), your Social Security card, or evidence to prove your Afghan citizenship, along with one type of photo identification.

Please notarize your passport application. If you are applying in person, notarization may not be required.

Passport application fee for 5 years of validation: \$104.

Passports with validation for 4, 3, 2 or 1 year are available. (Afghanistan n.d.)

According to the Counsellor, the passport can be renewed for a specific length of time by the institutions concerned in Afghanistan or by the consulates or the consular services of the embassies (Afghanistan 3 Apr. 2006). The Danish fact-finding report states that in order to renew a passport in Afghanistan, the applicant must appear in person (Denmark Nov. 2004, 63). However, a man can register his wife and his children up to 14 years of age on his passport without the woman or children needing to appear at the passport office (ibid.). Photos of the wife and children must be submitted (ibid.).

According to the Danish report, Afghanistan has begun to register all passports, recording the passport serial number and the applicant's photograph and fingerprint in a book (ibid.). With respect to the reliability of Afghan passports, the Danish report states the following:

The Ministry of the Interior was of the opinion that many citizens from Afghanistan's neighbouring countries have illegally been issued an Afghan national passport. This applies to people from Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan. This has happened because it has not been possible to check the identity of applicants. (ibid.)

The Finnish fact-finding report provided information on various allegations being made in the city of Mazar-i Sharif regarding the passport application process as follows:

[T]here were allegations that the regional passport office had started to restrict the issuing of passports. Several common Afghans complained to the FFM [fact-finding mission] that the passport authorities were issuing passports only to very sick persons, who needed medical care abroad. Another wide spread [sic] accusation was that although the passport has an clear fixed price, due to corruption the price of a passport could rise to over 300 USD. (Finland Sept. 2006, 37)

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 to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Afghanistan. 3 April 2006. Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa. Correspondence from the Counsellor. Translated from French to English by the Multilingual Translation Directorate, Translation Bureau, Public Works and Government Services Canada.

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Denmark. November 2004. Danish Immigration Service (DIS). *The Political, Security and Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: Report of a Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul, Afghanistan 20 March - 2 April 2004*. (Refworld) <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=type&docid=41b9cac24&skip=&type=FACTFINDING>> [Accessed 29 Nov. 2007]

Finland. September 2006. Directorate of Immigration. *Afghanistan: Report from a Fact-Finding Mission to Afghanistan, 5 - 19 September 2006*.

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Afgha.com, Amnesty International (AI), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Council on Foreign Relations, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Inter-Press Service (IPS), Refugee Council, Relief Web.

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[Top of Page](#)

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