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Afghanistan: The issuance of tazkira certificates; whether individuals can obtain tazkiras while abroad

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Tazkiras [also called tazkirah (MECS n.d.) or tazkera (UN May 2005)] are Afghan identity cards (MECS n.d; IWPR 22 June 2009).

Middle East Consultancy Services (MECS), a service based in London, UK that provides research and advice to public and private sectors, went on a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan in October and November of 2011, partly to "clarify the process of obtaining" tazkiras (MECS 1 Dec. 2011). According to MECS, tazkiras are mandatory, as "it is necessary to have one in order to apply for jobs, attend school or university, or apply for a passport" (MECS n.d.). However, MECS states that "in practice, individuals often only apply for a tazkirah when they need one" (ibid.). In 2005, UNHCR stated that men must have tazkiras, but tazkiras are "optional" for women (May 2005).

Procedures to Apply for a Tazkira Certificate from Within Afghanistan

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan and an official at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa stated that the Population Registration Department of the Ministry of Interior issues tazkiras (Canada 29 Nov. 2011; Afghanistan 30 Nov. 2011). According to the official at the Embassy of Afghanistan, population registration departments are located inside police headquarters in 34 provincial police departments in the country (ibid. 5 Dec. 2011). In consultation with the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, the official at the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan indicates that "not only provinces but also every district in Afghanistan issues the Tazkera" (Canada 20 Dec. 2011). Furthermore, the official stated that "[i]f people from provinces live in Kabul...they can still apply for a Tazkera via Police Zones in Kabul" (ibid.)

The official at the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan stated that the documents required to obtain a tazkira are: photographs, an application form, and the applicant's father's tazkira (Canada 29 Nov. 2011). The official at the Embassy of Afghanistan corroborated the statement that photographs and an application form are necessary, however, he stated that "at least one parent's [t]azkira will be required to retrieve the complete family history tree" (Afghanistan

30 Nov. 2011). He also elaborated that the required application form is printed in the local language and includes bio-data (ibid. 5 Dec. 2011). The official at the Embassy of Afghanistan indicated that a processing fee of 10 Afghani (AFN) [C\$0.21 (Oanda 7 Dec. 2011a)] is required (ibid.), while the official at the Canadian High Commission indicated that the application form costs approximately 20 AFN [C\$0.42 (Oanda 7 Dec. 2011b)] (Canada 29 Nov. 2011).

In consultation with the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, the official at the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan stated that if a child is born in a hospital in Afghanistan, the hospital will give the parents a yellow card, which the parents will have to take to the population registration office (Canada 20 Dec. 2011). The population registration office will then "go through files and...check full identification" after which the parents will have to obtain two signatures from government officials such as a doctor, engineer, teacher or chief of the army (ibid.). The official at the Embassy of Afghanistan stated that "personal presence" is required to apply for a tazkira (Afghanistan 30 Nov. 2011). He also indicated that it takes approximately two to three days to obtain a tazkira certificate (ibid.).

The official at the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan indicated that if an applicant misplaces his or her tazkira, "an announcement will be made on Radio TV and then another ID document will be issued using the same procedure" (Canada 29 Nov. 2011). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Procedures to Apply for a Tazkira Certificate from Outside of Afghanistan

According to the official at the Canadian High Commission, Afghan missions abroad cannot issue tazkiras (Canada 29 Nov. 2011). The official indicated that to apply for a tazkira certificate for a child born outside of Afghanistan, the father or guardian of the child must apply in the district or province that "the parents/grandparents belong to" (ibid.). The official stated that the documents required include: an application form, photographs, a copy of the father or other guardian's tazkira, and a letter signed by the elders of the parent's and grandparent's village that indicates that they know the parents or grandparents of the child (ibid.). The Canadian High Commission also stated that "a citizen of Afghanistan living overseas who misplaced his or her tazkira certificate would have to apply for it in the district/province where he or she belongs ... " (Canada 9 Dec. 2011) as it "must be issued inside of the country" (ibid. 20 Dec. 2011).

The official at the Embassy of Afghanistan confirmed that "tazkiras are not issued outside of Afghanistan" (Afghanistan 30 Nov. 2011). According to the official, a tazkira is "issued to [the] applicant only" (ibid. 5 Dec. 2011).

Obstacles to Obtaining Tazkiras

The official at the Embassy of Afghanistan stated that "an Afghan national can never be refused ... a [t]azkira subject to complete application and sufficient evidence of being an Afghan national" (Afghanistan 30 Nov. 2011). However, author and analyst, Abdulhadi Hairan, indicates that he had to bribe a population registration employee and use his "contacts" in order to obtain a tazkira in February 2009 in Kunduz province, district Qila-e-Zal (*Huffington Post* 15 Apr. 2010). Hairan also reports that "aggressive behaviour" and "bad language" were used by an employee of the population registration office towards an applicant

(ibid.).

Sources indicate that Jogis, an minority ethnic group in Afghanistan, cannot obtain tazkiras (IWPR 22 June 2009; *Daily Outlook Afghanistan* 10 July 2011). According to *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, an internet-based news service (*Daily Outlook Afghanistan* n.d.), Jogis are not officially recognized by the government, although they are allowed to vote (ibid. 10 July 2011). Sources state that the absence of tazkiras prevents Jogis from going to school and obtaining passports (ibid.; IWPR 22 June 2009).

Pajhwok Afghan News, an independent news agency headquartered in Kabul (Pajhwok Afghan News n.d.), reports that the population registration department in western Herat province had closed due to protests against the Taliban's killing of the district head of the department (26 Jan. 2011). According to Pajhwok Afghan News, the general head of the department stated that "the department would stay shut as long as the killers were not brought to justice" (26 Jan. 2011). Information on the current status of the population registration department in western Herat province could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: A representative of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) was unable to provide information for this Response.

Internet sites, including: AF Monitor; *Afghan Daily*; Afghan Islamic Press Online; Afghan Online press; Afghanistan — Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa, Ministry of Interior; Afghanistan News; Afghanistan News Center; British Broadcasting Corporation; Citizenship Laws of the World; *Current History*; *Dawn*; *The Economist*; Europa World Plus; European Country of Origin Information Network; *Human Rights Quarterly*; Human Terrain System Research Reachback Center; *Jane's Intelligence Review*; *Journal of Refugee Studies*; Keesing Reference Systems; Khaama Press; Legislationline; The Muslim World; Radio Free Asia; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; United Nations — Refworld; and United States Country Reciprocity Schedule.

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