



Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
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Canada

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RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Cameroon: Cameroonian passports, specifically the issuing agency, the meaning of the numbers on the page bearing the holder's photo, the measures taken to determine the passport's authenticity, whether applications must be submitted in person, whether the holder's photo is taken at the passport office, and whether the holder signs at the time of application or when the passport is issued (May 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

A 9 February 2005 article in the *Cameroon Tribune* indicated that there are four types of passport in Cameroon: regular, diplomatic, service and special. The article also stated that

[translation]

the regular passport is issued by the delegate general of the national police (délégué général à la Sûreté nationale, DGSN) or the heads of diplomatic or consular missions abroad The diplomatic passport ... is issued by the minister of foreign relations or the heads of diplomatic or consular missions. ... The special and service passports are issued only by the DGSN (*Cameroon Tribune* 9 Feb. 2005).

An article in *Le Messager*, a Cameroonian newspaper, stated that there are [translation] "no restrictions" on obtaining a regular passport but that the issuance of diplomatic or service passports is subject to specific provisions (28 Mar. 2005). Referring to the 31 May 1991 presidential decree on the conditions for issuing such passports, the *Cameroon Tribune* article lists the various categories of people who are eligible for diplomatic or service passports:

[Translation]

The permanent diplomatic passport is granted to the following persons for their travels abroad: the president of the Republic, the speaker of the National Assembly, the prime minister, the president of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), former heads of state, members of the government and persons treated as such, for the duration of their term in office, former vice-presidents of the Republic, former prime ministers, former ministers of foreign relations, members of the National Assembly's executive committee, and persons working in the office of the president of the Republic at the attaché level or higher.

Others who are eligible for the permanent diplomatic passport are persons working in the prime minister's office at or above the attaché level, the chief

justice of the Supreme Court, the attorney general at the Supreme Court, general officers, for the duration of their active duty, career diplomats, and officers in the department of foreign relations (ministère des Relations extérieures, MINREX) at or above the head of service (*chef de service*) level. Also eligible are Cameroonians working as secretaries general, assistant secretaries general or directors in international organizations, advisors, secretaries and attachés in embassy offices, army, navy and air force attachés, economic, cultural and financial advisors at diplomatic and consular missions, and any other person formally approved by the president of the Republic.

...

The spouses and children of the following persons are also eligible: the president of the Republic, the speaker of the National Assembly, the prime minister, the president of ECOSOC, former heads of state, members of the government and persons treated as such, career diplomats, embassy advisors, secretaries and attachés, army, navy and air force attachés, economic, cultural and financial advisors, and the aforementioned Cameroonians working for international organizations.

Temporary diplomatic passports are issued for the duration of the duties of departmental secretaries general, assistant army, navy or air force attachés, and technical service officers with a diplomatic rank working in diplomatic and consular missions. For the length of their mission, a temporary diplomatic passport is issued to members of a government mission abroad approved by the president of the Republic. This passport is also granted to anyone else approved by the president of the Republic. The temporary passport is returned to MINREX when the holder has accomplished his duties or once the mission is complete.

Also eligible for temporary diplomatic passports are the direct ascendants of career diplomats, as well as the spouses and minor children of the following groups: managers working in the office of the president of the Republic at or above the attaché level, general officers for the duration of their active duty, MINREX managers up to the service head level, army, navy and air force attachés, and technical service officers with a diplomatic rank working in diplomatic and consular missions.

Diplomatic passports belonging to employees who return to their original organization or who retire are returned to MINREX, with the exception of those of ambassadors or career diplomats.

Service passports are issued to citizens who are not eligible for diplomatic passports but who are charged with a permanent mission abroad or whose duties often require them to travel abroad on behalf of the government (*Cameroon Tribune* 9 Feb. 2005; see also *Le Messenger* 28 Mar. 2005).

According to *Le Messenger*, service passports must be withdrawn once the mission is completed (28 Mar. 2005). A *Cameroon Tribune* article indicated that the Cameroonian head of state signed a decree on 1 April 2005 establishing that diplomatic passports would be granted to all members of the National Assembly (*Cameroon Tribune* 6 Apr. 2005). The same article stated that this privilege would expire at the end of the members' current mandate (*ibid.*).

The following are listed on the Internet site of the High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon in Ottawa as documents required for obtaining a passport:

[translation]

- an application form, ... duly completed and signed by the applicant, or by the parents/guardians if the applicant is under 18 years of age;
- four recent passport-size photographs;
- ... the old passport, which will be cancelled and retained in exchange for the new one;
- ... the processing fee of CAN\$100, payable by bank draft or postal money order to the Cameroon High Commission, Ottawa (High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon n.d.).

An application for replacing a lost passport must include the documents listed above, as well as the following:

[translation]

- a copy of the birth certificate;
- a copy of the national identity card (and/or a driver's licence);
- a report to the police concerning the lost passport.

Applicants in this category will be invited to the Mission for an interview (ibid.).

No information on when the holder signs the passport, on the meaning of the numbers on the page bearing the holder's photo or on the security measures taken to determine the authenticity of a Cameroonian passport could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, in a 28 March 2005 article, *Le Messager* reported on the [translation] "extensive organized trafficking in diplomatic passports." The *Cameroon Tribune* mentioned [translation] "the granting of service or diplomatic passports to people other than those identified explicitly in the 31 May 1991 decree or those having received formal approval from the president of the Republic" (6 Apr. 2005). A 23 July 2001 article posted on Cameroon-Info.net stated that [translation] "the police had captured people who spent most of their time producing counterfeit administrative instruments and documents, such as passports, driver's licences, visas and computerized national identity cards [*cartes nationales d'identité informatisées*, CNII].

Attached is a sample passport application form issued by the High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon in Ottawa. It provides a detailed description of the type of information required to apply for or renew a Cameroonian passport.

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

Cameroun-Info.net. 23 July 2001. "Carte nationale d'identité informatisée : la délivrance se poursuit jusqu'au 31 décembre 2001." <http://www.cameroun-info.net/cmi_show_news.php?id=8175> [Accessed 13 May 2005]

Cameroon Tribune [Yaoundé]. 6 April 2005. Essama Essomba. "Passeport diplomatique pour tous les députés." <<http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200504060494.html>> [Accessed 10 May 2005]

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High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon [Ottawa]. n.d. "Demande de passeports camerounais." <http://www.haut-commissariat-cameroun-ottawa.ca/rubriques/s_consualire.html> [Accessed 10 May 2005]

Le Messager [Douala]. 28 March 2005. Jean-François Channon. "Passeport : Laurent Easo met fin aux abus." <http://www.cameroun-info.net/cmi_show_news.php?id=16105> [Accessed 13 May 2005]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources : The chargé d'affaires of the High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon in Ottawa and the Canadian diplomatic mission in Cameroon did not respond to an information request within the time constraints for this Response.

Internet sites, including : AllAfrica, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), government of Cameroon, High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon, International Crisis Group (ICG), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United States Department of State.

Attachment

High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon, Ottawa. N.d. "Demande de passeport." <http://www.haut-commissariat-cameroun-ottawa.ca/rubriques/fiche_demande-passeport.pdf> [Accessed 10 May 2005], 2 pp.

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