

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

15 July 2013

### SOM104487.FE

Somalia: Possibility for people outside the country without identity documents to establish their Somali nationality, in particular, those who have left Somalia since 1991; fraudulent identity documents (2012-July 2013)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### 1. Verifying Somali Nationality Outside the Country

Limited information on verifying the Somali nationality of people outside the country could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

During a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the settlement and integration coordinator at the Somali Centre for Family Services in Ottawa explained that a Somali expatriate can apply for a passport at the embassy, if one exists in the country (Somali Centre for Family Services 8 July 2013). However, the coordinator pointed out that the process to obtain a passport may be [translation] "long" and "difficult" and that the applicant must possess enough money as well as the necessary contacts at the embassy (ibid.). The Somali Centre for Family Services is a non-profit organization established in Ottawa in 1991, to assist Somali immigrants and refugees, particularly in integration and counselling; it receives funding from various government organizations, including Citizenship and Immigration Canada (ibid. n.d.).

The coordinator stated that his NGO supports people who speak Somali but, in general, it does not verify its clients' nationality (ibid. 8 July 2013). To assist a person who is from Somalia and is without documents, the organization could ask them to come with a friend or relative who has their own identity documents, who knew them in Somalia, who can attest to their identity, and with whom the organization would conduct an interview; if applicable, the organization could then send them to a lawyer (ibid.). No further information on this matter could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### 2. Fraudulent Identity Documents or Documents Obtained Fraudulently

Various sources indicate that a number of countries do not recognize the Somali passport as a valid travel document (Norway 5 Jan. 2009, 10; US 19 Apr. 2013, 27; RBC Radio 9 Apr. 2013). According to Norway's Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo, the lack of approval of the Somali passport is not caused by the quality of the passport, but rather by the lack of national authorities with notoriety to issue the passports (5 Jan. 2009, 10). Similarly, Somalia Report, a "non-partisan website that hires Western editors to work with over 140 Somali journalists inside the country" (n.d.), reported in 2011 that it would be "difficult at best" to obtain a legitimate Somali passport because the government has been at war for over 20 years (19 Nov. 2011).

Various sources also indicate that Somali passport fraud exists (US 19 Apr. 2013, 27; Somalia Report 19 Nov. 2011; Sabahi 24 Jan. 2013). According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012*, published by the US Department of State, Somali passport fraud is "widespread" (19 Apr. 2013, 27). According to Sabahi, a news website that covers the Horn of Africa and is sponsored by the United States Africa Command (n.d.), a forgery system for identity documents has "flourished" in Somalia for over two decades, but the Somali government is beginning to "tak[e] steps" to combat this problem (24 Jan. 2013).

##### 2.1 Document Fraud Outside Somalia

According to Landinfo, there are reports that Somali embassies sold passports to Somalis residing abroad, during and after the 1990s (Norway 5 Jan. 2009, 10). In that same report published in 2009, Landinfo states that the Somali foreign services "operated outside the control or command of central authorities, and have had no opportunity to verify documents presented to them (as proof of a person's identity)" (ibid.). The coordinator at the Somali Centre for Family Services in Ottawa stated that, based on his own experience toward the end of the 1990s, in some countries, such as Kenya, it was possible to obtain a passport if a person had enough money and if they had the proper connections at the

embassy (Somali Centre for Family Services 8 July 2013). The coordinator also stated that anyone, not only Somalis, could purchase fraudulent Somali identity documents, including passports, in the markets in Kenya (*ibid.*). However, the coordinator pointed out that he was not aware of the current situation (*ibid.*).

Media reports indicate that, in June 2011, the Somali authorities terminated a contract with Dubai-based Just Solutions, whose services had been used to print passports (*Baidoa Times* 13 Oct. 2012; Somalia Report 19 Nov. 2011). The company allegedly refused to hand over the printing equipment to the Somali government and continued to produce Somali passports (*ibid.*; *Baidoa Times* 13 Oct. 2012). In November 2011, in Mombasa, some Kenyan authorities allegedly seized one container filled with fraudulent Somali passports and identity cards produced by Just Solutions (*ibid.*; Somalia Report 19 Nov. 2011).

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.

## References

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United States (US). 19 April 2013. Department of State. "Somalia." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012*. <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204377.pdf>> [Accessed 26 June 2013]

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact representatives of the following organizations were unsuccessful: Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota, Dejinta Beesha. A representative from the Somali-Canadian Association of Etobicoke was unable to provide information.

**Internet sites, including:** AllAfrica; *The Daily Star*; Denmark – Danish Immigration Service; ecoinet; European Migration Network; Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees; Radiohormuud.dk; Reuters; Somalia – Embassy of Somalia in Turkey; Sweden – Swedish Migration Board; Thompson Reuters Foundation; United Nations – Refworld.

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