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Côte d'Ivoire: The rights granted to a person with a residency permit
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Also known as a resident card (carte de resident) or a freedom of movement permit (permis de libre circulation) (Côte d'Ivoire n.d.a), the Côte d'Ivoire residency permit is issued by the National Identification Office (Office national d'identification, ONI) (Côte d'Ivoire 18 Jan. 2010; Burkina Faso n.d.), a government organization based in Abidjan that handles matters of civil status and immigration services (Côte d'Ivoire n.d.b).

In an 18 January 2010 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Embassy of Côte d'Ivoire in Ottawa explained that the residency permit, which must be renewed annually, allows the holder to reside and move about freely in Côte d'Ivoire. Although the residency permit cannot be used as a travel document to exit Côte d'Ivoire, it still allows the holder to re-enter the country (Côte d'Ivoire 18 Jan. 2010). It also allows the holder to work anywhere in Côte d'Ivoire, but it does not provide him or her with access to jobs in the Ivorian public service (ibid.). According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), foreigners, including refugees with valid residency permits, can apply to the Ministry of Labour for work permits (USCRI 2008).

The website for Burkina Faso's Department of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation indicates that holders of an Ivorian residency permit receive the following social benefits and services-they can:

- collect family benefits: family allowances, retirement pensions;
- send or receive any kind of official document;
- open new bank accounts;
- obtain a business licence;
- obtain documents concerning civil status;
- register a business;
- obtain a vehicle registration card (carte grise);
- obtain or renew a driver's licence;
- sign employment contracts;
- register in educational institutions;
- register for water and electricity services and obtain a post office box;
- access public transportation (Burkina Faso n.d.).

Additional information on the social services available to residency permit holders could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

However, several sources consulted by the Research Directorate reported that the government of Côte d'Ivoire refused to issue residency permits to nationals from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in November 2007 (IUHR 19 Nov. 2007; IPS 20 Nov. 2007; Côte d'Ivoire 8 Nov. 2007). According to an article published by the United Nations (UN) Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (Opération des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire, ONUCI) on the identification of the population and the electoral census, [translation] "identity documents issued by their country of origin or respective consulates are sufficient" for nationals from ECOWAS-member countries (UN n.d.; Côte d'Ivoire 8 Nov. 2007). Additional information on the rights granted to holders of new identity documents issued to persons from the ECOWAS living in Côte d'Ivoire could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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

Burkina Faso. N.d. Ministère des Affaires étrangères et de la Coopération régionale. "Guide du Burkinabé en Côte d'Ivoire." <<http://www.mae.gov.bf/SiteMae/documents/guide-burkinabe-ci.html>> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2010]

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U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI). 2008. "Côte d'Ivoire." World Refugee Survey 2008. <http://www.worldrefugeesurvey.org/index.php?title=C%C3%B4te_d'Ivoire> [Accessed 20 Jan. 2010]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources : Attempts to contact the Office national d'identification (ONI) in Abidjan were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Afrik.com, AllAfrica.com, International Crisis Group, Minority Rights Group International (MRG), Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF), Panapress (PANA), Radio France internationale (RFI), Syfia Grands Lacs, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), United States (US) Bureau of Consular Affairs.

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