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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

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28 November 2007

PAK102657.E

Pakistan: Prevalence of fraudulent documents
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

A July 2005 article in *Dawn*, a Karachi-based newspaper, states that "tens of thousands of Pakistanis manage every year to reach [the] UK on forged documents and through other means of human trafficking" (6 July 2005). In an article on human trafficking, *The Daily Times* reports that trafficking people "under the cover of cultural and educational delegations travelling abroad" is common (10 Mar. 2005). The same article indicates that "illegal immigrants travelling with fake student visas" are also commonplace (*The Daily Times* 10 Mar. 2005). The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), a non-governmental organization which promotes the advancement of human rights in Pakistan (HRCP n.d.), indicates in their 2006 report that during the previous four years, over 33,000 Pakistanis were returned to Pakistan after using fraudulent travel documents to enter Oman (ibid. 2007, 255). The HRCP report also estimates that over 300,000 people were thought to leave Pakistan by illegal means each year (ibid.).

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), a Pakistani law enforcement agency which generally investigates cases of corruption and immigration control, including offences under passport-related legislation (Pakistan n.d.a; ibid. 13 Mar. 2007), states that it was aware of 131 passengers travelling on forged documents in 2004 and 83 in the first six months of 2005 (Pakistan n.d.b).

According to the Pakistan Press International (PPI), in May 2006, the British government donated a machine that detects forgeries to the Pakistan passport and immigration office (PPI 9 May 2006). This equipment, which magnifies images on any document to a very high degree and can identify the use of different inks in the preparation of documents, is intended to help Pakistani authorities identify forged or fraudulent documents, such as national identity cards, bank statements and other documents required to obtain visas (ibid.). The FIA already owns four such machines (ibid.). The Director of Visa Services at the British High Commission in Islamabad is quoted in the article as saying that approximately two percent of applications for United Kingdom (UK) visas are fraudulent (ibid.).

Although the German Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees could not provide information in 2007 within the time constraints of this Response, in 2004, they provided the following information which was cited in Response to Information Request PAK42535.E of 18 June 2004. According to the Information Centre on Asylum and Migration of the German Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees, most asylum applicants from Pakistan obtained forged and/or falsified travel documents from traffickers who made all of the travel arrangements and supplied them with a passport, visa and flight tickets (Germany 30 Mar. 2004). The German Federal Office went on to say that

[i]f and to what extent this supply of travel documents involves corrupt actions between "trafficker" and "passport authority" cannot be judged from this side-it is however likely that corruption does indeed play a certain role in this procedure.

If fake and/or falsified passports are used, Pakistani citizens usually claim that these are fake and/or falsified Pakistani passports. It is only rarely stated that Indian and British passports are faked or falsified.

The traffickers doing their "business" in Pakistan are mostly Pakistani nationals. Occasionally, also Afghan, Indian and Iranian citizens appear in this context.

With regard to contacting traffickers, Pakistani citizens usually state that this is accomplished via relatives.

(Fake and/or falsified) travel documents are not presented in the asylum procedure. Asylum applicants claim that either, after entry into the Federal Republic of Germany, they had to hand the documents back to the trafficker who accompanied them, or that they had to give them to a "contact person" waiting in a transit country.

The costs for trafficking-including the supply of the necessary documents-are mostly paid in Pakistani rupees. The sums claimed are up to 1.2 Mio. Rupees [\$28,243.80 CAD (Universal Currency Converter 18 June 2004)]. US-\$ or Euro play a minor role in this context.

Asylum seekers generally do not claim to have indebted themselves in order to pay the trafficker. (ibid.)

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of cases of where fraudulent or forged documents have been used, as reported by various media sources from 2004 - 2007:

-In January 2005, *The Daily Times* reported that the FIA offices in Karachi and Lahore had arrested the "ringleader" of an extensive human trafficking racket and recovered 403 Pakistani passports with altered photographs, 102 fake national identity cards, 52 blank Pakistani passports, 50 fake stamps, 20 air tickets of Syrian Airline, 60 photographs, 4 Canadian visa stickers, 2 Canadian immigration papers, 1 electric lamination machine, 1 manual lamination machine, 1 scanning machine, 30 used cheque books "containing counter foils," 20 loose pages of various passports; the investigation revealed that the ringleader had been running this operation since 1996 and that he claimed to have assisted more than 1,000 people to travel abroad on fraudulent travel documents (*The Daily Times* 8 Jan. 2005);

-A Bangladeshi national claims that a Pakistani intelligence agency provided him with forged Pakistani documents, including a Pakistani passport and a national identity card (ibid. 28 Nov. 2004);

-Several visa consultants were arrested in Lahore and authorities seized fraudulent travel documents from them (ibid. 10 Mar. 2005);

-Six people were arrested at the Islamabad airport with fraudulent travel documents, one suspect confessed to being involved in human trafficking and forging documents for three years (ibid. 19 Sept. 2005);

-A police inspector was arrested by the FIA for possession of a fake passport (*Dawn* 6 Oct. 2006);

-The FIA arrested seven people involved in human smuggling and seized fraudulent passports, stamps and other documents from them (ibid. 18 Feb. 2006);

-Two individuals were convicted in Lahore of preparing fraudulent travel documents and received sentences of seven years imprisonment each (ibid. 12 May 2005);

-The FIA arrested a former police constable and a Civil Aviation Authority employee on charges of human trafficking after it was revealed that they had provided fake university certificates to two illegal immigrants to make it possible for them to travel with student visas (ibid. 17 Oct. 2007);

-A man was arrested at the Quaid-i-Azam International airport on suspicion of human trafficking; he was travelling on a fraudulent passport along with his female companion and he had obtained a national identity card under a false name (ibid. 20 June 2007);

-A Pakistani man was caught at the Dubai airport trying to smuggle an Afghan woman and several children to Britain; authorities found that the visas stamped in the Pakistani passports of the Afghan passengers were forged (ibid. 17 June 2005);

-One Afghan national attempting to travel with a Pakistani passport and a Pakistani national attempting to travel with an Afghan passport were arrested at the Peshawar airport; the Afghan national also had a fake national identity card (ibid. 12 Oct. 2005);

-The Pakistan immigration police apprehended 16 people who had travelled to Pakistan using fraudulent Korean passports (AP 7 Aug. 2006; *The Baluchistan Times* 7 Aug. 2006);

-One Peshawar resident was caught trying to board a plane bound for Saudi Arabia using a fraudulent passport to which he had affixed his photograph (*The Baluchistan Times* 9 July 2007);

-A couple and their "travel agent" were arrested after authorities discovered that the man's passport photograph had been tampered with; during the investigation, the couple confessed that they had paid five thousand dollars in US currency to their agent for fraudulent passports and visas to allow them to travel to the US (ibid. 16 Nov. 2006);

-Immigration authorities at the Peshawar airport arrested four passengers travelling with fraudulent travel documents, and deported one Nigerian national with a forged visa (*Frontier Star* 28 Oct. 2006);

-*The Times of India* reported that two known Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami "terrorists" had arranged fake passports and visas for their recruits in order to send them to Karachi from Bangladesh (*The Times of India* 10 May 2006);

-One man was arrested at the Peshawar airport for attempting to travel on his cousin's passport (*Frontier Star* 22 Aug. 2006);

-Kuwait airport authorities arrested a Pakistani drug trafficker travelling on a forged passport (*Kuwait Times* 5 Dec. 2005).

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.

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Oral sources: Attempts to contact the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Islamabad were unsuccessful.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in Germany and the Canadian high commission in Islamabad did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), Freedom House, Government of Pakistan, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Security Service (MI5), United States Department of State.

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