

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

[Home](#) > [Research Program](#) > [Responses to Information Requests](#)

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.

28 January 2013

LKA104266.E

Sri Lanka: Identity documents issued in Colombo and the northeast of Sri Lanka, including driver's licences, temporary identity cards and postal identity cards

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Identity Documents, Overview

According to an 18 September 2009 UN Development Programme (UNDP) news release, most people affected by the conflict in Sri Lanka lost their documents, including birth certificates, identity cards, and marriage certificates, among others. The *Daily Mirror*, a Colombo-based national newspaper, reported that a "significant number" of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Northern and Eastern provinces did not possess national identity cards (NICs) (3 Mar. 2010). BBC also reports that there are more than 100,000 individuals in northern Sri Lanka who lost their identity cards or their ID cards were damaged (27 June 2012). BBC adds that many people do not have birth certificates, which are essential for applying for identity cards (27 June 2012). Corroborating information could not be found among sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the UNDP news release, government offices tasked with issuing documents are located in town centres and it is difficult and expensive for many people to travel to these locations, "especially when the process often requires half a dozen trips to as many different offices" (UN 18 Sept. 2009). In order to help people to obtain their identity documents, the UNDP dispatched mobile documentation clinics to communities affected by the conflict (*ibid.*). BBC indicates that the People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), an NGO monitoring elections in Sri Lanka (PAFFREL n.d.), also sent mobile services to the Northern Province to help individuals to acquire their birth and marriage certificates (BBC 27 June 2012). Further information on the mobile services could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Temporary Identity Cards

Several sources indicate that during the provincial elections held in 2012 in North Central and Eastern provinces, temporary identity cards were issued to people who did not have identification (*Global Tamil News* 9 July 2012; *The Sunday Times* 18 Mar. 2012; *Daily News* 20 Aug. 2012). Sources state that temporary ID cards were issued by the Grama Niladari [Department of Registration of Persons (Sri Lanka 25 June 2010)] (*Global Tamil News* 9 July 2012; *Daily News* 20 Aug. 2012; CaFFE 10 July 2012). Two of these sources note that the temporary ID cards were also issued by the State Superintendent (*ibid.*; *Daily News* 20 Aug. 2012). In order to obtain a temporary ID, an individual must submit the following documents:

- an application form and two copies; and
- two photographs (*ibid.*).
- Sources indicate that temporary ID cards were issued during the elections held in:
 - 2008 (*Global Tamil News* 9 July 2012);
 - 2009 (*ibid.*; CaFFE 7 Dec. 2009);
 - 010 (*Daily Mirror* 3 Mar. 2010; *Daily News* 7 Nov. 2012; *Ceylon Today* 10 July 2012); and
 - 2011 (*ibid.*; *Daily News* 7 Nov. 2012).

Sources noted that during past elections the following documents were accepted as proof of identity:

- passports (*Daily Mirror* 3 Mar. 2010; CaFFE 7 Dec. 2009; *Daily News* 21 July 2011);
- NICs (*ibid.*; CaFFE 7 Dec. 2009);
- driver's licences (*ibid.*; *Daily News* 21 July 2011; *Daily Mirror* 3 Mar. 2010);
- pensioner's identity cards (*ibid.*; *Daily News* 21 July 2011; CaFFE 7 Dec. 2009); and
- elder's identity cards (*ibid.*; *Daily Mirror* 3 Mar. 2010).

Pensioner's ID cards are issued by the Department of Pensions in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka n.d.b; *ibid.* n.d.c). Further information on the pensioner's and elder's identity cards could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Driver's Licences

The website of the Department of Motor Traffic indicates that, in order to obtain a new driver's licence, an individual must submit, in person, the following documents to a district office:

- NIC or a valid passport with the NIC number;
- two black-and-white passport size photographs; and
- birth certificate (if obtaining driver's licence for the first time) (*ibid.* 3 Aug. 2011a).

The website notes that an "online method" of submitting an application is available at the offices in the following cities: Colombo, Werahera and Kurunegala (*ibid.*). Individuals submitting applications at these offices must submit the above mentioned documents, except their photographs (*ibid.*). The photographs will be taken during the application process at the office (*ibid.*). The new driver's licence processing fee varies from 1,700 Sri Lankan rupees (LKR) [about C\$13.00 (XE 21 Jan. 2013a)] to 2,250 LKR [about C\$18.00 (XE 21 Jan. 2013b)], depending on the class of a vehicle (Sri Lanka 3 Aug. 2011b).

4. Postal Identity Card

Government sources indicate that a postal ID card is accepted as proof of identification for one to sit for school examinations (*ibid.* 22 Jan. 2013) or for a financial transaction (*ibid.* n.d.a). According to the website of Sri Lanka Post, a postal ID card is issued by the Postmaster General to assist the holder to establish his or her identity in order to transact post office business (*ibid.*). In order to obtain a postal ID card, an individual must submit the following:

- an application form, which is available at any post office;
- two photographs; and
- the processing fee of 50 LKR [about C\$ 0.40 (XE 21 Jan. 2013c)] (Sri Lanka n.d.a).

The website notes that, if the applicant is not known to the postmaster, two witnesses must confirm the identity of the applicant and they must sign the declaration form in the presence of the postmaster (*ibid.*). According to the website of the Government Information Center, an applicant must also submit his or her birth certificate (*ibid.* 25 Oct. 2010). The application form must be signed in the presence of the postmaster of the post office nearest the applicant's permanent address and then the application will be forwarded to the Postmaster General (*ibid.* n.d.a). The office of the Postmaster General is located in Colombo (*ibid.* n.d.d). When the postal ID card is ready, it will be delivered to the post office to which the applicant submitted his or her application (*ibid.* n.d.a). Postal ID cards are valid for a period of five years (*ibid.* n.d.a).

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

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). 27 June 2012. Ponniah Manikavasagam. "Sri Lanka's Tamils Face Identity Crisis." <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-18261375?print=true>> [Accessed 7 Jan. 2013]

Campaign for Free and Fair Election (CaFFE). 10 July 2012. Azra Ameen. "Temporary ID Cards for Elections." <http://www.caffesrilanka.org/Temporary_ID_cards_for_elections_-5-2965.html> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2013]

_____. 7 December 2009. "ID Cards for Previous Polls Also Valid: Dissanayake." <http://caffesrilanka.org/ID_cards_for_previous_polls_also_valid__Dissanayake-5-1290.html> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2013]

Ceylon Today [Colombo]. 10 July 2012. Azra Ameen. "Temporary IDs for PC Polls." <<http://www.ceylontoday.lk/16-9319-news-detail-temporary-id-cards-for-elections.html>> [Accessed 15 Jan. 2013]

Daily Mirror. 3 March 2010. S.S. Selvanayagam. "FR Violation Petition Filed Seeking Voting Right for IDPs." <<http://www.southasianrights.org/?p=712>> [Accessed 15 Jan. 2013]

Daily News. 7 November 2012. "Applications for Temporary IDs Accepted Till Aug 10." <http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=applications_for_temporary_ids_20120711_01> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2013]

_____. 20 August 2012. "Temporary IDs for PC Polls : Deadline for Applications August 27." <<http://www.dailynews.lk/2012/08/20/pol04.asp>> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2013]

_____. 21 July 2011. Irangika Range. "Temporary IDs for Northerners Till 6pm." <<http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/07/21/news26.asp>> [Accessed 15 Jan. 2013]

Global Tamil News. 9 July 2012. "Sri Lanka Elections Department to Issue New Temporary IDs to Residents in the Election Area." <<http://www.globaltamilnews.net/GTMNEditorial/tabid/71/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/79994/language/en-US/Sri-Lanka-Elections-Department-to-issue-new-temporary-IDs-to-residents-in-the-election-area.aspx>> [Accessed 15 Jan. 2013]

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL). N.d. "People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL)." <<http://www.paffrel.lk>> [Accessed 18 Jan. 2013]

Sri Lanka. 22 January 2013. High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in Ottawa. Correspondence from an official to the Research Directorate.

_____. 3 August 2011a. Department of Motor Traffic. "New Driving License." <http://www.motortraffic.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83%3Anew-driving-license&Itemid=140&lang=en> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2013]

_____. 3 August 2011b. Department of Motor Traffic. "Charges for Services." <http://www.motortraffic.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=121&Itemid=147&lang=en> [Accessed 15 Jan. 2013]

_____. 25 October 2010. Government Information Center. "Obtain of Postal Identity Card." <http://www.gic.gov.lk/gic/index.php?option=com_info&id=722&task=info&lang=en> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2013]

_____. 25 June 2010. Government Information Center. "Complain Relating to Missing NIC and Electronic Equipments." <http://www.gic.gov.lk/gic/index.php?option=com_info&id=453&task=info&lang=en> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2013]

_____. N.d.a. Sri Lanka Post. "Postal Identity Cards." <<http://www.slpost.gov.lk/view.php?id=11&pid=3&type=item>> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2013]

_____. N.d.b. Embassy of Sri Lanka to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union. "Attestation of Pension Receipts / Life Certificate." <<http://www.srilankaembassy.be/CSAttestationOfPensionReceipts-LifeCertificate.htm>> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2013]

_____. N.d.c. Embassy of Sri Lanka in Rome. "Attestation of Pension Receipts/Life Certificates." <<http://www.srilankaembassyrome.org/en/consular-services/other-consular-services/attestation-of-pension-receiptslife-certificate.html>> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2013]

_____. N.d.d. Sri Lanka Post. "Let Us Know Your Idea." <<http://www.slpost.gov.lk/mail.php>> [Accessed 22 Jan. 2013]

The Sunday Times. 18 March 2012. Priyantha Hewage. "Day-to-day Hardship Killing Voter Enthusiasm for Polls." <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/120318/News/nws_11.html> [Accessed 15 Jan. 2013]

United Nations (UN). 18 September 2009. UN Development Programme (UNDP).

"Providing Identification Papers in Sri Lanka." <<http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2009/september/sri-lanka-identity.en>> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2013]

XE. 21 January 2013a. "Currency Converter Widget." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=1700&From=LKR&To=CAD>> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2013]

_____. 21 January 2013b. "Currency Converter Widget." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=2250&From=LKR&To=CAD>> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2013]

_____. 21 January 2013c. "Currency Converter Widget." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=50&From=LKR&To=CAD>> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2013]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact following were unsuccessful: Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development NGO; Centre for Policy Alternatives, Sri Lanka; Department of Political Science, Temple University; Human Rights in Conflict Program, Sri Lanka; human rights lawyers; INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre, Sri Lanka; Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Sri Lanka; International Organization for Migration; Networking for Rights in Sri Lanka; Sri Lanka – Colombo Divisional Secretariat, Department of Immigration and Emigration, Department of Pensions, Department of Registration of Persons, Eastern Provincial Council, Government Information Centre, Northern Provincial Council, Parliament of Sri Lanka, Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Sri Lanka Police; South Asians for Human Rights; UNHCR Ottawa.

Officials of the Canada Border Services Agency Document Integrity Unit and the High Commission of Canada in Sri Lanka were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development NGO; Amnesty International; Canada – High Commission of Canada to Sri Lanka and Maldives; Centre for Policy Alternative, Sri Lanka; *Daily FT*; *Daily Mirror*; Factiva; Freedom House; Human Rights Watch; Institute for War and Peace Reporting; Internal Displacement; International Organization for Migration; Keesing's Document Checker; *Lanka Truth*; Lanka Woman; News First; Reporters without Borders; Sri Lanka – Colombo Divisional Secretariat, Department of Immigration and Emigration, Department of Pensions, Department of Registration of Persons, Eastern Provincial Council, Electronic Travel Authority, Government of Sri Lanka Official Web Portal, High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in Ottawa, Ministry of Defence and Urban Development, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs, Ministry of Resettlement, Ministry of Social Services, Ministry of Transport, National Institute of Social Development, National Secretariat for Elders, Northern Provincial Council, Parliament of Sri Lanka, Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Seva Vanitha Army Branch, Sri Lanka Army, Sri Lanka Police; Sri Lanka Telecom; South Asians for Human Rights; *Sunday Times*; TamilNet; *The Times of India*; University Grant Commission, Sri Lanka; United Nations – Refworld, ReliefWeb; United States – Department of State.

[Click here for tips on how to use this search engine.](#)

Date modified: 2013-07-17