

# 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.

14 February 2014

**AFG104742.E**

Afghanistan: Requirements and procedures to obtain an e-Tazkira; description of the card, including appearance and security features

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### 1. Background

Sources indicate that the e-Tazkira [also e-Taskera, e-Tazkera] is a biometric electronic national identity card (US 21 May 2013; Afghanistan June 2013, 30).

According to an undated document regarding the tazkira, available on Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior Affairs website,

[o]wing to the conflict in Afghanistan, there has been no regular, national issue of the tazkira since 1976. Different governments have issued tazkiras at different times that are still valid, but they have provided an opportunity for forgery and misrepresentation. Moreover, the document is still paper-based and hand-written, and people do not routinely register births or apply for a tazkira, unless they need one to go to school or university or to obtain a passport. As a consequence, there is not a consistent and reliable system of population registration in the country at the moment, and the true population of Afghanistan is unknown.

To remedy the population registration problem, the government of Afghanistan has adopted comprehensive plans to introduce a new electronic system of population registration and issuing of tazkiras. It is jointly managed by the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. The Ministry of Interior Affairs is responsible for the collection of biometric data such as fingerprints and photos from every individual Afghan. The intention is to register and issue tazkiras to all of the estimated 30 million population in the next few years. (Afghanistan n.d.)

### 2. Status of E-Tazkira Issuance

According to a report on political developments in Afghanistan by the UN Secretary General, dated 5 March 2013, a presidential decree states that e-Tazkira distribution was to begin on 21 March 2013 (UN 5 Mar. 2013, 2). Sources indicate that there have been delays in the issuance of the e-Tazkira (Daily Outlook Afghanistan 16 Apr. 2013; South Asia Monitor 16 Nov. 2012).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the Director General of the Ministry of Interior's eTazkira Administration indicated that e-Tazkiras have not yet been issued in Afghanistan (Afghanistan 22 Jan. 2014). The Director General stated that the e-Tazkira legislation has passed parliamentary approval (ibid.). According to a Dari-language article published by the private news source Mandegar and republished in English by the BBC, on 6 January 2014, the President had not yet signed off on a draft of the e-Tazkira (BBC 6 Jan. 2014). On 22 January 2014, the Director General similarly said that the e-Tazkira legislation was still awaiting the President's approval (Afghanistan 22 Jan. 2014). According to the Director General, the first e-Tazkira will be issued to the President and his family (Afghanistan 22 Jan. 2014). He added that, after the President and his family receive e-Tazkiras, the issuance of e-Tazkiras will begin in Kabul (ibid.). He said that, after Kabul province, e-Tazkira issuance will begin in adjacent provinces and secure provinces (ibid.).

A 24 March 2013 article in Pajhwok Afghan News (PAN), a news source based in Afghanistan, reports on a "process of resident registration" in Kabul that started "ahead of issuance of the long-awaited computerized identity cards." Information on whether the applicants who registered during this process received e-Tazkiras could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to an undated document posted on the Afghanistan Ministry of Interior Affairs website, [t]he system for the new tazkira has been developed and successfully piloted in some parts of the country such as Kabul, Nangarhar and Bamyan. A total of 22,589 people have registered, which includes 7,877 males, 7,842 females and 6,244 children. Staff is now being recruited to form 401 registration teams to work throughout the country. (Afghanistan n.d.)

However, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Director General said that "[t]here has never been any piloting of the project and the information with respect to the piloting of the project in the MOI website is inaccurate" (ibid. 13 Feb. 2014).

According to the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia, speaking before the US Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs, regarding Afghanistan's upcoming 2014 elections,

[t]he MoI [Ministry of Interior] began an e-tazkera pilot program in Kabul in mid-April, which will expand nationwide once voter registration begins; however, progress on the issuance of e-tazkeras has been slow. Public demand for the e-tazkera has increased as public awareness of the program has become more widespread. This places the MoI under considerable pressure to meet demand and will continue to present a challenge for the MoI, as they work to meet their very aggressive goal of enrolling 14 million Afghans by March 31, 2014. (US 21 May 2013)

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's July 2013 country information report for Afghanistan describes the e-Tazkira as an electronic ID card that was "only recently introduced" (31 July 2013, 15). The UK government's February 2013 monthly progress report on Afghanistan states that, in the 2014 elections, "the majority of voters will be expected to use [voter registration] cards issued during previous registration exercises, or where possible, will be able to present an *e-taskera* electronic ID card to enable them to vote" (2).

### 3. Plans for e-Tazkira Issuance

The information in the following section was provided by the Director General of the eTazkira Administration. He described the plans for e-Tazkira issuance as follows: Teams of people will be sent out to go door to door to distribute forms, assist families to fill out forms, and take pictures of old Tazkiras. These teams will then bring these forms to registration centres. The Public Registry Department (PRD) will verify the information on the forms and confirm the authenticity of the family's old Tazkiras. After this process, a family will be scheduled for an appointment at an enrollment centre. Only certain families will be invited to the enrollment centres, and only at scheduled times, due to security considerations.

Upon a family's arrival for their appointment at the enrollment centre, the identities of the applicants will be verified, their documents will be double-checked, their irises will be scanned, and their fingerprints will be taken. E-tazkiras will then be printed, and delivered to registration centres, which will give them back to the teams to distribute to homes (Afghanistan 22 Jan. 2014).

The Director General also explained that

[t]hose families who do not possess paper tazkiras or whose information could not be verified have to go to their original districts, and two local authorities will have to verify their identity and sign on the forms. Then, they will be scheduled to come to the nearest enrollment center and get processed for the issuance of e-tazkira. (ibid. 13 Feb. 2014)

According to the Director General, individuals cannot register alone, but rather must do it through the family registration process, whereby the head of the family certifies all members of the family (ibid. 22 Jan. 2014). He said that each family will receive a number (ibid.). He added that, once a family form is registered, individual forms will be generated (ibid.). Then, e-tazkiras will be issued to individual members of families (ibid.). The Director General added that e-Tazkiras for minors under the age of 18 will be distributed to the head of the family (ibid. 13 Feb. 2014).

Corroborating information on the plans for issuance of e-tazkiras could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Director General indicated that, after teams have "covered" an entire province, the Ministry of Interior Affairs will declare all other Tazkiras in that province to be invalid (ibid. 22 Jan. 2014). According to information from a telephone interview conducted by an official of the High Commission of Canada to Pakistan with the

Director General of the eTazkira Administration, and sent to the Research Directorate, it will be mandatory for all citizens of Afghanistan to replace their Tazkiras with e-Tazkiras (Canada 24 Jan. 2014).

#### 4. Issuance of e-Tazkiras from Abroad

According to the Director General, there are plans to issue e-Tazkiras from abroad in the future (Afghanistan 22 Jan. 2014). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### 5. e-Tazkira Security Features

The Director General indicated that fingerprints and iris scans will be saved in the chip of the e-Tazkira (ibid.). He said that there are 14 additional security features on the card and in the chip (ibid.). He added that other security features cannot be disclosed for security reasons (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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.

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## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact a journalist at Daily Outlook Afghanistan were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response. The Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa was unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response. The following sources could not provide information for this Response: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit; Canada Border Services Agency, National Document Centre; United Nations – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Afghanistan.

**Internet sites, including:** 1TV; 1 Sada; Afghan Daily; Afghanistan – Ministry of Interior's e-tazkira Department; Al Jazeera; Council on Foreign Relations; ecoi.net; The Frontier Post; Institute for War and Peace Reporting; Keesing Reference Systems; Times of Central Asia; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld; United States – Department of State.

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