



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		20 March 2007
About the Board	COD102456.FE	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Democratic Republic of Congo: The Congolese passport, including the name of the issuing authority and the procedure and conditions for obtaining one; possibilities of obtaining a passport through fraud or corruption (March 2007).	
Employment		
Legal and Policy		
References	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Publications	Types of passports and the procedure and conditions for obtaining them	
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division	In correspondence dated 5 March 2007, the President of Journalists in Danger (Journaliste en danger, JED) provided the information the five paragraphs that follow. Based in Kinshasa, JED is a non-governmental organization that defends and promotes freedom of the press (JED 5 Mar. 2007). It is a member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) and of the international network of Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières, RSF) (ibid.).	
Immigration Division		
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions	The DRC issues three types of passports: a regular passport, a duty passport and a diplomatic passport. Passports are issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (ministère des Affaires étrangères et de la coopération internationale).	
Forms		
Statistics		
Research		
Research Program	The regular passport is dark blue and issued to all Congolese citizens who apply for one. Since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is based in Kinshasa, Congolese citizens who want to obtain a regular passport must either go to Kinshasa themselves or authorize a friend or relative there to act on their behalf. All applications must include a duly completed passport application form, a certificate of nationality, four passport-size photographs (sometimes two are sufficient) of the applicant, and USD 50. The passports are signed by ministry employees [translation] "who are often as high up as a counsellor of embassy, etc." A regular passport is valid for three years but can be extended.	
National Documentation Packages		
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets		
Responses to Information Requests		
Recent Research	The duty passport is green and issued to government employees on assignment. This type of passport is free, but to obtain one, the applicant must be a government employee or an officer of a public corporation. The applicant must also have an official travel order signed by a minister or deputy minister. In the case of a military officer, the travel order is signed by the Minister of Defence or his or her deputy minister. In the case of government employees working in the office of the president of the DRC, the travel order is signed by the president's chief of staff or his or her assistant.	
Media Centre		
News		
Information Sheets		
Media Relations		
Proactive Disclosure		
	The diplomatic passport is red and issued to members of the government and their families, to government employees with the rank of minister and their	

families, and to diplomats and their families. The diplomatic passport is issued upon presentation of a certificate of appointment (order from the head of state).

According to the President of JED, all citizens, including those who served under former president Mobutu, can obtain a regular passport, but [translation] "the more prominent ones and those who have problems with the government cannot easily obtain a passport."

According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*, "there were no reports that the transitional government [from July 2003 to 2006] prevented particular groups from acquiring passports" (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2d). The same source reports that Joseph Olenghankoy, a political dissident who left the DRC after his passport was temporarily confiscated in 2005, later returned and ran for president (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2d.).

Possibilities of obtaining a passport through fraud or corruption

The President of JED stated in his 5 March 2007 correspondence that the requirements for obtaining a regular passport are merely [translation] "theoretical." According to him,

[translation]

in practice, you complete a regular passport application form (a friend or a government employee can even do it for you and sign it). You provide two photographs and USD 150 or USD 200. The officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs puts USD 50 in the government's coffers and pockets the difference, which he shares with his bosses who sign the passport. At that price, you get your passport in one or two days at most. It is not necessary to go in person. (JED 5 Mar. 2007)

The information on corruption provided by the President of JED is corroborated by *Documents d'identité*, a report from a joint mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo by the Belgian Commissioner General's Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons (Commissariat général aux réfugiés et apatrides, CGRA), the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides, OFPRA) and the Swiss Federal Office for Refugees (Office fédéral des réfugiés, ODR) (Projet ARGO July 2004, 1, 4). The authors of the report note that Congolese passports are obtained, in most cases, through corruption and that the official procedures with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are [translation] "often circumvented" (ibid., 4). More specifically, the report explains that

[translation]

a person simply has to go to the ministry with four photographs and approximately 150 dollars to obtain a passport in whatever name the person wants. With more money, one can also obtain a few extra stamps. A fake [passport] enables one to obtain an authentic passport (the same goes for diplomatic passports). The authenticity of a passport does not reflect reality, in the sense that a person can obtain an authentic document but have someone else's photograph or a fake name inserted. (ibid.)

Country Reports 2006 indicates that, in the DRC, "passport issuance was irregular and often required payment of significant bribes" (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2d).

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.

References

Journaliste en danger (JED). 5 March 2007. Correspondence from the President.

Projet ARGO. July 2004. *République démocratique du Congo. Documents d'identité*. Report from a joint mission to Kinshasa by the [Belgian] Commissariat général aux réfugiés et apatrides (CGRA), the Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (OFPRA) and the [Swiss] Office fédéral des réfugiés (ODR) in May 2004.

United States (US). 6 March 2007. Department of State. "Democratic Republic of Congo." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78728.htm>> [Accessed 6 Mar. 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: *CIA World Factbook*, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Norwegian Refugee Council, International Crisis Group (ICG), Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), Migration News, Minorities at Risk Project, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), ReliefWeb, United Kingdom Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), United Nations Security Council, United States Department of State, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.

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