



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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23 January 2006

### **ETH100912.E**

Ethiopia: The process by which Ethiopian citizens can obtain identity documents from consulates or missions abroad; birth registration and manner by which birth certificates are issued (2006)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### **Passports**

The following information is based on a telephone interview conducted on 16 January 2006 with the head of the consular section at the Ethiopian embassy in Canada:

The Ethiopian embassy in Canada has not been issuing passports since September 2005. Ethiopian passports have been redesigned so that they are "machine-readable." However, the Ethiopian embassy in Canada does not yet have the proper equipment to make these passports. The Ethiopian embassy in Washington, as well as some other missions abroad, have also temporarily stopped issuing passports for this reason. The Ethiopian missions in New York and Los Angeles, however, have been able to continue issuing passports.

Ethiopians in Canada who would normally apply for a passport are instead issued a one-way "laissez-passer," which allows entry into Ethiopia. The Ethiopian embassy in Canada also provides the applicant with a "letter of cooperation" in order to facilitate the process of obtaining a new Ethiopian passport from the passport office in Addis Ababa.

To obtain a "laissez-passer," the applicant must complete an application form and provide the embassy with their Canadian residence permit and any original official document from Ethiopia (e.g., birth certificate, school certificate). If the applicant does not have an official document from Ethiopia that proves his or her citizenship, another Ethiopian citizen in Canada must serve as a witness to confirm the applicant's Ethiopian citizenship. The "laissez-passer" costs CAN\$29.00 and is valid for three months.

The Ethiopian government's immigration officials have not yet informed the Ethiopian embassy in Canada when they will be able to begin issuing passports again.

### **Identity Cards**

According to the head of the consular section at the Ethiopian embassy in Canada, identity cards are issued to citizens of Canada or other countries, who are of Ethiopian origin (16 Jan. 2006). Ethiopian law does not permit dual citizenship; however, the identity card allows Ethiopians who have become citizens of other countries to maintain certain privileges that are granted to citizens of Ethiopia (Ethiopia 16 Jan. 2006). These rights include entering Ethiopia without a visa, owning immovable property in Ethiopia, and being employed in Ethiopia (ibid).

The Ethiopian embassy in Canada's Website indicates that those who apply for an Ethiopian identity card must be of Ethiopian origin and be at least eighteen years old in order to be eligible (20 Dec. 2005). The applicant must also provide his or her original Canadian passport, as well as an original Ethiopian document that proves Ethiopian citizenship (e.g., birth certificate, school certificate) (ibid.).

An identity card costs CAN\$500.00 (Ethiopia 16 Jan. 2006) and is valid for five years (ibid. 20 Dec. 2005).

### **Birth Certificates**

An applicant wishing to obtain a birth certificate must contact a city hall in Ethiopia (Ethiopia 16 Jan. 2006). The applicant needs to arrange for a family member or friend in Ethiopia to obtain the birth certificate on their behalf from the city hall (ibid.). If the applicant does not have a family member or friend in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian embassy can provide the applicant with the telephone number and mailing address of the appropriate city hall so that the applicant can make direct contact with the city hall (ibid.).

The United States Bureau of Consular Affairs Website provides the following information regarding the procedure to obtain an Ethiopian birth certificate:

[Birth certificates are] available only to those resident in Ethiopia. Requests for copies of previously issued birth certificates should be addressed to the Office of Region 14 Administration, Vital Statistics Service, Municipality of Addis Ababa, P.O. Box 356, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; or to the equivalent office or any other municipality in which the birth was registered.

For children under ten years of age, a hospital birth certificate, court document confirming parentage, or a baptismal certificate and acknowledgment from one's "kebele" (urban neighborhood association) are sufficient documentation for issuance of a birth certificate. For children between the ages of eleven and thirteen, the above mentioned documents and school records are required for issuance. Any of the above documents and an identity card are satisfactory for issuance of birth certificates for persons over the age of eighteen.

Persons applying for original birth certificates should contact the appropriate municipal authorities and present hospital birth records, which have been authenticated by their "kebele." Because of the nature of the "kebele" system, the birth certificate may be issued by the municipality where the person presently resides rather than where the birth actually took place (25 Aug. 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.

#### References

Ethiopia. 16 January 2006. Embassy of Ethiopia in Ottawa. Telephone interview with the Head of Consular Section.

\_\_\_\_\_. 20 December 2005. Embassy of Ethiopia in Ottawa. "Consular and Legal Services." <<http://www.ethiopia.ottawa.on.ca/consular.htm>> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2006]

United States (US). 25 August 2005. Bureau of Consular Affairs. "Ethiopia: Reciprocity Schedule." <<http://travel.state.gov/visa/reciprocity/Country%20Folder/E/Ethiopia.htm>> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2006]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, including:** United States Office of Personnel Management Investigations Service; Embassy of Ethiopia, Washington, DC.

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