



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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27 February 2007

### ERI102025.E

Eritrea: Information on official identity documents and the names of agencies that issue them (2005 - 2006)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### Passport

According to the online database maintained by Keesing's Reference Systems for verifying the validity of identity documents, the Eritrean national passport is valid for two years (n.d.a). The national passport is bound with a black cover that displays the word "ERITREA" at the top and the word "PASSPORT" at the bottom (Keesing's Reference Systems n.d.a). The middle of the front cover contains a circle with a picture of a dromedary (one-humped Arabian camel) (ibid.). The cover page contains Tigrinya text in the upper and lower left corners and Arabic text in the upper and lower right corners (ibid.). The inside of the front cover repeats the camel motif, while the opposite page contains a standard passport statement requesting that the bearer be granted assistance while abroad (ibid.). A seven-digit passport number is indicated at the bottom of this first page (ibid.). Inside, the bearer's details page includes a glued photograph of the bearer with a dry-embossed stamp on the upper left corner and a seven-digit passport number in the upper right corner of the page (ibid.). The bearer's details, on the right side of the page, include the full name, mother's maiden name, date and place of birth, sex, height, identification card number, address, date of issue, date of expiry and issuing authority (ibid.). In the example provided by Keesing's Reference Systems, the issuing authority is the Ministry of Internal Affairs (ibid.). Eritrean passports do not indicate the bearer's nationality (US 8 June 2006). Each blank passport page contains a watermark of the dromedary emblem displayed on the front of the passport (Keesing's Reference Systems n.d.a).

The Eritrean diplomatic passport displayed on the Keesing's Reference Systems Web site is like the Eritrean national passport, but differs in the following ways: the diplomatic passport is valid for five years and is renewable only three times (ibid. n.d.b.). Diplomatic passport numbers have seven characters, a letter followed by six numbers (Keesing's Reference Systems n.d.b). The front cover is maroon coloured and contains the words "DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT" underneath the dromedary emblem (ibid.). The first page contains the words "GOVERNMENT OF ERITREA," below which are the words "MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS," followed by "DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT" (ibid.). The bottom of the first page contains space to indicate the place and date of issue; the passport number is not included (ibid.). The photograph page, page 3, identifies the passport number in the top right portion of the page (ibid.). Below the passport number, there are spaces to specify the name of the passport holder, profession, date of birth and signature (ibid.). The following page includes the passport number centred at the top of the page, and space for renewing the passport two separate times below it (ibid.). The renewal information includes the place, date of renewal and expiry date (ibid.). In the example provided, each renewal is stamped by the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ibid.).

#### Domestic identity card

The Eritrean identity card does not expire, but is valid only within Eritrea (Keesing's Reference Systems n.d.c.). The card is laminated and grey-blue in colour, with the bearer's photograph on the left side and a seven-digit identity card number on the bottom, centred below the personal information section (ibid.). Both the front and back of the card contain space for providing the bearer's personal information (ibid.). Official information on the card is written in Tigrinya (ibid.). Information on the issuing authority for national identity cards could not be found by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Application forms to renew a passport, replace an identification card, and obtain a transit visa or a "laissez-passer" can be found on the Web site of the Eritrean embassy in Stockholm, Sweden (Eritrea n.d.a; ibid. n.d.b.; ibid. n.d.c; ibid. n.d.d; ibid. n.d.e).

#### Driver's licence

The Eritrean driver's licence is valid for one year and is renewable eight times, each time for an additional year (Keesing's Reference Systems n.d.d). It is a blue booklet containing eight unnumbered pages (ibid.). The front cover contains text in Tigrinya and English; the English text includes the words "DRIVING LICENCE," "GRADE II," and "THE STATE OF ERITREA" (ibid.). The issuing authority is identified as the Road Transport Authority at the bottom of the front cover, underneath which is a five-digit licence number (ibid.). The photograph page contains a

glued picture of the bearer underneath which is a space for his or her name, the date issued and the name of the issuing officer (ibid.). The example provided on Keesing's Web site includes a circular ink stamp as well as a date stamp on the photograph page (ibid.). The words "Grade II Licence" and "D.L. No." can also be found in the top right portion of the page (ibid.). The next page contains space for the bearer's name, date of birth, sex, place of birth, nationality, address (country, city, zone, district, street and house number), telephone number, post office box number and signature (ibid.). The remaining pages contain space for renewing the licence (ibid.). The driver's licence number is filled in by hand on each page with the exception of the front cover (ibid.).

### **Other documents**

According to the United States (US) Bureau of Consular Affairs, birth certificates and marriage certificates can only be issued to persons inside Eritrea; requests for copies should be addressed to the Office of Civil Status in the municipality in which the birth or marriage was registered (US 8 June 2006). If the birth or marriage has not been registered, the US Bureau of Consular Affairs suggests that consular offices use hospital records, baptismal records, church records or affidavits given by witnesses in lieu of the certificate (ibid.). Divorce decrees are issued following a complex and lengthy process (ibid.). All parties involved in the divorce, including the spouses, family and two appointed arbitrators representing each party in the marriage, must sign an agreement and have it stamped and approved before submitting it to the relevant court, after which a divorce decree can be issued (ibid.). The decree is issued in both Tigrinya and English (ibid.).

Military records are likewise only available to persons in Eritrea (ibid.). These are issued by the Ministry of Defence (ibid.).

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

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### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** The Embassy of Eritrea in Washington and the Embassy of Eritrea in Ottawa did not provide information to the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net); Shaebia; United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN); UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE); UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

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