

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.

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China: Identity documents required to purchase tickets to travel by train, bus or boat; whether authorities check the identity of train travellers during their travel through China

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Domestic Travel Restrictions in China

The US's Department of State *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011* states that authorities may sharpen controls on freedom of movement from time to time (US 24 May 2012, 36). Freedom of movement can be limited for dissidents, human rights activists and petitioners at "sensitive times," such as during the run-up to the 18th Chinese Communist Party Congress in November 2012 (CHRD 1 Nov. 2012), or for "individuals deemed politically sensitive" (US 24 May 2012, Sec. 2). Freedom House points out that "officials face penalties if they fail to limit the flow of petitioners travelling to Beijing to report injuries" (2012).

Sources indicate that members of certain ethnic groups can be subject to internal travel restrictions (*Time* 9 July 2009; RFA 12 Jan. 2010; US 13 Sept. 2011, Sec. 2). The US Department of State *July-December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report* notes that Tibetan monks and nuns reportedly need to obtain permission from religious affairs bureaus at the county level to travel to study or teach (ibid.). In addition, media sources indicate that travel restrictions can be imposed on members of the Uyghur minority (*Time* 9 July 2009; RFA 12 Jan. 2010). In particular, citing exiled Uyghur groups, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reports there was "widespread" control on domestic travel for Uyghurs during a period of tension between the Uyghur minority and the Han majority in Guangdong Province following the stabbing of a Uyghur man (ibid.). RFA quotes an official as indicating that members of the Uyghur minority "are much more sensitive than the Han Chinese, so they are going to be subject to stricter checks" (ibid.). RFA also quoted a World Uyghur Congress spokesman as stating that Uyghurs were being stopped from buying plane and train tickets to Guangdong Province (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

2. Real-Name Ticket System for Travel by Train

Sources indicate that China's has had a real-name ticket system for train travel (*China Daily* 17 Feb. 2012) since January 2012 (BBC 13 Feb. 2012; [TravelChinaGuide.com](#) n.d.). Under the real-name system, individuals must show identification in order to purchase train tickets and their names must be displayed on their tickets (*China Daily* 17 Feb. 2012; BBC 13 Feb. 2012). According to sources, the real-name ticket system was first introduced for high-speed train travel beginning in June 2011 (Xinhua 1 June 2011; *Business Traveller Asia Pacific* 26 May 2011; *China Daily* 23 May 2011).

According to some sources, the real-name ticket system allows for one train ticket to be bought per valid identification (CITS [2012]; [TravelChinaGuide.com](#) n.d.). [TravelChinaGuide.com](#), a website providing information for travellers in China, specifies that the only exception to this rule is for children accompanying adults (ibid.). In addition, sources indicate that self-service ticket machines were found in some train stations in 2011, although these reportedly only accept Chinese ID cards (*Shanghai Daily* 14 May 2011; [Seat61.com](#) [2011]).

Sources indicate that identification must be shown alongside tickets when boarding trains ([TravelChinaGuide.com](#) n.d.; CITS [2012]). The BBC reports that both tickets and identity documents are checked at entry into train stations (BBC 13 Feb. 2012). According to CNN Travel, a division of news network CNN that focuses on

travel information (CNN [n.d.](#)), high-speed rail passengers must be prepared to show ID with their tickets both on trains and in waiting halls (CNN 30 [Nov.](#) 2011). CNN Travel also reports that ID must be presented for ticket adjustments and refunds (*ibid.*).

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- Chinese citizen ID card
- Passport
- Permit of Inland Entry and Exit for Hong Kong and Macau Residents
- Permit of Mainland land Entry and Exit for Taiwan Residents
- Home-return Permit
- Permit for Mainland Residents to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan
- Residence Permit for Foreigners
- Aliens' Exit-Entry Permit
- Diplomat Certificate (CITS [2012]).

Sources state that identification-document numbers are printed on passengers' train tickets along with the ticket holders' names (*China Daily* 23 May 2011; CITS [2012]; CNN 30 [Nov.](#) 2011). *China Daily*, a state-owned English-language newspaper (Mondo Times [n.d.](#)), specifies that the system that was put in place for high-speed railway was tailored to the "new type" of identity cards, and that ticket buyers using other types of identification may face delays (*China Daily* 23 May 2011). For more information on Chinese identification cards, please see RIR CHN103755 of 7 July 2011.

Sources indicate that authorities claim to have introduced real-name ticket sales in order to prevent ticket scalping (*China Daily* 17 Feb. 2012; BBC 13 Feb. 2012; TravelChinaGuide.com [n.d.](#)). According to sources, illegal ticket sales are a particular problem during the busy travel period surrounding the Chinese New Year (*China Daily* 17 Feb. 2012; BBC 13 Feb. 2012; TravelChinaGuide.com [n.d.](#)). However, some observers have expressed concern over the Chinese government's motivations for introducing the real-name ticket system (BBC 13 Feb. 2012; SCMP 12 [Jan.](#) 2010). A BBC article notes that the introduction of the obligation for certain services is seen by some as "a move to restrict civil liberties" (BBC 13 Feb. 2012).

According to sources, the real-name ticket system is used by police to identify and detain fugitives (*Shanghai Daily* 15 Apr. 2012; BBC 13 Feb. 2012). According to sources, police reported that they had captured 375 fugitives during the 2012 Chinese New Year travel period (*ibid.*; *Shanghai Daily* 15 Apr. 2012). The *Shanghai Daily* also notes that police patrol train stations and that train passengers might need to present their identification (*ibid.*).

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3. Previous Systems Requiring Identification for Train Travel

Sources mention that there were previously various systems of ticket sales requiring ID in different regions of China (Xinhua 15 [Jan.](#) 2011; SCMP 12 [Jan.](#) 2010; TravelChinaGuide.com 30 July 2008). These include a pilot program requiring the use of ID when buying train tickets, which was implemented in January 2010 (SCMP 12 [Jan.](#) 2010; Xinhua 21 [Jan.](#) 2010). The Xinhua news agency states that the pilot program was implemented between Guangdong province and the provinces of Hunan, Sichuan, and Guizhou, as well as between Guangdong and Chongqing municipality (*ibid.*). The Hong Kong-based newspaper *South China Morning* (SCMP) notes that the system was put into place at 37 stations of the Guangzhou and Chengdu railway bureaus (SCMP 12 [Jan.](#) 2010). According to SCMP, under the pilot project, only passengers with the proper identification for their tickets would be allowed into railway stations (*ibid.*). According to Xinhua, only one ticket could be purchased per customer (Xinhua 15 [Jan.](#) 2011).

According to a report from TravelChinaGuide.com, a website dedicated to information on travelling in China, a ticket sales system requiring identification was instituted for the train going from Chongqing to Lhasa in July 2008 (TravelChinaGuide.com 30 July 2008). The report states that passengers needed to be present their identification to railway police after purchasing their tickets and before boarding (*ibid.*) Corroboration of the above and information on whether these procedures were still in use were not found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

4. Plans for a Facial Recognition System at Train Stations

Media sources indicate that authorities have announced plans to put in place a face recognition system at three stations of the high-speed railway between Beijing and Shanghai (*Shanghai Daily* 15 Apr. 2012; *Global Times* 16 Apr. 2012; *China Daily* 16 Apr. 2012). The aim of the system is to assist police in capturing fugitives (ibid.; *Global Times* 16 Apr. 2012; *Shanghai Daily* 15 Apr. 2012). Passengers will be examined as they go through security-check areas and police will be able to verify if there are matches with the criminal database (ibid.; *Global Times* 16 Apr. 2012).

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5. Travel by Bus

A RFA article reported in April 2012 that a government notice was circulated among bus companies in Beijing indicating that they were prohibited to take as passengers Chinese citizens attempting to reach government officials to petition them for assistance regarding various issues, in particular petitioners belonging to the Uyghur minority (22 Apr. 2012). Corroborating information and information on the identification documents required to travel by bus could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

6. Travel by Boat

Information regarding identification documents necessary for travel by boat could not be found among sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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 representatives of the Chinese embassies in Ottawa and Washington were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Australia – Refugee Review Tribunal; China – Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Railways; eoi.net; Factiva; Human Rights Watch; Lonely Planet; *People's Daily*; United Kingdom Home Office; United Nations Refworld.

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