

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Home > Research Program > Responses to Information Requests

## 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.

21 October 2013

**CHN104579.E**

China: Fraudulent documents, including the manufacturing, procurement, distribution and use of passports, hukou, and resident identity cards (RICs), particularly in Guangdong and Fujian; instances of officials issuing fraudulent RICs to citizens and selling authentic RICs on the black market (2010-September 2013)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### 1. Overview

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at the Canadian embassy in Beijing wrote that there are "consistent reports" of document fraud in China and that fraudulent identity documents (IDs) are easily obtained in the country (Canada 17 Sept. 2013). Similarly, a professor of criminal justice at Xavier University who specializes in Chinese policing stated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that "[t]here is little question that fraud of all kind[s], including ID fraud, is a major problem in China" (Professor 13 Sept. 2013). The Professor added that fraudulent IDs are "easily accessible" and that the industry is a "big business" and an "open secret" in China (ibid.). In July 2012, the state media source China.org.cn described the fraudulent ID industry as "an incredibly lucrative trade," in an article about the market for fake student ID cards, university diplomas, and other types of ID on the grounds of Renmin University in Beijing (9 July 2012).

According to the Beijing embassy official, the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian are "considered particularly high-risk for fraudulent documents" (Canada 17 Sept. 2013). The embassy official also related that the Fujian government announced the launch of a comprehensive investigation into document fraud in February 2012 and called on the public to provide tips to aid the investigation (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

### 2. Reported Incidents of ID Fraud

#### 2.1 RICs and Passports

The Beijing embassy official provided the example of an undercover *China News* reporter, who found in 2010 that fraudulent RICs could be purchased 100 metres from a police station in Guangdong for as low as 200 Chinese yuan (RMB) [approximately C\$34 (XE 25 Sept. 2013a)], revealing a "thriving and well-establish[ed] industry" for both counterfeit RICs as well as genuine RICs obtained fraudulently through theft or loss (Canada 17 Sept. 2013). The embassy official indicated that reports of counterfeit IDs continue to surface, noting that 46 people were arrested and over 4,000 fraudulent documents were seized in Guangdong in a sting operation in 2012 (ibid.). The embassy official also related that, in 2013, counterfeiting rings with "substantial amounts of fake RICs" were uncovered in Guangdong and two individuals who had allegedly sold thousands of fraudulent RICs were apprehended in Henan province with over 600 RICs (ibid.).

The embassy official explained that fraudulent RICs have become more prevalent as people seek to circumvent newly-introduced "real-name" train ticketing systems in provinces such as Guangdong and Hunan (ibid.). The real name system reportedly requires individuals to provide an ID when purchasing a train ticket and limits ticket purchases to one per person (Xinhua News Agency 16 Jan. 2011). In February 2010, the state-owned Xinhua News Agency reported that police in Guangdong province had broken up 12 counterfeiting rings, arrested 56 people and confiscated over 5,000 fake IDs that were used in illegal train ticket-selling businesses (ibid. 3 Feb. 2010). Xinhua News Agency also reported in January 2011 that, during a raid, railway police in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, had apprehended five gangs, arrested at least 10 suspects, and confiscated over 11,000 fraudulent ID cards used in ticket-scalping operations (ibid. 16 Jan. 2011). Police in Huihua, Hunan province, were also reported to have broken up two groups and confiscated over 5,000 fake IDs (ibid.).

Media sources have reported on the various incidents of ID fraud, including but not limited to the following:

- According to the state-run English-language news source *China Daily*, the Ministry of Public Security reported on 184 incidents between 2008 and 2012 in which government officials attempted to use fraudulent ID to obtain passports (6 Nov. 2012).
- The *Taipei Times* reports that, in January 2013, Taiwan's National Immigration Agency (with the help of foreign airport officers based in Taiwan and Thailand) arrested 11 members of a passport fraud ring that sold Chinese RICs and boarding passes to Chinese and Nepalese citizens (29 Jan. 2013).
- Xinhua News Agency reports that, in May 2012, police in Fujian province arrested 34 people and confiscated 217 counterfeit government administration seals and 206 fraudulent documents, including passports, visas, and bankbooks (Xinhua News Agency 1 June 2012). According to a statement from the Fuzhou border police, the suspects had sold fake tourist visas and passports to 140 people who intended to make unauthorized border crossings (ibid.).
- Sources indicate that the former head of the local tobacco bureau in Shanwei, Guangdong province, forged IDs to make unauthorized trips to Hong Kong and Macao (*Beijing Review* 28 Feb. 2013; *China Daily* 18 Oct. 2011). He was subsequently fired and expelled from the Communist Party for corruption in October 2011 (ibid.; *Beijing Review* 28 Feb. 2013; *SCMP* 27 Jan. 2013).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Beijing embassy official stated that there have been no reports of public officials selling RICs to citizens between 2010 and 2013, but that public officials have been known to use fake RICs "to open bank accounts and launder money" (Canada 17 Sept. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 2.2 Hukou Documents

A 2012 article published by the *China Watch*, an English-language Chinese news website, reports on the online black market for Beijing hukou (household registration documents), catering in particular to students who wish to live and work in the city after graduating (1 Mar. 2012). According to the article, some hukou sold on the black market are genuine documents while some are forgeries, but there is no difference in price and it is difficult to differentiate between real documents and fakes (*The China Watch* 1 Mar. 2012). Citing a *China Economic Weekly* report, the Chinese Communist Party's English-language newspaper *Global Times* states that 70 percent of hukou are allocated to state-owned enterprises but that those that are not given out are "usually sold to graduate students for exorbitant prices" (9 June 2011). *Global Times* also corroborates the existence of online markets for hukou and the sale of forged hukou (ibid.).

Media sources have reported on numerous incidents in 2013 in which public officials were found to have multiple hukou or identity cards for fraudulent purposes (*SCMP* 7 Feb. 2013; *The Straits Times* 12 Feb. 2013; Xinhua News Agency 24 Jan. 2013). According to the Singaporean newspaper *The Straits Times*, at least eight government officials or Communist Party members, all holding "relatively low-level, small-town posts," were exposed between October 2012 and February 2013 for owning "excessive numbers" of properties, multiple hukou, and "other hidden assets" (12 Feb. 2013). The Hong Kong-based newspaper *South China Morning Post* (*SCMP*) wrote in February 2013 that ten "corrupt" officials had been reported by whistle-blowers in the preceding two months for owning more than a dozen properties each (7 Feb. 2013). The newspaper also indicates that citizens cannot own more than three residential properties in the jurisdiction where they are a registered local permanent resident (*SCMP* 27 Jan. 2013). However, according to Xinhua News Agency, the government has prohibited individuals from owning more than two homes since 2012, which has led to "many people acquiring a fake identity to escape from the legal limit" on properties (24 Jan. 2013).

Media sources have reported on several instances of housing-related hukou fraud, including but not limited to the following:

- A bank executive in Shenmu county, Shaanxi province, was found to possess four hukou, including one for Beijing, with which she had purchased at least 40 properties (*Beijing Review* 28 Feb. 2013; *NewsChina Magazine* Apr. 2013). Sources indicate that at least seven other people, including police officers, were also detained for helping her forge the hukou (*Beijing Review* 28 Feb. 2013; BBC 5 Feb. 2013).
- In Zhengzhou, Henan province, it was revealed that a former director of the housing administration bureau and at least three of his family members had two hukou each and owned at least 29 properties between them (*SCMP* 7 Feb. 2013; *NewsChina Magazine* Apr. 2013).
- In Guangdong province, a public security official in the city of Lufeng was found to have purchased 192 homes using fake identity documents (*The Guardian* 5 Feb. 2013; BBC 5 Feb. 2013).

In January 2013, a Xinhua News Agency reporter found that a fraudulent hukou could be purchased for between 30,000 RMB [C\$ 5,056 (XE 25 Sept. 2013b)] and 50,000 RMB at a grass-roots police station in a county in Jilin Province, where a police officer involved in the fake hukou production "said their 'business' has been thriving in recent years" (24 Jan. 2013). The reporter was informed that the process takes about a month and requires a different photograph from the one appearing on their existing ID, while all other documents and procedures are the same as those required to obtain a legitimate hukou (Xinhua News Agency 24 Jan. 2013).

According to Xinhua News Agency, fraudulent hukou are used not only by people purchasing extra properties, but also by corrupt officials who use multiple identities "to shun the attentions of watchdogs and the public" (ibid.). Additionally, a professor of politics and law in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, interviewed by the Chinese-language newspaper *China Youth Daily*, said that in Shaanxi, "many business people have multiple hukou so that they can evade legal and financial liabilities by assuming false identities when signing commercial contracts" (qtd. in *Beijing Review* 28 Feb. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to *Beijing Review*, an English-language Chinese national news magazine based in Beijing (*Beijing Review* n.d.), in early 2013, the Ministry of Public Security announced the launch of a campaign to uncover "fake or duplicate hukou identity records" (28 Feb. 2013). *Industry Updates*, an Australia-based manufacturing magazine and directory (*Industry Updates* n.d.), reports that the Ministry of Public Security stated in January 2013 that the authorities had been running special investigations since 2010 to expose hukou fraud and had punished 100 police officers involved in the fraudulent hukou trade (25 Jan. 2013). Similarly, *NewsChina Magazine* [the English-language edition of the Beijing publication *China Newsweek* (*NewsChina Magazine* n.d.)] reports that a Ministry of Public Security statement claimed to have disciplined 121 police officers for hukou fraud "in recent years" (Apr. 2013).

*Beijing Review* provides the following information about hukou fraud:

The current hukou registration procedures and the management of the national database have made multiple identities difficult to spot. People use the same documents and procedures to obtain a fake hukou as those used to get a legitimate one. Moreover, as long as different identity numbers are assigned to different hukou, a person with multiple identities cannot be immediately identified by the national database even when a similar picture and the same name have already been registered under another hukou. (28 Feb. 2013)

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:** A professor of political science at the University of Hong Kong was unable to provide information for this Response. Attempts to contact professors of sociology at the University of Hong Kong and professors at Hong Kong Baptist University were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** *The Atlantic*; *Caixin Online*; *China Perspectives*; China Public Security University; ecoinet; Freedom House; Norway – Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo); Radio Free Asia; United Nations – Refworld; United States – Congressional-Executive Committee on China; *The Wall Street Journal*.

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