



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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14 January 2003

### SLE40893.FE

Sierra Leone: Whether someone who has applied for a passport must fetch it in person, or whether it is possible to send another person in his or her place; if the latter is possible, type of authorization required by authorities before they hand the passport over to a person sent by the passport holder; time it takes for a passport to be issued, from the time the application is made (January 2003)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

In a letter to the Research Directorate dated 13 January 2003, a counsellor at the Sierra Leonean embassy in Washington reported that it can take over two months to obtain a passport, and that the exact time required varies, depending on the means and method used by the applicant. As for Sierra Leoneans living in the United States, the embassy official explained that applicants must first present their old passport as proof of nationality (Sierra Leone 13 Jan. 2003). Then, after completing the necessary application forms and paying a fee of \$10, applicants must forward their application to the main immigration office in Freetown, either through the embassy or by their own means (using a courier service or arranging delivery by a friend or family member) (*ibid.*). Once the passport has been prepared, the authorities send it to the Sierra Leonean embassy in Washington (*ibid.*). The holder may then fetch the passport in person, or have it sent by mail (*ibid.*). A third party may also take delivery of the passport at the embassy, on presentation of written authorization from the holder (*ibid.*).

A press release issued by the Sierra Leonean immigration department in 2001 reminded citizens that, between 5 June 2001 and 4 June 2002, all the old passports had to be replaced by new, machine-readable passports (*ibid.* 22 Oct. 2001). The press release also stated that, as of 5 June 2002, the old passports would no longer be valid (*ibid.*).

Citing statements made by the Sierra Leonean ambassador to the United States, an article published on Sierra Leone Web reported that the old passports were being replaced because they were known to be very easy to duplicate or obtain by fraudulent means (Sierra Leone Web 26 Feb. 2002). The same source, quoting a Sierra Leonean immigration adviser on the subject of how citizens living outside Sierra Leone could obtain a new passport, explained that passport application forms were available at embassies, but that it was up to the applicant to forward the forms to the immigration office in Sierra Leone (Sierra Leone Web 26 Feb. 2002). The adviser recommended that applicants go through a family member to file an application and obtain their passport (*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 to refugee status or asylum. Please see below the list of sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

#### References

Sierra Leone. 13 January 2003. Embassy of Sierra Leone in Washington, D.C. 13 January 2003.

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\_\_\_\_\_. 22 October 2001. Sierra Leone High Commission in London. "Public Notice." <<http://www.slhc-uk.org.uk/publicnotice.htm>> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2003]

Sierra Leone Web. 26 February 2002. "News Archives." <<http://www.sierra-leone.org/accreport-chapter5.html>> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2003]

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