

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. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca.

21 June 2013

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Rwanda: Information on the official death certificate (*acte de décès*) and the doctor's death certificate (*certificat de décès*) for a Rwandan citizen, including the procedure for obtaining death documents (2012-June 2013)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

According to the Rwandan Civil Code (*Code civil*) of 1988, [translation] "the death must be declared within 15 days of the date of the death, on presentation, where possible, of the medical certificate of death" (Rwanda 1988, Art. 127). The Civil Code makes the following clarifications:

[translation]

Official death certificates [*actes de décès*] set out the following information:

1. The year, month, day and place of death;
2. The family name, given names, sex and ethnicity, date of birth, occupation, residence and domicile of the deceased person, and the family names, given names, occupations and domicile of the deceased's father and mother;
3. The family name and given names of the other spouse if the deceased person was married, widowed or divorced;
4. The family name, given names, age, occupation and domicile of the person applying for the death certificate and, if applicable, the his or her degree of relationship to the deceased person;
5. The family name and given names of the author of the medical certificate submitted, if that information is known.

The death shall be noted in the margin of the birth certificate of the deceased person (*ibid.*, art. 128).

The Civil Code states the following with respect to consulting the registers:

Article 98

Registers are provided free of charge to civil status offices by the Minister of Justice.

They may be consulted by any interested person.

...

Article 106

The civil status officer is required to issue certified true copies or extracts of all civil status records to any interested person who requests one.

The copy is a reproduction of the record as it appears in the register. The excerpt is a summary of the essential information in the record. Copies and excerpts must be signed by the civil status officer under the seal of that office (Rwanda 1988).

Sources report that required data is sometimes missing from civil status registers in Rwanda (Rwanda Oct. 2008, 142; *The New Times* 16 Mar. 2011). The Rwandan Minister of Justice stated in 2011 that "[s]ome people are born and die without leaving a trace in any legal records" (*The New Times* 16 Mar. 2011).

In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a lawyer practicing in Kigali explained that there are two types of death certificates in Rwanda:

the "doctor's death certificate," which is issued by the hospital administration "when a patient passes away while being hospitalized in an authorized medical institution;" it states the name of the deceased person, the disease that caused the death and the name of the hospital;

the official death certificate, which is issued by "an Executive Secretary of a sector or by a Mayor of District" (Lawyer 18 June 2013).

The lawyer in Kigali stated that the doctor's death certificate is "automatically issued by the hospital administration before a dead body is handed to a family" (Lawyer 18 June 2013). To obtain the official death certificate, a person must go to the registration office in the sector where the deceased person was registered in order to register the death and must be accompanied by witnesses (*ibid.*). If the death occurred in a hospital, the person must present the doctor's death certificate, and if the death occurred somewhere other than in a hospital, the person requesting the official death certificate must provide "proof [of the death], confirmed by the witnesses" (*ibid.*).

The United States (US) Department of State also reports that a doctor's death certificate is approved by the chief at the cell level [the second smallest administrative unit in Rwanda, just above the village level (Lawyer 18 June 2013)] and is then taken to "sector" officials for an "Attestation de Décès" [in French in the text] (US n.d.). According to that source, if the death occurred somewhere other than in a hospital, village or cell-level authorities who know of the deceased person can register the death before the Attestation is issued (*ibid.*).

According to the US Department of State, the doctor's death certificate is most frequently used as the source document (that is, the original), and Rwandan authorities consider it to be authentic (*ibid.*). The lawyer in Kigali stated that the doctor's death certificate may serve as proof in order to obtain an official death certificate, but that an official death certificate may not serve as proof in order to obtain a doctor's death certificate (Lawyer 18 June 2013).

According to the website "eRegulations," a database administered by the Rwanda Development Board that provides information on investment procedures in Rwanda (Rwanda n.d.a), in order to obtain a death certificate, the person requesting it must show proof of identification and pay 1,000 Rwandan francs [C\$1.50 (XE 12 June 2013)] (Rwanda n.d.b). According to the lawyer in Kigali, the family of the deceased person must "declare the death to the registry office in 15 or 30 days.... In a draft law to be adopted by the Rwandan parliament, the death declaration will be done in 30 days" (Lawyer 18 June 2013). Additional information on the time frames for reporting a death could not be found among the 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.

References

Lawyer, Kigali. 18 June 2013. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

The New Times. 16 March 2011. "Civil Registration Vital - Karugarama." <<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=14566&a=39238>> [Accessed 19 June 2013]

Rwanda. 8 October 2008. National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. *National Strategy for the Development of Statistics NSDS 2009-2014*. <<http://statistics.gov.rw/publications/national-strategy-development-statistics-2009-2014>> [Accessed 19 June 2013]

_____. 1988. *Code civil*. <<http://www.jafbase.fr/docAfrique/Rwanda/CodeCiv.htm>> [Accessed 7 June 2013]

_____. N.d.a. "eRegulations Rwanda." <<http://rwanda.eregulations.org/index.asp?l=fr>> [Accessed 12 June 2013]

_____. N.d.b. "Obtain Death Certificate." <<http://rwanda.eregulations.org/show-step.asp?mid=210&rid=175&sno=639&l=fr>> [Accessed 3 June 2013]

United States. N.d. Department of State. *Rwanda Reciprocity Schedule*. <http://travel.state.gov/visa/fees/fees_5455.html?cid=8968> [Accessed 7 June 2013]

XE. 12 June 2013. "Currency Converter Widget." <<http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1000&From=RWF&To=CAD>> [Accessed 12 June 2013]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives at the World Health Organization, the Rwandan Ministry of Health and the High Commission of the Republic of Rwanda in Ottawa were unsuccessful. A representative at the Office of the Registrar General could not provide information. Representatives at the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Ministry of Local Government and the King Faisal Hospital in Kigali did not respond within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: AllAfrica.com; ecoi.net; Factiva; Rwanda – General Directorate of Immigration and Emigration, High Commission United Kingdom, Office of the Registrar General; United Nations – Refworld, World Health Organization.

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