

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

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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](mailto:Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca).

16 January 2015

### **IRN105036.E**

Iran: The National Smart Card, including the issuing agency, the requirements to obtain the card, areas where the card is being issued, card format, information and uses; requirements to renew the National Identity Card before expiration and problems associated with having an expired identity card; whether the National Smart Card is being issued in conjunction with a new format of the Shenanameh [birth certificate].

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### **1. The National Smart Card Issuing Agency**

Sources indicate that the Ministry of the Interior's National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR) is the government agency that issues the National Smart Card (Iran n.d.; Professor 5 Jan. 2015; IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015).

#### **2. Requirements to Obtain the Smart Card**

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Executive Director of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), a New Haven-based NGO founded by human rights scholars and lawyers that aims to "[e]stablish a comprehensive and objective historical record of the human rights situation in Iran" (IHRDC n.d.), said that the following are requirements to obtain a smart card:

- The individual must be over the age of 15.
- The individual must have already registered at the relevant site [NOCR] and obtained a tracking code.
- The individual must be photographed and his/her fingerprints must be taken in person at the offices of the National Organization for Civil Registration.
- The original shenasnameh [the birth certificate] with photograph and the National ID card must be provided. (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015)

Corroborating information about the requirements to obtain a smart card could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### **3. Areas Where the Smart Card Is Being Issued**

The NOCR website indicates that the NOCR plans to replace the current national ID card with smart cards (Iran n.d.). In a news release dated 10 February 2014, the head of the NOCR said that a pilot project for the implementation of the National Smart Card had been initiated in Qom [Ghom] province in 2013 and that, as of February 2014, over 100,000 people had been issued a smart card in Qom city (ibid. 10 Feb. 2014). The head of the NOCR also reportedly said that he hoped to secure the necessary funds and infrastructure to collect the

personal information of 20 million people annually and to be able to issue smart cards to the whole population by 2018, over the next 4 years of the current government administration (ibid.).

Two sources indicate that smart cards have only been issued in Qom (MECS 12 Jan. 2015; MEMRI 7 Jan. 2015). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a researcher at the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), a Washington-based NGO that provides analysis and translations of Middle East and South Asia media sources (MEMRI n.d.), said that the Iranian smart card has only been implemented in the city of Qom and is still a "project," but also noted that implementation of the smart card throughout Iran was part of Iran's fifth five-year plan [which covers the period from 2011-2016 (Tehran Bureau 4 Nov. 2010)] (MEMRI 7 Jan. 2015). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a consultant with Middle East Consultancy Services (MECS), a London-based consulting firm that provides research and analysis services on the Middle East and North Africa to the public and private sectors (MECS n.d.), said that the National Smart Card has only been issued in Qom (ibid. 12 Jan. 2015). This source cited an October 2014 article from a Persian news source in which a government official said that one million smart cards had been issued in Qom and that they aimed to issue the smart card nationwide within the next five years [by 2019] (ibid.).

In contrast, the Executive Director of the IHRDC said that, in addition to the pilot project that was initiated in Qom in 2013, smart cards are currently being issued throughout the country, and that, as of 29 December 2014, one million smart cards had been issued (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015).

#### **4. Information Included on the National Smart Card and Its Uses**

According to the NOCR, information on the National Smart Card includes the name, family name, date of birth, place of birth, photograph and fingerprint of the bearer (Iran n.d.). According to the IHRDC Executive Director, in addition to the bearer's name, family name, date and place of birth, photograph and fingerprint, the card also includes the individual's father's name, the individual's national ID code and shenasnameh number, and digital signature (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015). The same source indicated that the smart card is valid for 10 years (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A sample of the National Smart Card, which was provided by the Executive Director of the IHRDC, is attached to this Response.

The NOCR indicates that the primary purpose of the smart card is for identity confirmation (Iran n.d.). The NOCR indicates that the smart card contains biometric data of the bearer; the photo and fingerprint of the person are electronically saved on the card (ibid.). The same source explains that a fingerprint scanner can verify if the person's fingerprint matches the fingerprint electronically stored on the smart card (ibid.).

The NOCR also indicates that another feature of the smart card is the "electronic signature," which the agency explains as follows:

The owner of the card will be able to sign electronic documents in the digital space [online]. In its application, the electronic signature is the same as the traditional signature, but in the digital space, the receiver of a letter or a document can be sure that what he has received is not a counterfeit. (ibid.)

The NOCR website indicates that the agency foresees the use of the smart card in other aspects of "electronic government," such as in the delivery of health care services, participation in elections, distribution of subsidies, and other public services (ibid.).

#### **5. Replacing the National Identity Card with the National Smart Card**

In February 2014, the head of the NOCR reportedly said that people are not required to replace their national ID cards with a smart card, but that in cases in which 15 year olds apply for their first national ID card, as well as in cases in which a national ID card is replaced or amended, smart cards will be issued (Iran 10 Feb. 2014). The Executive Director of IHRDC said that while individuals are "technically" supposed to replace their national ID card with a smart card before they expire, the NOCR is currently focused on replacing expired national ID cards with smart cards and issuing new smart cards to people who have never had national ID cards (approximately 600,000 people) (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015). The same source noted that the old national ID cards are no longer being issued, but that the NOCR is waiting for additional funding to implement the Smart Card project (ibid.). According to the MECS consultant, the Iranian government is replacing the national ID card (*Karte Mellî*) with the Smart Card, but the "vast majority" of people in Iran continue to use the national ID card (MECS 12 Jan. 2015).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor of political science at York University, who specializes in Iran, said that the Iranian government announced that expired national ID cards are still acceptable, because the government has not been able "to replace them all" (Professor 5 Jan. 2015). The

MECS consultant noted that on 31 December 2013 the President of the NOCR announced that all national ID cards would be valid until 2015 and that the "automatic renewal [of the old national ID cards] was initiated because of a lack of funds to pay for the new programme" (MECS 12 Jan. 2015).

However, without providing details, the Executive Director of IHRDC said that Iranians with expired national ID cards might face "some administrative obstacles" (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015).

For further information about the National Identity Card, see Response to Information Request IRN104592.

## 6. Whether the National Smart Card Is Being Issued in Conjunction with a New Format of the Shenanameh

According to the MECS consultant, the National Smart Card is not being issued in conjunction with the new format of the Shenanameh (MECS 12 Jan. 2015). The consultant explained that the new Shenanameh began being issued "about four years ago," while the smart card is currently only being issued in limited quantities in Qom (ibid.). Similarly, the Executive Director of the IHRDC explained that the issuing of a new format of the Shenanameh began in 2010, while the issuing of smart cards began in 2014 (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015). He concluded that, while they are both part of the "same policy aims," there is "insufficient information to determine whether both are being issued to citizens simultaneously" (ibid.).

For further information about the new format of the Shenanameh, see Response to Information Request IRN105037.

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

Iran. 10 February 2014. National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR). "Head of NOCR Informed of the Operation of the Largest IT Project in February of the Year." <<https://www.sabteahval.ir/en/module/News/Shownews/page-12428.aspx?NewsId=16585>> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2015]

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Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). 7 January 2015. Correspondence from the Director to the Research Directorate.

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Professor of political science, York University. 5 January 2015. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

Tehran Bureau. 4 November 2010. Farideh Farhi. "Iran's Fifth Five-Year Plan."

<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/11/irans-fifth-five-year-plan.html>> [Accessed 7 Jan. 2015]

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** The following organization was unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response: Pakistan – Interests Section of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, DC.

The following individuals and organizations were unable to provide information for this Response: Canada – the National Documentation Centre of the Canada Border Services Agency; a lawyer in London who specializes in Iranian law.

**Internet sites, including:** ecoi.net; EdisonTD; Factiva; Iran – Islamic Republic News Agency; *Iran Daily*; IRIN; Keesing Reference Systems; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; *Tehran Times*; United Nations – Refworld; United States – Overseas Security Advisory Council.

## Attachment

Iran. N.d. National Smart Card. Sent to the Research Directorate by the Executive Director of the IHRDC, 12 January 2015.

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