

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

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16 January 2015

IRN105037.E

Iran: The new format of the shenasnameh (birth certificate), including physical characteristics, security features, and period of validity; application procedures and requirements; whether citizens are required to replace their shenasnameh with the newer version (2012-January 2015)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. The New Shenasnameh

1.1 Overview

According to sources, the Iranian *shenasnameh* is translated as a "birth certificate" (MECS 12 Jan. 2015; Iran n.d.a, 13) or "identity certificate" (US n.d.). 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 public and private sectors (MECS n.d.), said that shenasnamehs are issued by the National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR, Sazmane Thabt Ahval Keshver), which is part of the Ministry of the Interior (ibid. 12 Jan. 2015).

In a booklet of information published by the Personal Status Registration Organization (PSRO), a department within the Ministry of the Interior of Iran, it states that a birth certificate is a document kept by the PSRO which registers the birth of an infant and includes the following information: name and surname of the infant, place and date of birth, gender, information relating to the parents including their names and residences, and the "registration documentation (witness or physician's certificate)" (Iran n.d.a, 25). The same source states that following the registration of the birth of an infant, the PSRO issues an identity document to the Iranian national (ibid., 26). The identity document is a booklet containing information such as "personal particulars, particulars of parents, place and date of birth, a place for registration of marriage, divorce and death information" (ibid.). According to the PSRO publication, identity documents issued to Iranians under the age of 15 do not contain the pages for marriage and divorce registration, nor do they have a picture (ibid.).

Sources indicate that a photo must be added to the shenasnameh at the age of 15 (MECS 12 Jan. 2015; IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015; Iran n.d.b). 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.), indicated that the photo must also be replaced at the age of 30 (ibid. 12 Jan. 2015).

Sources indicate that there is a new format of the shenasnameh (ibid.; MECS 12 Jan. 2015). The Executive Director of the IHRDC said that the new format of the shenasnameh began being processed in 2010 (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015). In contrast, the MECS consultant said that the new format started in approximately 2011 or 2012 (MECS 12 Jan. 2015).

1.2 Physical Characteristics and Security Features

According to the MECS consultant, the inscription on the cover of the new shenasnameh states: "Islamic Republic of Iran," "Ministry of Interior," "National Organisation of Civil Registration," and "Shenasnameh" (ibid.). Sources indicate that the new shenasnameh contains the individual's national ID number and a bar code (ibid.; IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015). According to the MECS consultant, it also contains a security code (MECS 12 Jan. 2015).

The Executive Director of the IHRDC said that the new format of the shenasnameh has the following features:

- Same size as the old shenasnamehs, but with covers and quality reminiscent of passports.
- The paper is produced domestically and has a watermark.
- High printing quality.
- The photograph is printed on the shenasnameh as opposed to being stamped onto the document.
- The individual's shenasnameh code is hole-punched on pages throughout the shenasnameh.
- Instead of including the shenasnameh numbers of the individual's children in the relevant section, the individual's children's national ID codes are used. (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015)

According to the MECS consultant, the new shenasnameh contains the following information: "holder's name, family name, names of father and mother, date of birth, place of birth, marriage and divorce status, a "page for death," the status of any children belonging to the bearer, and "a page for stamps indicating the holder's voting record" (MECS 12 Jan. 2015).

A sample of the cover of the new shenasnameh was provided by the MECS consultant and is attached to this Response (Attachment 1). A sample of the inside of the shenasnameh was provided by the IHRDC Executive Director, and is Attachment 2 of this Response.

1.3 Period of Validity

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a researcher at the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), a Washington, DC-based NGO that provides analysis and translations of Middle East and South Asia media sources (MEMRI n.d.), said that there is no limit on the period of validity for the new shenasnameh (MEMRI 7 Jan. 2015). The Executive Director of IHRDC said that the new shenasnameh's period of validity is "unclear" (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015). Further information on the period of validity of the shenasnameh could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within time constraints of this Response.

2. Application Procedures and Requirements

The website of the NOCR provides instructions for registering the birth of a baby with authorities and obtaining the baby's identity document (Iran n.d.c). These instructions are attached to this Response (Attachment 3).

According to the MECS consultant, those eligible for the new shenasnameh include newborn babies, people who are changing their names, those who have lost their original birth certificates, and those born before 2001 who have reached the age of 15 and need to change their cards to add the photograph (MECS 12 Jan. 2015). He explained the application procedures and requirements as follows:

the individual must apply in the registry office, online or in person, fill in the necessary forms, and will be given a new Birth Certificate. For babies receiving their first Birth Certificate, their parents/guardians must produce a letter from the hospital in which they were born. For those applying for a replacement Birth Certificate, they must apply with their old Birth Certificate. (ibid.)

The MECS consultant also said that to replace the new shenasnameh, individuals must go to a special office called Dafater Pishkhane Dolat (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The IHRDC Executive Director said that in order to get a replacement shenasnameh, the applicant must complete a replacement form, pay the relevant fee, submit their old shenasnameh, and provide three copies of the same photo if the person is above the age of 15 (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015). The NOCR website indicates that for individuals between the ages of 15 and 18, their parents must apply for a birth certificate with a photo on their behalf (Iran n.d.b).

The NOCR website provides information about obtaining or replacing an "ID card" without specifying whether they are referring to the national ID card or the shenasnameh (Iran n.d.d). For details about these procedures, see Response to Information Request IRN104592.

3. Replacement of the Old Shenاسnameh with the Newer Format

Sources indicate that old shenasnamehs are still currently valid, and that there are no set dates for individuals to replace their old shenasnamehs (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015; MECS 12 Jan. 2015). According to MEMRI, the replacement of the old shenasnamehs with the new format is part of the government's fifth five-year plan [which covers the period from 2011-2016 (Tehran Bureau 4 Nov. 2010)], but, in practice, the timeline for the replacement is unknown (MEMRI 7 Jan. 2015). According to the Executive Director of the IHRDC, there has been a public appeal for Iranians to replace their shenasnamehs with the newer versions, "but old shenasnamehs that have not expired are still acceptable for all purposes" (IHRDC 12 Jan. 2015). The same source noted that in cases in which someone has lost their old shenasnameh, ones in the new format are being issued (ibid.). According to the MECS consultant, "[t]he government is not forcing [the] new shenasnameh on Iranians, but is in fact happy to replace them gradually" (MECS 12 Jan. 2015). This source also noted that the old shenasnameh does not have an expiry date (ibid.).

For information about the old version of the shenasnameh, see Response to Information Request IRN101296.

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. N.d.a. Personal Status Registration Organization (PSRO). *National Organization for [Civil] Registration (NOCR)*. <<http://www.sabteahval.ir/Upload/Modules/Contents/asset90/engbo.pdf>> [Accessed 16 Sept. 2013]

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United States (US). N.d. "Iran-Documents." *Iran Country Reciprocity Schedule*. <travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/fees/reciprocity-by-country/IR.html> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2015]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources, including: The following organizations 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 organization and individual was unable to provide information: Canada – the National Documentation Centre of 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.

Attachments

1. Iran. Shenاسnameh cover. (Sent to the Research Directorate by the Middle East Consultancy Services, 12 January 2015).
2. Iran. Shenاسnameh interior. (Sent to the Research Directorate by the the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, 12 January 2015).
3. Iran. N.d.c. National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR). "Birth Registration of Baby's ID Card (Booklet)." <<http://www.sabteahval.ir/Upload/Modules/Contents/asset90/101.pdf>> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2015]

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