

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. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the [Knowledge and Information Management Unit](#).

11 October 2013

ZZZ104636.FE

Armenia and Syria: Procedure for Syrians of Armenian origin to obtain Armenian citizenship from other countries, such as Canada

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

According to the *Law of the Republic of Armenia on Citizenship*, "[a] person of Armenian ethnicity may acquire RA citizenship pursuant to a simplified procedure" (Armenia 1995, Art. 1).

During a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, an official of the Embassy of Armenia to Canada stated that people of Armenian origin who wish to acquire Armenian citizenship are exempt from certain requirements imposed on people who are not of Armenian ethnicity (Armenia 9 Oct. 2013). In particular, the embassy official specified that, in order to obtain Armenian citizenship, people of Armenian origin are exempt from the normal requirements: a residence period of three years in Armenia prior to the application, fluency in the Armenian language and a demonstrated knowledge of the Armenian Constitution (*ibid.*). The official added that people of Armenian origin are not required to go to Armenia to apply for citizenship, but that they must follow the procedure indicated on the website of the Embassy of Armenia to Canada (*ibid.*).

The website of the Embassy of Armenia to Canada states that people who want to apply for Armenian citizenship must make an appointment before visiting the Consular section of the Embassy (Armenia n.d.). The website provides the following information:

The applicant must appear [at] the Embassy in person and should bring the following original documents and copies with *translations and legalizations*.

...

- Passport (photo page must be translated, validated by a notary and authenticated with Canadian Foreign Affairs)
- [L]etter to the President of Armenia (can be handwritten)
- Application form
- 6 passport type colour photos
- Government issued [b]irth certificate (must be translated, validated by a notary and authenticated with Canadian Foreign Affairs). In case a government issued [b]irth [c]ertificate is absent, an explanatory letter must be provided.
- In case of absence of a government issued [b]irth [c]ertificate and in case it does not state one's Armenian origin, a special letter from [the] Armenian Church must be provided (important).
- [M]arriage certificate, in case spouse is a citizen of Armenia
- Copy of the Armenian passport (only the page with photo) of spouse
- 2 USD money order or certified che[que] payable to the Embassy of Armenia (*ibid.*).

The form to fill out and examples of the letter that must be sent to the President and the explanatory letter are provided on the embassy website (ibid.).

The website points out that "all documents in English must be translated into Armenian by a notary then legalized by the Department of Foreign Affairs of Canada," and adds that "[f]inal legalization will be done by the Embassy of Armenia in Ottawa"; the legalization fee for each document is US\$12, payable by money order or certified cheque to the Embassy of Armenia (ibid.).

The embassy official explained that a letter must be sent to the President because Armenian citizenship is granted by presidential decree (ibid. 9 Oct. 2013). The official stated that applications for citizenship submitted to the embassy are sent to and processed in Armenia (ibid.).

The official also explained that, as indicated on the embassy's website, if an applicant's Armenian origin is not stated on their birth certificate or the applicant is unable to provide a birth certificate, a letter must be provided by an Armenian church (ibid.). He explained that Armenian churches have their own registries (ibid.). The official pointed out that this could apply, for example, to people who are born in Syria or Lebanon, who are unable to obtain copies of their birth certificate because of trouble in those countries (ibid.).

No further information on the letters produced by the Armenian churches could be found by the Research Directorate.

The official stated that, on average, it takes eight to nine months to process an application for Armenian citizenship, though it can take up to 14 months, depending on the complexity of the case and the availability of the documents required (ibid.). He added that files of applicants from Syria and Lebanon are treated as a priority because of the trouble in those countries, and that the average processing time for them is instead six to seven months (ibid.). An article from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), republished by the Parisian journal *Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine*, also stated that, in August 2012, Armenian authorities announced that Syrian nationals of Armenian origin who had applied for Armenian citizenship could expect to receive an Armenian passport no later than seven months after submitting the application (20 Aug. 2012).

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

Armenia. 9 October 2013. Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to Canada. Telephone interview with an official.

Armenia. 1995 (modified in 2010). Law of the Republic of Armenia on Citizenship of the Republic of Armenia. <<http://eudo-citizenship.eu/admin/?p=file&appl=currentCitizenshipLaws&f=ARM%20Citizenship%20Law%20of%20Armenia%20%28Consolidated%20Version%206%20April%202010%29%20%28English%29.pdf>> [Accessed 10 Oct. 2013]

_____. N.d. Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to Canada. "Citizenship". <<http://canada.mfa.am/en/citizenship/>> [Accessed 10 Oct. 2013]

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). 20 August 2012. "Les Syriens d'origine arménienne devraient recevoir leur nouveau passeport dans un délai de 6 ou 7 mois". <http://www.armenews.com/mot.php3?id_mot=666> [Accessed 9 Oct. 2013]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact officials of the Armenian Holy Apostolic Church Canadian Diocese, of the Canadian Coalition for the Support of the Armenians of Syria and of the Syrian Armenian Relief Fund were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Arham Online; *The Armenian Weekly*; Armenia – Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the United States, Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to France, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Armenpress; BBC; eoi.net; European University Institute; *The New York Times*; PanARMENIAN Network; Tert.am.

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Date modified: 2015-12-17 [Top of Page](#)