



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Iraq: Requirements and procedures to obtain a passport from within and outside of Iraq, including procedures to obtain a passport for youth, women, and Bahais; length of time to issue passports; features of the new A-series passport; validity of the G-, S-, H-, M-, and N-series passports

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Obtaining a Passport from Within Iraq

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq, in Ottawa, indicated that the procedures and requirements to obtain a passport are updated "from time to time" (Iraq 14 Dec. 2011). Currently, the process for obtaining a new A-series passport begins with the applicant completing an application form (ibid.). The application form to obtain a passport is available electronically on the Ministry of Interior's website (ibid. n.d.a). The Interior Ministry's Passport Affairs Directorate indicates that the application form requires the following information: personal information, a complete address, identification documents, and financial information, including a cheque number, the name of the bank and branch name, and the branch number (ibid. n.d.d). The form must be completed either in Arabic, Kurdish or English (ibid.). Kurd Net, an independent English-language electronic journal (n.d.), corroborates the Passport Directorate's statement that application forms can be completed in either Arabic or Kurdish (25 Dec. 2008).

The Passport Affairs Directorate indicates that, in order to be accepted, the information provided in the application form must conform to the information appearing on the applicant's civil status identification (ID) card (Iraq n.d.d). If the civil status ID card does not include the applicant's surname, the applicant must write the name of his or her third grandfather in the application (ibid.). Upon completion of the application form, it must be printed and taken to the "subsidiary directorate of passports" in the applicant's region (ibid.). The Iraqi embassy official similarly stated that, after completing the application form, the applicant must go to "the nearest regional Passport office confined to the geographic district" of the applicant's residence (ibid.). The applicant must provide the following documents to the passport office:

- Personal ID card (also called an Iraqi civil ID card) that is in good condition, contains a photo, and that has been issued no more than 10 years prior to the passport application (Iraq 14 Dec. 2011);
- Certificate of Iraqi citizenship (ibid.);

- Housing card (ibid. n.d.d);
- Recent ration (supply) card (ibid. 14 Dec. 2011);
- Two 35 mm x 45 mm photos with a white background (ibid.); and
- Certified cheque for 25,000 Iraqi dinars [22.26 Canadian dollars (XE 14 Dec. 2011)] addressed to the National Directorate General (Iraq 14 Dec. 2011).

In addition to the above-mentioned documents, the Passport Affairs Directorate indicates that, while at the relevant passport office, the applicant must also provide a "live fingerprint" (ibid. n.d.d). The Iraqi embassy official stated that applicants will be given a receipt to enable those living in Baghdad to retrieve their passports from the Passport Directorate bureau in Baghdad or, if they reside in one of the provinces, from a provincial passport bureau (ibid. 14 Dec. 2011).

According to the Passport Affairs Directorate, a passport holder must inform the local police station if his or her passport is damaged, lost or stolen, in order to obtain "legal approvals" and "a judicial decision to issue a transit passport" (ibid. n.d.d).

Obtaining a Passport from Outside of Iraq

The Iraqi embassy official stated that the embassy in Ottawa currently does not issue any passports, and will not be issuing any passports until the system needed to issue the A-series passports has been set up (Iraq 14 Dec. 2011). However, he said that the process for obtaining a passport from outside Iraq is the same as that from within Iraq, with the following differences: the applicant submits the required documents to an Iraqi consulate or embassy, pays US\$20, and picks up the passport at an Iraqi embassy or consulate (ibid.). The Passport Affairs Directorate adds that fingerprints are taken at Iraqi consulates, and clarifies that citizens applying from outside Iraq must provide a residence ID document instead of the housing and supply cards (ibid. n.d.d).

The websites of the Iraqi embassy in Ottawa and Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs similarly indicate that the requirements to obtain a passport include the application form and list the same document requirements, though in different numbers: three colour photos with a white background, a colour copy of the applicant's Iraqi nationality certificate, a colour copy of the applicant's "recent" Iraqi ID card, and a fee of US\$20 (ibid. n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c).

The "new process" for administering the A-series passport was described by the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in London as starting on 1 February 2010, including the completion of the electronic form, and requiring the enclosure of the documents with the form and payment of the fee in cash with an "A/37 Receipt" (Iraq 15 Feb. 2010). The documents submitted with the form were to be two color copies of the applicant's national identity card containing a photograph, two colour copies of the applicant's Iraqi Nationality Certificate in good condition, four recent photographs with a white background, and two photocopies of the previous passport (ibid.).

According to the embassy official in Ottawa, when a passport has been damaged, lost, or stolen while abroad, "the Iraqi consulate must be notified" in order to issue "a transit passport" (ibid. 14 Dec. 2011).

Passports for Youth

The Iraqi embassy official indicated that Iraqi youth require the approval of their guardian to apply for a passport from within Iraq (ibid.). The Passport Affairs Directorate adds that, for a child under the age of 16, the guardian must submit the necessary documents to the passport office, and that the child must also be present to provide his or her fingerprint (ibid. n.d.d). The embassy official said that if children under the age of 12 do not have a certificate of Iraqi nationality, a father's certificate will be accepted (ibid. 14 Dec. 2011).

The Embassy in London indicates that, if they are outside of Iraq, children under the age of 12 require two colour copies of the child's father's Iraqi Nationality Certificate (ibid. 15 Feb. 2010).

Passports for Women

The US Department of State indicates that women require the approval of a "close male relative" before they can obtain a passport (8 Apr. 2011, 29). In Iraqi Kurdistan, however, women over the age of 18 may receive passports without male approval (US 8 Apr. 2011, 29). More specifically, the Passport Affairs Directorate states that any "non-married" Iraqi women, including women "under puberty" and widowed or divorced women,

must obtain the approval of her guardian [up]on granting her a passport noting that the guardian must submit his identification documents and must be present in person in the subsidiary passports department in order to provide his live fingerprint. (Iraq n.d.d)

The Passport Directorate also states that a married woman

must obtain the approval of her husband [up]on granting her a passport noting that her husband must submit his identification documents and must be present in person in the subsidiary passports department in order to provide his live fingerprint. (ibid.)

The Passport Directorate adds that if the guardian lives outside of Iraq, he must

send his approval on issuing passports for his wife and children who are residing inside Iraq through the Iraqi Embassy at his country of residence for the purpose of sending the approval to the directorate of passport affairs after certifying it by the Foreign Ministry/department of ratification. (ibid.)

A female journalist writing for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) reports that, as a woman, she was also unable to collect her passport without being accompanied by a male relative such as a father, brother, husband or son (29 June 2011).

Passports for Bahais

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) reports that "[m]any" citizens of Iraq that are of the Bahai faith do not have citizenship documents, including passports (Nov. 2011, 8). A 1975 regulation prohibited them from registering their faith on identity cards and recorded them as Muslim instead (MRG Nov. 2011, 8; US 17 Nov. 2010, Sec. 11). The US Department of State indicates that

the regulation was revoked in April 2007 and the Ministry of Interior issued a "small number" of ID cards to Bahai citizens before discontinuing the process (ibid.). Despite the cancellation of the 1975 regulation, those Bahai citizens who had been registered as Muslims are prohibited from changing their ID cards to indicate their faith (ibid.).

Length of Time to Issue Passports

According to Kurd Net, on 25 December 2008, Iraq stopped issuing passports for a period of time due to "yearly stock-take" and to print new copies of Iraqi passports (25 Dec. 2008). On 11 April 2009, the *Kurdish Globe* reported that passport offices across Iraq were sending passport applications and accompanying documentation to Baghdad, the only city that issued passports. The process reportedly took five to seven months (*Kurdish Globe* 11 Apr. 2009). The Kurdish newspaper also states that, in order to obtain passports more quickly, some people were submitting their passport applications through an "unofficial route" that consisted of paying taxi drivers approximately \$200 to deliver the documentation directly to the Baghdad passport head office (ibid.).

However, Niqash, an Arabic, Kurdish, and English-language website providing briefings about Iraqi politics, economy and culture (MICT n.d.), reports that, in January 2010, although passport-printing machines were sent to all the provinces, one month later some provinces were still using the lengthy "old method" of sending documentation to the Baghdad passport office (Niqash 22 Feb. 2010). An applicant reportedly expressed regret that the "illegal shortcut" of sending documentation to Baghdad by taxi was no longer available (ibid.).

In 2011, the IWPR female journalist who wrote about her experience in applying for a passport indicates that Iraqi government offices are "notoriously bureaucratic" and that it took "several days" to submit the required documentation for her passport (IWPR 29 June 2011). In April 2011, *The National*, a newspaper published in Abu Dhabi (n.d.), reports that applicants were told by the Iraqi embassy in Abu Dhabi that, until they were replaced the previous month with the A-series passport, the G-series passports were "in short supply" and obtaining one could take "up to two years" (24 Apr. 2011). Many applicants reportedly attempted to speed up the process by submitting their documentation to travel agents in Iraq, who returned fraudulent G-series passports to them (*The National* 24 Apr. 2011).

According to the National Iraqi News Agency, the Prime Minister of Iraq has listened to the problems identified by citizens regarding their passport applications and the time it takes to obtain a passport, and told officials to "treat the citizens with respect and to complete their work with flexibility, without delay and extortion, as has been the case during the former regime ..." (17 May 2011).

Media sources report that on 25 September 2011, multiple bombs exploded in Karbala, including one at the passport office, killing and wounding civilians (RFE/RL 25 Sept. 2011; VOA 25 Sept. 2011). Information on the current state of the passport office in Karbala could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Features of the A-Series Passport

According to *The National*, the A-series passport is a biometric passport

that cannot be "tampered" with easily because the passport holder "needs to be present so that biometric information, such as pictures and fingerprints, can be taken" (24 Apr. 2011). (See an example of an A-series passport attached to this Response.) The Iraqi embassy official in Ottawa stated that the A-series passport is valid for eight years (Iraq 14 Dec. 2011). Sources indicate that the A-series passport is written in Arabic, English, and Kurdish (*Kurdish Globe* 11 Apr. 2009; Niqash 22 Feb. 2010; Iraq 15 Dec. 2011). In follow-up correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Iraqi embassy official in Ottawa explained that the headings are written in Arabic, Kurdish, and English, while the passport holder's personal information is written either in Arabic and English or in Kurdish and English, depending on whether the applicant is Arabic or Kurdish (ibid.).

Validity of the G-, S-, M-, N- and H-Series Passports

In addition to the A passport, the Iraqi embassy official said that the G- and S-series are also valid types of Iraqi passports (ibid. 14 Dec. 2011). However, an official at Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) told the Research Directorate through correspondence that "Canada remains one of the few countries that still recognize the S series as valid for travel with an appropriate Canadian visa" (Canada 16 Dec. 2011). As for the new A-series passport, the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in London explains that it is not a replacement for the G-series passport (Iraq 15 Feb. 2010), which is machine-readable (ibid. n.d.d). According to the US Department of State, unlike the S-series passport (*Jordan Times* 30 May 2007), the G-series has "effective security features" (US n.d.c).

Iraqi passports that are no longer in use include the M- and N-series passports (Iraq 14 Dec. 2011; US n.d.b; ibid. n.d.a; Canada 16 Dec. 2011). According to the Iraqi embassy official in Ottawa, as of 31 December 2011, the H-series passport will also become invalid (Iraq 14 Dec. 2011). The CBSA official specified that the M-series passports were deemed invalid on 31 December 2006, and that, "regardless of the expiry date on the passport," the N-series passports have been invalid since 1 January 2008 (Canada 16 Dec. 2011).

The validity period of the still-active G- and S-series passport is, according to the Iraqi embassy official, eight years (Iraq 14 Dec. 2011). The official added that G-series passport holders may not apply for a new passport if his or her passport remains valid and still has usable passport pages (ibid.). Media sources indicate that the S-series passport is handwritten (BBC 2 Apr. 2010; *Jordan Times* 30 May 2007).

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.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives of the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in London and the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in Washington

were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: 1stHeadlines, Al Bawaba, Al Jazeera, Amnesty International, *The Economist*, EIN News, Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in Australia, European Country of Origin Information Network, Freedom House, *The Guardian*, Human Rights Watch, Keesing's Document Checker, United Kingdom Border Agency and United Nations Refworld.

Attachment

Iraq. N.d. Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in Ottawa. "Example of Iraqi Passport." Sent to the Research Directorate in 14 December 2011 correspondence.

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