



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Egypt

EGY35958 – Identity cards – Military service deferment – Security forces – Border control – Koranists (Quranists)

12 January 2010

1 How are identity cards issued (at what age etc)?

The American University in Cairo website states “According to the Egyptian Law No. 260 enacted in 1960 and amended by Law No. 11 enacted in 1965, all Egyptian males must apply for the National ID Card within 30 days of their 16th birthday”. The website gives the following procedure for students to obtain a National ID card:

- Fill out the application form for the National ID card.
- Submit the form to the office of the “University Registrar” to be verified and stamped.
- Proceed to the “Civil Registration” office (*segel madani*) the nearest to your residence, and submit the stamped form and your official birth certificate.
- A National ID card will be issued to you.¹

A 2007 Human Rights Watch (HRW) paper provides information on identity documentation in Egypt (in the context of the difficulties faced by Baha’is). The paper states that:

The Civil Status Department (CSD, *maslahat al-ahwal al-madaniyya*) of Egypt’s Ministry of Interior is responsible for administering and providing identity cards, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, and other vital records. All of these documents record, among other things, a person’s religious identity. Of these, **the most vital for everyday life is the national identity card that all Egyptians 16 years of age must, by law, obtain**. This card includes a national identification number (*raqam qawmi*) assigned at birth. A national ID is essential to have access to post-secondary schooling, to get a job, to vote, to travel, and to conduct the most basic financial or administrative transactions. Not to have one’s national ID when requested by a law enforcement official is an offense punishable by a fine of between LE 100-200 (US\$18-35).²

¹ ‘Military Service Policy for Egyptian Male Students’ (undated), American University in Cairo website <http://www.aucegypt.edu/currstudents/registrar/policies/Pages/Military.aspx> – Accessed 6 January 2010 – Attachment 1.

² Human Rights Watch 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, p. 14 – Attachment 2.

2 Is it conceivable that a 22 year old would have on his ID card an address at which he has not lived for over 20 years?

Information indicates that it is incumbent on the individual to change or correct information on identity documentation. No information was found as to what kind of checks are undertaken to ensure the correct address is included on identity cards.

The HRW paper states that:

According to the Civil Status Law, a citizen can change or correct most information, including religious affiliation, in his or her identification documents by simply registering the new information, without requiring the approval of the Ministry of Interior's Civil Status Department (CSD). The only requirement is to have the request authorized by the "competent body" (jihāt al-ikhtisās). While the law does not elaborate on what constitutes a competent body, in practice it has meant an employer when one is seeking to change how one's profession is listed, for instance, or an officiating religious authority in the case of one's marital status."³

As noted previously, the HRW paper states that all Egyptians must, by law, obtain a national identity card when they reach 16 years of age.⁴ The paper also states that "Egypt introduced computer-generated birth certificates and plastic national identity cards in 1995. Since then, persons needing a birth certificate or national identity card because they had come of age, or needing to replace their existing paper ID, have had no option other than a computer-generated card."⁵

The 2007 HRW paper gives an example of a 24 year old university student (a Baha'i) who had a handwritten paper birth certificate, before being required to get a new computerised birth certificate in 2001. The paper states that since "September 2005, he has been trying unsuccessfully to obtain a national ID card, known in Arabic as the *raqam qawmi*, or "national number," the now-mandatory computerized identification document, with either Baha'i or 'other' listed in the space reserved for religion."⁶ This information does seem to indicate that it is conceivable that a student in their twenties may not have an up-to-date national ID card.

3 Deleted.

4 What is the documentation process for a deferral of military service? How is it policed, and by which authority?

Sources indicate that a computerised national identity card must be presented in order to obtain a military service deferment card. The American University in Cairo website gives the procedure for students to defer military service (see below). According to this, all Egyptian male students must identify their Military Service status within 30 days of their 19th birthday. One source states that universities are required by law to suspend any male students who fail

³ Human Rights Watch 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, pp. 19-20 – Attachment 2.

⁴ Human Rights Watch 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, p. 14 – Attachment 2.

⁵ Human Rights Watch 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, pp. 28-29 – Attachment 2

⁶ Human Rights Watch 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, p. 30 – Attachment 2.

to produce their deferment cards.⁷ According to DFAT advice (in 2002 and 2008), male Egyptian citizens who have not completed compulsory military service will not be allowed to depart Egypt unless they have formally deferred service, or are exempt due to particular circumstance.⁸ According to DFAT, the Conscription and Mobilisation Administration (affiliated to the Ministry of Defence) is the Egyptian authority responsible for matters relating to military service.⁹

The American University in Cairo website states that “According to the Egyptian Military Service Law No. 127 enacted in 1980, all Egyptian male students must identify their Military Service status within 30 days of their 19th birthday”. The website gives the following procedure for a student to obtain a Military Service Card and identify their Military Service Status:

- In the month of December following your 18th birthday, proceed to the same civil registration office that issued your National ID card and follow their instructions to obtain your Military Service Card “Betaka 6 Gond,” free of charge.
- Make sure that all the information included in the Military Service Card is identical to your National ID card.
- Follow the steps below to identify your Military Service Status:
 - **Deferring your Military Service**
 - Obtain a “Namouzag 2 Gond” from your ”Military Service Area”.
 - Submit it along with your Military Service Card to the Military and Visa Services Unit, Office of the University Registrar between 09:00am and 01:00pm Sundays through Thursdays in New Cairo Campus, Admin. Building, Plaza Level, Room P-041.
 - The “Military and Visa Service” Unit will process your Military Service Status.
 - **Military Service Exemption**

Students who have the right to get an exemption from the military service (final, temporary, or being dual national) will have to process the exemption in person and then submit the original exemption certificate to the “Military and Visa Service Unit”, office of the “University Registrar”.¹⁰

A 2007 Human Rights Watch paper provides information on students obtaining military service deferment cards (in the context of the difficulties faced by Baha’is who are unable to

⁷ ‘Court Dismisses Challenge by Defence Ministry and Upholds Decision to Grant Military Service Papers to Baha’i Student’ 2009, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights website, 22 February <http://www.eipr.org/en/press/09/2202.htm> – Accessed 6 January 2010 – Attachment 3.

⁸ DIMA Country Information Service 2002, *Country Information Report No.116/02 – Entry/Exit Procedures*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 7 May 2002), 10 May – Attachment 21; DIAC Country Information Service 2008, *Country Information Report No.08/84 – CRS Request No EGY9407: Egypt: Exemption from military service in Egypt; treatment of Coptic Christians*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 1 September 2008), 3 September – Attachment 22.

⁹ DIAC Country Information Service 2008, *Country Information Report No.08/84 – CRS Request No EGY9407: Egypt: Exemption from military service in Egypt; treatment of Coptic Christians*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 1 September 2008), 3 September – Attachment 22.

¹⁰ ‘Military Service Policy for Egyptian Male Students’ (undated), American University in Cairo website <http://www.aucegypt.edu/currestudents/registrar/policies/Pages/Military.aspx> – Accessed 6 January 2010 – Attachment 1.

obtain ID cards). According to this, in around 2005 the Defense Ministry brought in a new rule that: “anyone born during or after 1985 had to produce the computerized national ID card for his application [for a military service deferment card] to be processed.”¹¹

A February 2009 article on the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) website reports on a court ruling ordering the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to grant a Baha’i student his military service deferment card even though he did not have a national identity card. The article reports that universities are required by law to suspend any male students who fail to produce their deferment cards. The article also reports that the student was suspended from his college in 2006 because the MoD insisted that they could not grant him the military service deferment card unless he first presented the new and computerized identity card.¹²

5 What are the various security authorities in Egypt?

The latest US Department of State (USDOS) human rights report has the following information on police and security forces:

Role of Police and Security Apparatus

The MOI [Ministry of Interior] controls local police forces, which operate in large cities and governorates; the SSIS [State Security Investigative Service], which conducts investigations; and the Central Security Force (CSF), which maintains public order. SSIS and CSF officers are responsible for law enforcement at the national level and for providing security for infrastructure and key officials, both domestic and foreign. Single-mission law enforcement agencies, such as the Tourist and Antiquities Police and the Antinarcotics General Administration, also work at the national level.

The security forces operated under a central chain of command and were considered generally effective in their efforts to combat crime and terrorism and maintain public order. However, a culture of impunity militated against systematic prosecution of security personnel who committed human rights abuses.¹³

A copy of the organisational structure of the Ministry of Interior (MOI), found on the MOI website, is also attached for reference.¹⁴

6 Which one is responsible for cracking down on Koranists?

Sources indicate that the SSIS are responsible for cracking down on Koranists. The USDOS human rights report for 2007 gives the example of five Koranists arrested by SSIS agents

¹¹ Human Rights Watch 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, p. 45 – Attachment 2

¹² ‘Court Dismisses Challenge by Defence Ministry and Upholds Decision to Grant Military Service Papers to Baha’i Student’ 2009, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights website, 22 February <http://www.eipr.org/en/press/09/2202.htm> – Accessed 6 January 2010 – Attachment 3.

¹³ US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Egypt*, 25 February, Section 1.d – Attachment 4.

¹⁴ ‘Organizational Structure’ (undated), Egyptian Ministry of Interior website <http://www.moiegypt.gov.eg/English/AboutMOI/OrganizationalStructure/OrganizationalStructure.htm> – Accessed 12 March 2008 – Attachment 5.

during that year.¹⁵ More recently, in November 2009, a Koranist was reportedly arrested at Cairo Airport by SSIS officers.¹⁶

- 7 Is there a border control data base which would identify whether someone has left the country?**
- 8 Would police authorities know that someone is out of the country?**
- 9 If state security wanted to interrogate someone who was overseas, would they be able to check electronically?**

Definitive information in regard to these questions was not found. Previous advice from DFAT on passport and exit related issues indicates that they have been unable to clarify similar issues with the Egyptian government, due to the sensitivity of the issues. A 2008 research response by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada does not indicate whether there is a border control database, but does state that “Egypt has entry and exit controls at all its border points that are administered by Immigration, a division of the national police force and the Ministry of Interior”. Further: “During entry and exit procedures, all travellers entering and leaving Egypt must submit an entry/exit card, which lists basic biometric data information, destination, means of transportation and local address”.¹⁷ It would seem likely from this that security forces would be aware, or would be able to check that someone had left the country.

In April 2008 the Tribunal received extensive advice from the Cairo post of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on a range of passport and exit related issues. The Cairo post advised that: “The Egyptian government maintains strict controls on the exit of all people out of Egypt” and “Egyptian citizens would be prevented from exiting Egypt if their name appeared on the official ‘alert list’”; however, “We are unable to clarify with the Egyptian government the exact details of how this alert process operates due to the sensitive nature of the matter.”¹⁸

Information on entry/exit procedures is given in a 2008 research response by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. This does not indicate whether there is a border control database. The response states:

A Canadian migration integrity officer at the Embassy of Canada in Egypt stated that Egypt has entry and exit controls at all its border points that are administered by Immigration, a

¹⁵ US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Egypt*, 11 March, Section 2.c – Attachment 6.

¹⁶ Carr, S. 2009, ‘Quranist detained at Cairo Airport released’, *Daily News*, 29 November <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=26118> – Accessed 8 January 2010 – Attachment 19; ‘Finally...The release of Abdullateef Sa’eed’ 2009, Ahl-Alquran website, 26 November http://www.ahl-alquran.com/English/show_news.php?main_id=7754 – Accessed 8 January 2010 – Attachment 20.

¹⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2008, *EGY102804.E – Egypt: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders; incidence of bribery of Egyptian border officials to facilitate departure by individuals with fraudulent travel documents or outstanding financial, military, or legal obligations or who are sought by the government for political reasons; the punishment for border officers caught taking such bribes (2006 – May 2008)*, 5 May – Attachment 7.

¹⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *DFAT Report No. 802 – Egypt: RRT Information Request: EGY33006*, 3 April – Attachment 8; for the Tribunal email which elicited this advice, see: RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to DFAT ‘Refugee Review Tribunal Information Request: EGY33006’, 11 March – Attachment 9.

division of the national police force and the Ministry of Interior (Canada 15 Apr. 2008a). All luggage is subject to possible customs inspection when passengers arrive in Egypt (ibid.).

During entry and exit procedures, all travellers entering and leaving Egypt must submit an entry/exit card, which lists basic biometric data information, destination, means of transportation and local address (ibid.).¹⁹

10 If they wanted to interrogate someone, is it conceivable that they might contact the house by telephone and then pass the message through a lawyer?

Information indicates that the State Security Investigations regularly summon young men who are on their lists to report to SSI facilities and question them about their activities and acquaintances.²⁰ DFAT advice of 22 May 2009 indicates that the State Security Directorate issues written letters to request that individuals appear before their local unit.²¹ A description of the procedure for this was not found (i.e. whether the individual would first be contacted by telephone or whether the request would be delivered through a lawyer).

11 Deleted.

12 Deleted.

13 Is there any evidence to suggest that many ordinary Koranists (as opposed to those who are linked to Ahmed Subhy Mansour or those engaged in polemics with the Sheikhs of Al Azhar University) have been rounded up by the security police and detained indefinitely?

No information on arrests or activities of “ordinary Koranists” was found in the available sources.

Details of the arrests over the past few years of high-profile Koranists have been given in a previous research response.²²

Most recently, in November 2009, a high-profile Koranist was reportedly arrested at Cairo Airport by State Security Investigations officers and held for a week before being released without charge.²³

¹⁹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2008, *EGY102804.E – Egypt: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders; incidence of bribery of Egyptian border officials to facilitate departure by individuals with fraudulent travel documents or outstanding financial, military, or legal obligations or who are sought by the government for political reasons; the punishment for border officers caught taking such bribes (2006 – May 2008)*, 5 May – Attachment 7.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch 2007, *Anatomy of a State Security Case: The “Victorious Sect” Arrests*, December, p. 10 – Attachment 10.

²¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2009, *DFAT Report 1006 – RRT Information Request EGY34761*, 22 May – Attachment 11; for the Tribunal email which elicited this response, see: RRT Research & Information 2009, Email to DFAT: ‘RRT Country Information Request EGY34761’, 23 April – Attachment 12.

²² RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response EGY35489*, 24 September – Attachment 18.

²³ Carr, S. 2009, ‘Quranist detained at Cairo Airport released’, *Daily News*, 29 November <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=26118> – Accessed 8 January 2010 – Attachment 19; ‘Finally... The release of Abdullateef Sa’eed’ 2009, Ahl-Alquran website, 26 November http://www.ahl-alquran.com/English/show_news.php?main_id=7754 – Accessed 8 January 2010 – Attachment 20.

14 Deleted.

List of Attachments

1. 'Military Service Policy for Egyptian Male Students' (undated), American University in Cairo website
<http://www.aucegypt.edu/currstudents/registrar/policies/Pages/Military.aspx> - Accessed 6 January 2010.
2. Human Rights Watch 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November.
3. 'Court Dismisses Challenge by Defence Ministry and Upholds Decision to Grant Military Service Papers to Baha'i Student' 2009, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights website, 22 February <http://www.eipr.org/en/press/09/2202.htm> – Accessed 6 January 2010.
4. US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Egypt*, 25 February.
5. 'Organizational Structure' (undated), Egyptian Ministry of Interior website
<http://www.moiegypt.gov.eg/English/AboutMOI/OrganizationalStructure/OrganizationalStructure.htm> – Accessed 12 March 2008.
6. US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Egypt*, 11 March.
7. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2008, *EGY102804.E – Egypt: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders; incidence of bribery of Egyptian border officials to facilitate departure by individuals with fraudulent travel documents or outstanding financial, military, or legal obligations or who are sought by the government for political reasons; the punishment for border officers caught taking such bribes (2006 – May 2008)*, 5 May. (REFWORLD)
8. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *DFAT Report No. 802 – Egypt: RRT Information Request: EGY33006*, 3 April.
9. RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to DFAT 'Refugee Review Tribunal Information Request: EGY33006', 11 March.
10. Human Rights Watch 2007, *Anatomy of a State Security Case: The "Victorious Sect" Arrests*, December.
11. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2009, *DFAT Report 1006 – RRT Information Request EGY34761*, 22 May.
12. RRT Research & Information 2009, Email to DFAT: 'RRT Country Information Request EGY34761', 23 April.
13. Deleted.
14. Deleted.
15. Deleted.

16. Deleted.
17. Deleted.
18. RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response EGY35489*, 24 September.
19. Carr, S. 2009, 'Quranist detained at Cairo Airport released', *Daily News*, 29 November <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=26118> – Accessed 8 January 2010.
20. 'Finally...The release of Abdullateef Sa'eed' 2009, Ahl-Alquran website, 26 November http://www.ahl-alquran.com/English/show_news.php?main_id=7754 – Accessed 8 January 2010.
21. DIMA Country Information Service 2002, *Country Information Report No.116/02 – Entry/Exit Procedures*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 7 May 2002), 10 May. (CISNET Egypt CX64426)
22. DIAC Country Information Service 2008, *Country Information Report No.08/84 – CRS Request No EGY9407: Egypt: Exemption from military service in Egypt; treatment of Coptic Christians*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 1 September 2008), 3 September. (CISNET Egypt CX209321)