



Somalia – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 13 October 2010

Were Somali passports being issued in Nairobi in June 2000?

A report published by the *Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre*, in a section titled “Passports” (section 2.8), states:

“Because Somalia has not had a functioning central government since January 1991, very few countries have accepted the Somali passport as a valid travel document. There are reports that Somali embassies, during and after the 1990s, have issued (sold) passports to Somalis residing abroad (Reuters 2007). Somali foreign services have operated outside the control or command of central authorities, and have had no opportunity to verify documents presented to them (as proof of a person’s identity).” (Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) (5 January 2009) *Documents in Somalia and Sudan*, p.10)

In a section titled “Documents” a country of origin information seminar report published by the *Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation* states:

“Currently, no passports are being issued in Somalia. The last official issuing of Somali passports was in 1991. At present, it is possible for someone to obtain a Somali passport in Europe or elsewhere for USD 100 or even less. However, Dr. Ali Khalif Galaydh, the former Prime Minister of the TNG has announced that Somalia has succeeded recently to print ‘new National passports’ with stringent security features. The new Somali passports are printed in France, reportedly with hard-to-forge security features conforming to international standards. The government promised to immediately start to issue these passports to Somalis all over the country, and it expects other nations to take note of this. The Somaliland authorities have recently issued their own passports, but so far usage is limited to travelling to neighbouring countries and as well as to official use by the administration’s senior officials. The only existing national passports in use in Somalia is the green passport introduced before the collapse of the state. At the moment it is still used by TNG officials travelling abroad. The Somali passport does not seem to be accepted anywhere in the world at the moment, except in some Arab countries. Somali businesspersons and travellers from Somalia are allowed entry into Gulf and Arab States. Usually visa arrangements are made by the [Somali] airlines. As regards the neighbouring countries, Somali passports are still accepted in Djibouti, Ethiopia and to a lesser extent in Kenya.” (Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (November 2001) *7th European Country of Origin Information Seminar Berlin, 11 - 12 June 2001: Final Report – Somalia*, p.146)

An *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* response to a request for information on Somali passports states:

“A media article reports that the Somali government has not issued passports since the internal conflict began in 1991 (AlJazeera 17 Jan. 2007). A statement from the Government of Canada explaining why Canada will not accept the Somali passport as a valid travel document states that, since 1991, Somalia has been functioning with virtually no government, and that satellite ‘Somali embassies’ with no oversight from a central government have sold blank passport stock to finance their operations (16 Dec. 1999). Numerous sources report serious concerns about the integrity and reliability of Somali passports.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (7 May 2007) *SOM102471.E – Somalia: Passports and other documentation that could assist with identification*)

This response also states:

“According to the Executive Director of the Somali Centre for Family Services in Ottawa, the new passport has been produced by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia but is not yet in active circulation (12 Apr. 2007). In contrast, the Director of Somali Immigration and Naturalisation states in a media article that Somali embassies in Kenya and Ethiopia have already started to distribute the new passports and that passport offices have been opened in the Somali centres of Baidoa, Bossaso, Garowe and Laas Anod (Afrol News 28 Mar. 2007). The Director claims that many countries, including Canada, recognize the new passport (ibid.). However, in a 25 April 2007 correspondence with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the Director of Identity and Document Policy in the Risk and Mitigation Branch stated that ‘for the purposes of seeking entry to Canada ... any passport issued by the government of Somalia is not valid for travel to Canada’” (ibid)

A *BBC News* report states:

“Forged Somali passports are as easy to buy as bread in the Garissa Lodge market in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. Abdifatah Farah Yasin not only sells the passport but also ‘authenticates’ it by putting a seal of the Somali ministry of foreign affairs and forging the signature of the last controller of passports before the break-up of the Somali state. Somalia has had no central government since 1991 and has been wracked by fighting between opposing warlords. ‘We are doing nothing wrong, we are just playing the role of a Somali government now that there isn’t one in our country. Obviously there should be someone offering this service to Somalis,’ he said. He even offered to sell me a Somali diplomatic passport, for just \$100. He said he would indicate in the passport that I was the Somali Ambassador to China or any other country of my choice. He said they are printed in Malaysia and then smuggled into Kenya, where they are sold to Somalis desperate to travel abroad.” (BBC News (12 May 2004) *Somali passports for sale*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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