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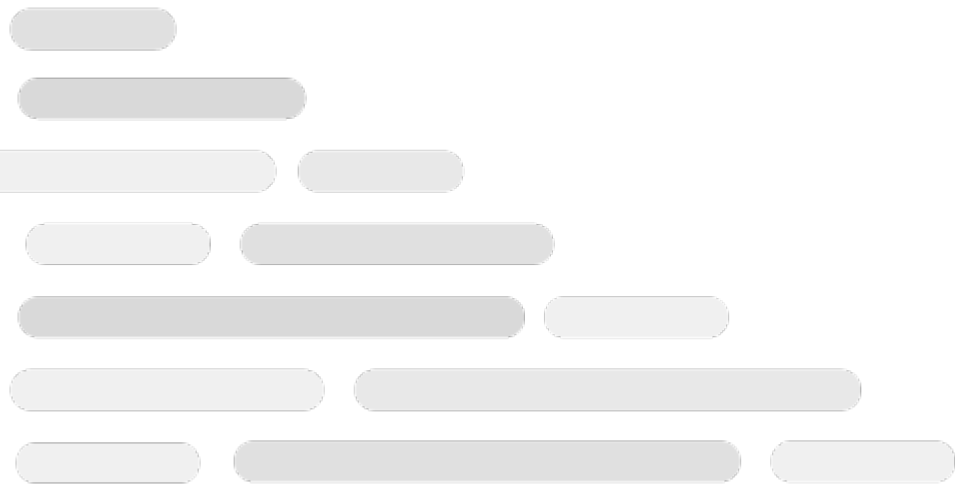
Country of Origin Information Centre

Report

Iran

Passports, ID and civil status documents

5 January 2021



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Summary

All Iranian citizens are issued an ID booklet upon birth registration. The ID booklet is called *shenasnameh* and comes in two versions: one for children up to 15 years and one for persons over 15 years. The *shenasnameh* is continuously updated throughout life through changes in marital status and family relations. Furthermore, Iranian authorities also issue a national ID card to Iranian citizens over the age of 15 – a so-called *kart-e melli*. This is now an electronic smart card, which has gradually become the most important ID document for Iranians in daily life. It is the National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR) that issues both *shenasnameh* and *kart-e melli*.

The Passport and Immigration Police issue passports on the basis of *shenasnameh* and *kart-e melli*. The current version (C-/S-series) was introduced in the period 2012-2014 and has a number of modern security details. The latest editions of *shenasnameh* and *kart-e melli* also have far more advanced security features than previous models. This has helped improve the authenticity of Iranian ID documents and passports in recent years.

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1 Introduction

This report concerns ID, travel and civil status documents in Iran, including *shenasnameh* (ID book/birth certificate), *kart-e melli* (national ID card), passports, marriage and divorce certificates as well as death certificates.

The report describes the procedures for issuing these documents, what information they contain and what is required to renew or replace them. Registration and issuing procedures both in Iran and abroad are described.

Finally, the report describes factors that are important for assessing the reliability of Iranian documents. Relevant topics are the extent of corruption, issuance control procedures and availability of forged documents.

1.1 Sources

The information is mainly collected from Iranian government websites:

- The Iranian national register, National Organization for Civil Registration ([NOCR](#)), describes issuing procedures for *shenasnameh* and *kart-e melli*, both in Iran and abroad.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs ([MFA](#)) describes procedures for issuing passports abroad.
- The Main Office for Consular Services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, henceforth referred to as [Econsulate](#),¹ describes the conditions for issuing *shenasnameh* and passports abroad, and for the registration of marriage and divorce.

The report is also based on conversations with representatives of NOCR in 2011 and 2015, and correspondence with the Iranian Embassy in Norway and Norwegian Embassy in Tehran. We have also used information from other immigration authorities and the National ID Centre (NID).

It is difficult to obtain reliable information about document issuing practices within the Iranian foreign service missions. The procedures and documentation requirements are occasionally described somewhat differently on the various government websites. Furthermore, as all these websites are undated, we cannot know what is the most up-to-date information. This leaves some uncertainty as to which procedures and documentation requirements apply in particular contexts. In complicated cases where applicants lack breeder documents, this is even more uncertain.

¹ These websites are unstable.

We must also consider that practise may deviate somewhat from what the authorities describe on their websites.

Several of the websites we refer to only have information in Persian. The information from Econsulate (n.d.), along with the application forms, has in most cases been translated into Norwegian by a professional translator. In other cases, we have used Google translation programs. We make certain reservations that these translations may be imprecise.

2 ID-booklet – *shenasnameh*

Shenasnameh is an ID booklet to be issued to all Iranian citizens upon birth registration. It is issued in two versions – one for children up to 15 years, and one for persons over 15 years. The ID booklet is continuously updated throughout life according to changes in civil status and family relationships.

The *shenasnameh* is used as a proof of identity in several contexts and has for many years been the most important ID document for Iranian citizens. It is the breeder document for several other ID documents, including the national ID card and passport.

A *shenasnameh* is referred to as both ID booklet/ID certificate/ID card and birth certificate (see for example NID 2019b and NOCR n.d.b).

It is the National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR) that issues *shenasnameh*. NOCR sorts under the Ministry of the Interior and is said to have about 1000 local offices in all towns and villages of a certain size. These offices record births and changes in Iranian citizens' civil status and issue various types of ID documents (NOCR, meeting in Tehran November 2015).

NOCR (n.d.b) states that *shenasnameh* is issued to:

- children who have an Iranian father, regardless of whether they were born and reside in Iran or abroad
- children born in Iran to unknown parents
- children born in Iran to foreign parents if one of the parents was born in Iran

All these groups are considered to be Iranian citizens under the Iranian Civil Code (Civil Code 1935, Book 2, Article 976). According to the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI & GCENR 2019, p. 2), however, the law is not complied with for the last group. This could mean that these children do not receive a *shenasnameh*.

2.1 Birth registration and first-time issuance of shenasnameh

Birth registration is mandatory and must by law take place within 15 days after birth. As far as Landinfo understands, this applies to children born to Iranian and foreign parents in Iran, and to Iranian children born abroad (Law on Civil Registration 1976, Article 12, 15; NOCR n.d.c).

NOCR has stated that almost all Iranian children (99.7%) are registered within the deadline (meeting in Tehran, November 2015). According to UNICEF, the proportion of children registered before the age of five, increased from 87% in 1997 to 99% in 2010 (UNICEF 2005, p. 2; UNICEF 2013, p. 41).

The high proportion of registered childbirths in Iran is due to several measures carried out by the authorities. First, an online national database was launched for population statistics in 1997. From 2000, all issued personal documents concerning birth, marriage, divorce and death have automatically been registered in this database (NOCR 2015; Samadi 2017, p. 36).²

Secondly, birth registration was integrated into the primary health care service during the period 2006-2008. Since then, it has been possible to register births not only with NOCR but also at health centres, vaccination centres and mother-child clinics in rural areas. During this period, NOCR officials also participated in door-to-door vaccination campaigns, where they registered births using mobile computer equipment. NOCR stated in 2014 that 90% of civil status registrations were made via online computer systems (Samadi 2017, p. 36).

In the provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan, however, a significant proportion of Baluchi Iranians (who are citizens) still lack shenasnameh (diplomat source, e-mail December 2019). The authorities announced in 2017 that 20,000 special cards for school registration had been issued in Sistan and Baluchistan for children who lacked shenasnameh. In addition, there are unregistered children who have not received such cards. Among these were both children of mixed marriages between Iranian women and Afghan man, and children of local Baluchs who themselves have never been registered and therefore lack proof of Iranian citizenship (ISI & GCENR 2019, p. 8).

Personal attendance by either parent, paternal grandfather or guardian is required to register a child and for the shenasnameh to be issued (NOCR n.d.b and c):

- If the marriage is registered, it is sufficient that one of the parents, or the paternal grandfather, appears.

² Old ID documents have also been digitized. In 2015, NOCR completed a project to scan 130 million ID documents issued before 2000. These were stored and archived (NOCR 2015; Samadi 2017 p. 36).

- If the marriage is not registered, both parents must attend and sign all documents.
- A trustee/guardian appointed by a competent court can register orphans or persons who have been declared minors and get them issued with a shenasnameh.

Hospitals are also responsible for reporting births to NOCR, which typically will have staff present in hospitals where more than ten children are born every day. These personnel will register the births. In hospitals with fewer births, it is the task of the Ministry of Health to report to NOCR (NOCR, meeting in Tehran November 2015; NID 2016c). In other words, there will be two separate reports of births to NOCR – one made by the parents, and one by the hospital/Ministry of Health.

After the child has been registered at the local NOCR office, this same authority will issue a shenasnameh to the child. NOCR (n.d.b) states that you can get the ID booklet on the same day as you register the child if you attend before 10 in the morning.

The following documentation is required to register and get issued with a shenasnameh for new-borns (NOCR n.d.b):

- birth confirmation from the physician or midwife where the birth took place
- mother's and father's shenasnameh in original version
- receipt for payment of 150,000 IRR to NOCR through Bank Melli

2.1.1 Children of an Iranian mother and a foreign father

Since 2006, children with an Iranian mother and a foreign father have not been issued a shenasnameh. This group has had to apply for citizenship after turning 18 if they want to become Iranian citizens (NOCR, meeting in Tehran November 2011).³

In October 2019, however, a law was passed allowing Iranian mothers married to foreign men, to apply for citizenship of their children before they reach the age of 18 (HRW 2019). Thus, the transfer of citizenship from mother to child does not take place automatically. The condition is that the parents pass a security check (CHRI 2019).

³ Before 2006, children of Iranian mothers and foreign fathers could be issued with a shenasnameh. The conditions were that the parents' marriage was registered, that the child was born in Iran, and that the father had a residence permit in the country. Due to the large number of refugees in Iran, this arrangement was discontinued in 2006 (NOCR, meeting in Tehran November 2011).

It is unclear how many children are affected by this. Iranian authorities have stated (as referred in ISI & GCENR 2019, p. 6) that over 49,000 children with Iranian mothers were undocumented in 2017. This was revealed during a government campaign to register marriages between Iranian women and foreign men. 60% of these women were married to Afghan men, and 12% to Iraqis. Almost 30% of the children did not go to school due to lack of ID documents.⁴ Iranian parliament members have claimed that around one million children in Iran have Iranian mothers and foreign fathers (ISI & GCENR 2019, p. 6).

Landinfo does not have information on how the new law from 2019 is put into practice.

2.1.2 Children of an Iranian mother and an unknown father

If the mother is Iranian and the father is unknown, the child will become an Iranian citizen and thus get issued with a shenasnameh. The child then gets the mother's family name, while a fictitious first name of the father is registered (NOCR, meeting in Tehran November 2015). Fictitious names are used to prevent stigma from childbirth out of wedlock and are practiced in accordance with Articles 16 and 17 of the Civil Registration Act (Samadi 2017, p. 40).

2.2 National ID number

At birth registration, Iranian citizens receive a national ID number. The number has ten digits and is composed of an area code that indicates where the person is born, a serial number and a check digit. The ID number does not contain the date of birth (NOCR, meeting 2015).

The ID number appears both in the shenasnameh, in the national ID card (*kart-e melli*) and in the passport (Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 14; NID 2019a & b; NOCR, meeting 2015).

2.3 Characteristics and content of the shenasnameh

A shenasnameh is formed like a small booklet the size of a passport (approx. 125 x 176 mm) (Discs n.d.a). It is issued in two variants (NOCR, meeting 2015):

- one with a green cover for people under 15 years of age
- one with a brown cover for people over 15 years of age

⁴ Of the approximately 49,000 children in the survey, 21% had not reached school age, 6% had graduated, 25% had dropped out, and 29% had not attended school at all (ISNA 2018).

Only the brown variant has a photo of the holder (Discs n.d.a).

The personal data page in the booklet contains (NOCR, meeting 2015; NID 2019b; DFAT 2020; p. 71; Discs n.d.a):

- photo of the holder if he/she is over 15 years old
- national ID number
- first name and last name (family name)
- shenasnameh number (serial number)
- date of birth
- place of birth
- parents' names
- parents' national ID numbers or shenasnameh numbers
- parents' place of birth (place/province)
- place of issue
- the name of the person who issued the document

The brown booklet also contains information about spouse(s), divorce(s) and children. There is also space for stamps that confirm voting at elections, and for registration of death (DFAT 2018, p. 49; US Bureau of Consular Affairs n.d.).

We have somewhat divergent information about when this type of shenasnameh was introduced. In 2011, NOCR (meeting in Tehran) announced that the new green version was introduced in 2005, while the brown one came in 2009. Other sources have stated both 2010, 2011-2012 and 2013 as the year when the new version was introduced (IRB 2015; DFAT 2020, p. 71; NID 2019b). The various statements may be related to the fact that the implementation has taken place gradually in different parts of the country, and that the sources refer to different phases in this process.

The current model has significantly better security features than the old one, such as laminated paper, hologram, barcode, number perforation and watermark. Furthermore, the photo of the holder is now printed into the document while it was previously stapled on (NOCR, meeting 2015).

2.3.1 Previous version of the shenasnameh

The previous version of shenasnameh has a red cover and was issued during the period from 1986 until the current model was introduced (at the earliest in 2005).

In 2015, representatives of NOCR told Landinfo (meeting in Tehran) that many Iranians still had the old version and were not obliged to replace it as it has no expiry date. Landinfo has no recent information about this. According to a source

consulted by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in 2015, Iranian authorities intended to replace the old version gradually (IRB 2015).

The former version of shenasnameh consists of two pages for people under 15 and four pages for people over 15 years. Contrary to what is the case now, a new shenasnameh was not issued at the age of 15 years. Instead, two pages were added to the existing version, and a photo of the holder was inserted (IRB 2006).

The personal data page (page 2) is handwritten and contains the following information (IRB 2006; US Bureau of Consular Affairs n.d.):

- photo of the holder if over 15 years
- first name and last name
- parents' names
- date of birth
- place of birth
- place of issue
- the name of the person who issued the shenasnameh
- serial number

Page 3 contains information about marriage and children (IRB 2006).

In 2015, NOCR (meeting in Tehran) said that there were many problems with counterfeits of the old version of shenasnameh.

Before the revolution in 1979, another type of shenasnameh was issued, which now is no longer valid (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail February 2018).

2.4 Validity

A green shenasnameh is only valid until the holder turns 15, after which it will be replaced by a brown shenasnameh. The brown booklet has no defined validity period (IRB 2016), but NOCR (n.d.d) states that it will be renewed with a new photo when the holder turns 30 years old. Since the photo is scanned and printed into the document, a new shenasnameh must be issued when a photo is replaced.

2.5 Renewal of shenasnameh

A shenasnameh can be renewed at any NOCR office in the country. A new document will then be issued, as the old one is handed in. Applicants do not need to approach their original issuing office, but the application will be sent and processed there (NOCR n.d.d).

The Shenاسnameh is renewed in these circumstances (NOCR n.d.d):

- at the age of 15 to switch to the brown version with a photo
- at the age of 30 to insert a new photo taken the same year
- in case of wear and tear of the document
- in case of change of date of birth or name, after a decision has been made by a court, by dispute settlement councils or by commissions for age ascertainment or surname approvals
- when replacing an old model

In order to be issued with a new shenasnameh, persons over the age of 18 must attend at the NOCR office. People between the ages of 15 and 18 who have received a so-called *growth award* can apply themselves. Such confirmation of maturity can be given by a family court to persons in this age group if they appear in court and answer some basic financial questions (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail June 2020).⁵ If a person has no confirmation of maturity, (one of) the parents,⁶ the paternal grandfather or guardian must apply on her/his behalf (NOCR n.d.d).

Applicants must fill out an application form, pay a fee (not specified) and submit the following with the application (NOCR n.d.d):

- the old shenasnameh
- if the old shenasnameh does not contain a photo: the original and a copy of other valid ID documents⁷ with a photo⁸
- three new passport photos (3x4 cm, only applies to people over 15 years)

If the applicant lacks valid ID documents with a photo, he/she must obtain confirmation of the photo from the police (NOCR n.d.d).

Parents or grandparents applying on behalf of persons under the age of 18 must submit their own shenasnameh. A guardian must submit relevant documents confirming his/her relation to the applicant (NOCR n.d.d).

⁵ Such a court order is usually used for financial purposes (property-related, opening a bank account) or to be able to renew a shenasnameh on your own (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail June 2020).

⁶ If the marriage is not registered, both parents must appear.

⁷ The plural form is used in the original text (*original and copy of valid documents affixed with photo such as [...]*), which may mean that one type only is not sufficient.

⁸ These documents are mentioned: passport, military service completion or exemption card, driver's license, diploma with photo from upper secondary school or higher education institution, letter of introduction with a photo from the educational institution where the applicant is studying, identity card with a photo for public employees. The national ID card is not mentioned.

2.5.1 Registration of changed civil status information

It is not necessary to renew the shenasnameh when one marries/divorces or has children. These changes in civil status are incorporated into the existing shenasnameh (NOCR, meeting 2015; NOCR n.d.g, p. 29-30; Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 31):

- NOCR offices enter the child's name into the parent's shenasnameh when issuing a shenasnameh to the child.
- A notary public for marriages and divorces registers the marriage, issues certificates and updates the civil status in the couple's shenasnameh.

In the event of a divorce, people have three months to consider the ruling in the family court before they must register the divorce with the notary public. In these cases, the shenasnameh might not reflect actual marital status (NOCR, meeting 2015).

Changes can be made to a shenasnameh two or three times. After that, a new booklet must be issued because the laminate cannot withstand multiple printing (NOCR, meeting 2015).

2.6 Replacement of lost shenasnameh

A lost shenasnameh can be replaced at any NOCR office in the country. Applicants do not need to consult the original issuing office to have this done (NOCR n.d.f).

Applicants over 18 years of age must attend in person. Those between 15 and 18 years can also apply if they have a «confirmation of maturity» (see description in Chapter 2.5). If not, (one of) the parents,⁹ the paternal grandfather or guardian must apply on his/her behalf (NOCR n.d.f).

Applicants must submit the following along with to the completed application form (NOCR n.d.f):

- completed and notarized declaration of lost shenasnameh
- original and copy of other types of ID documents with photo¹⁰
- original and copy of marriage or divorce certificate and shenasnameh for children (applies if married)

⁹ If the parents' marriage is unregistered, both must attend. If the marriage is registered, either the mother or father can attend alone.

¹⁰ As footnote 8.

- two new passport photos (3x4 cm) for people over 15 years (with name, surname, shenasnameh number, date of birth and place of issue written on the back)
- receipt for a bank deposit of 200,000 IRR (paid via Bank Melli Iran to NOCR) if it is the first time shenasnameh is reissued, and 400,000 IRR if it is the second time

If the applicant lacks other valid ID documents with a photo, he/she must obtain confirmation of the photo from the police (NOCR n.d.f).

The replacement ID booklet features the printing *almosana*, which means duplicate, diagonally on all pages. The new booklet will also have a new issue date (DFAT 2020, p. 71; NID, e-mail April 2020).

2.7 Children of foreign parents

Foreigners residing in Iran can register their new-born children at NOCR's offices. A birth certificate from the hospital as well as a passport and/or documentation proving legal stay in Iran must be presented. These children will then receive a birth certificate for foreigners in Iran (NOCR n.d.e; NOCR n.d.g, p. 27).

If one of the foreign parents was born in Iran, the child is to be reckoned as an Iranian citizen and should by law obtain an Iranian birth certificate (shenasnameh) (NOCR n.d.b; Civil Code 1935, Article 976). However, as mentioned on page 8, it does not appear that this statutory provision is complied with in practice.

Many children of parents without legal stay in Iran are not registered. This is partly because local officials may refuse registration if no residence permit is presented, and partly because illegal migrants tend to avoid contact with the authorities for fear of being deported from the country (Samadi 2017, p. 44). This applies in particular to the large group of unregistered Afghan refugees and migrants who have resided in Iran for many years. Many of the children of unregistered Afghans were born in Iran but have neither Iranian nor Afghan ID documents (Samadi 2017, p. 45).

2.8 Issuance of shenasnameh abroad

2.8.1 First-time issuance to children under 15 years

Children born to Iranian fathers abroad are Iranian citizens and can receive a shenasnameh after being registered in Iran. The registration of a child in Iran requires advance agreement with the foreign service mission and registration in an

electronic portal called the *Clove system*¹¹ (also referred to as the Mikhak portal). Parents must also make sure that the name they have chosen for the child is «idiomatic and customary». They can do this by contacting the foreign service mission or by visiting the website of the National Organization of the Civil Registration (NOCR) (Econsulate n.d.a).

After this, one of the parents, or both if the marriage is not registered,¹² should visit the foreign service mission and present (NOCR n.d.c; Econsulate n.d.a):

- birth certificate issued by local authorities
- both parents' shenasnameh (original)

In order to be issued with a shenasnameh, the parents must also fill out an application and pay a fee (Econsulate n.d.a).

Subsequently, the foreign service mission reports the birth to NOCR in Iran, which registers the child (NID 2019b). In 2015, NOCR explained (meeting in Teheran) that the shenasnameh is issued and personalized by NOCR centrally, and then sent to the foreign service mission. This procedure has not been confirmed by other sources.

The foreign service mission retains an archive document documenting that a shenasnameh has been issued (NID 2019b).

2.8.2 First-time issuance to children between 15 and 18 years

For the first-time issuance of a shenasnameh to Iranian children between 15 and 18 years, applicants must enter a prior agreement with the foreign service mission and register the case in *clove system*. Then they must meet in person at the foreign service mission and present (Econsulate n.d.b):

- birth certificate from the country of residence (if the child was born in a country other than country of residence, the birth certificate must be verified by the Iranian representation in the country of birth)
- both parents' shenasnameh (original)
- two fingerprint cards taken by the police at the applicant's place of residence (it is also possible to take fingerprints at Iranian foreign service missions)
- five new photos (4x3 cm) with personal information written on the back (the photo should show a full face, without a hat or dark glasses, and women must have complete Islamic hijab)
- receipt for a paid consular fee

¹¹ Integrated Management of Consular Services (clove).

¹² The paternal grandfather or a legal guardian can also register the child at the foreign service mission (NOCR n.d.c).

If no fingerprint card can be presented, the foreign service mission will issue a referral to the local police station at the place of residence. The precondition is that applicants have submitted complete documentation requirements (Econsulate n.d.b).

If the parents' marriage is registered in their shenasnameh, it is sufficient that one of them attends at the foreign service mission and signs the necessary documents. If the marriage is not registered, both parents must attend (Econsulate n.d.b).

2.8.3 First-time issuance to persons over 18 years of age

Econsulate (n.d.c) also provides application procedures for first-time issuance of a shenasnameh to Iranians over 18 years. In such cases, the person must pre-register in the *clove system* and attend in person at the foreign service mission. Having reached the age of majority, specific rules apply (Econsulate n.d.c).

The following documentation must be submitted (Econsulate n.d.c):

- birth certificate issued by local authorities in the country of birth (if the applicant was born in a country other than the country of residence, the birth certificate must be verified by the Iranian representation in the country of birth)
- both parents' shenasnameh (original)
- valid foreign identity document with photo, passport or other valid identification
- six new photos (4x3 cm) with personal data written on the back (the photo should show a full face, without a hat or dark glasses, and women must have a complete Islamic hijab)
- one photo of each of the parents
- two fingerprint cards taken by local police
- completed application form for the issuing of a shenasnameh, a so-called tripartite written declaration (*tripartite confession*)¹³
- receipt for a paid consular fee

If applicants cannot present fingerprint cards, the foreign service mission will issue a referral to the local police station at the place of residence. The precondition is that applicants have submitted complete documentation requirements (Econsulate n.d.c).

¹³ Landinfo does not have access to this form, nor have we found relevant information by searching for the term «tripartite confession». But perhaps it is a statement signed by both applicant, parents and witnesses, who confirm the identity.

2.8.4 Replacement of lost shenasnameh

Iranians abroad who have lost their shenasnameh can get a new one issued by contacting the nearest foreign service mission. However, it is difficult to determine with certainty exactly which documentation requirements apply in these circumstances. Iranian authorities describe the procedures somewhat differently on their websites (Econsulate n.d.d; NOCR n.d.i). We have also received information from meetings with NOCR, which supplements the requirements mentioned on their website. The various representations could be an indication that practices vary somewhat.

According to the Econsulate (n.d.d) applicants must submit:

- a completed application form
- notification of loss of the shenasnameh (separate form)
- if applicable: completed form for replacement of a shenasnameh issued before 1979
- two new photos (4x3 cm) with personal data written on the back (the photo should show a full face, without a hat or dark glasses, and women must have a complete Islamic hijab)
- copy of lost shenasnameh
- two types of Iranian ID documentation with photo¹⁴
- original of spouse's and children's shenasnameh and original marriage certificate
- valid residence permit with photo
- original receipt for a paid consular fee

Furthermore, applicants must appear in person. For persons under 18 years, the application must be made by either the father, mother (if marriage to father is registered), paternal grandfather or guardian (Econsulate n.d.).

NOCR's website (n.d.i) states that applicants for a replacement shenasnameh must enclose a specific statement form to be signed by three witnesses at the consulate. Alternatively, applicants can attach copies of the three witnesses' passports in the application.¹⁵

Econsulate (n.d.d) does not mention witnesses. However, it is mentioned as a requirement for the renewal of a shenasnameh (see Chapter 2.8.5).

¹⁴ Such as a passport, driver's license, proof of completed military service or exemption from military service, educational documents, national identity card, a new ID booklet from father, mother, spouse or children.

¹⁵ NOCR also states that applicants must attach two copies of the lost shenasnameh (if available), and copies of page 2-9 and the visa page in the passport (NOCR n.d.i).

In case applicants lack ID documents with a photo, they must present ID documents from close relatives, such as parents or siblings, according to NOCR (meeting 2011). This documentation will then be sent to the local NOCR office at the place of origin for verification of the person's identity.

2.8.5 Renewal of shenasnameh

In order to renew a shenasnameh, the criteria we have described in Chapter 2.5 must be fulfilled. Applicants must attend at the foreign service mission with witnesses. It is not specified what the witnesses should do (Econsulate n.d.f.).

The following documentation must be submitted (Econsulate n.d.e; Econsulate n.d.f; NOCR n.d.i):

- completed application form for replacement/substitution of shenasnameh
- if the old shenasnameh does not have a photo: completed form for insertion of photo in shenasnameh
- if applicable: completed form for replacement of a shenasnameh issued before 1979
- original and copy of old shenasnameh
- foreign identity and citizenship documents/valid residence permit
- two other types of original Iranian ID documentation¹⁶, either for the applicant himself or for parents if they are applying for shenasnameh with a photo for children over 15 years¹⁷
- four photos (4x3 cm) with personal information written on the back (the photo must show a full face, without a hat or dark glasses, and women must have a complete Islamic hijab)
- original receipt for the paid consular fee

The application form must state the exact address and telephone number abroad and in Iran. Alternatively, individuals can provide the address and telephone number of their parents or an acquaintance in Iran (Econsulate n.d.f.).

¹⁶ Two of the following documents must be submitted: Passport, driving license, certificate of completion of or exemption from military service, education papers, national ID card, new ID booklet for father, mother, spouse or children (Econsulate n.d.f). NOCR (n.d.i) also includes two copies of pages 2-9 and the visa page of the passport in the list of requirements.

¹⁷ When a parent applies for a shenasnameh with a photo for his/her 15-year old child, a copy of all pages from his/her own passport must be enclosed, according to NOCR (n.d.i). Econsulate (n.d.f), states that parents must submit both shenasnameh and passport if the child is registered in the passport.

2.8.6 Issuing by proxy in Iran

The Iranian embassy in Norway has informed Landinfo that a shenasnameh may be renewed and replaced by giving power of attorney to a relative in Iran. However, a power of attorney must be sent via an Iranian foreign service mission, so applicants in Norway must visit the Iranian embassy to start the process. Prior to that, applicants must register information on a website of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They will then be given a code which they must bring to the embassy as they deliver a power of attorney (Iranian Embassy in Norway, telephone conversation November 2016).

3 National ID card – *kart-e melli*

Iran has introduced a national ID card, *kart-e melli*, which all Iranian citizens over 15 years shall be in possession of (Samadi 2017, p. 33). The *kart-e melli* has now become the most common identification document in daily life. Iranian authorities state that 99% of the target group have obtained the card (ITU 2017, p. 50).

There are two versions of the card: a new electronic version with a computer chip, and one older version with a barcode. The older version is probably still valid (see more on p. 22).

The Iranian Civil Registration Law of 1986 stipulates that the authorities may introduce a national ID card that all residents over the age of 15 will have to obtain (Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 38):

Whenever the government may deem necessary and announces, the individuals, who have reached over 15 years old, shall have an ID card and always carry it.

Several years seem to have gone by before the scheme was implemented. Sources state slightly different years for implementation, but according to the International Telecommunication Union, ITU, which has a database of various national ID documents, Iran started to issue national ID cards in 1997 (ITU 2017, p. 52).

The law of 1986 states that a person must carry the ID card with him at all time. (Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 38). However, Iranian lawyers have explained (meeting 2011) that citizens should be able to identify themselves if necessary, but that you are not punished if you do not actually carry the ID with you. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT 2020, p. 71) confirms that there is no requirement to carry the card at all times - only when it is necessary to prove identity.

Kart-e melli is mandatory in many contexts, for example to obtain passports and driver's licenses and for banking transactions/services (DFAT 2020, p. 71). People also need the kart-e melli to buy a train ticket, so Iranians will therefore be rather helpless without this card. Representatives of NOCR explained this in a meeting with Landinfo in Tehran in 2015. Moreover, they stated that there is no legal basis for denying anyone an ID card.

Different government offices require different ID documents. While banks only require the kart-e melli, one must present both this card and the shenasnameh to get assistance from a notary public. According to the Australian DFAT (2018, p. 50) Iranians often check in advance which documents are required in different contexts or keep the two types with them to be on the safe side (DFAT 2018, p. 50). The US Bureau of Consular Affairs (n.d.) informs that national ID cards are not accepted as a replacement for the shenasnameh. While the shenasnameh is designed to record all important events in a person's lifetime, the purpose of the ID card is primarily to identify a person, without revealing further information about him/her (Samadi 2017, p. 33).

3.1 Electronic version (smart card)

The kart-e melli is now an electronic smart card with a computer chip. The computer chip contains an electronically stored photo, fingerprints and signature. Additional information can also be entered into the chip in connection with the use of public services. NOCR has stated (meeting 2015) that this model has been issued since 2012. According to Iran Daily (as referred in IRB 2013), smart cards were first issued in the city of Qom in 2011 as part of a pilot project.

Currently only the electronic version of the kart-e melli is issued in Iran (Iranian Embassy in Norway, telephone conversation June 2020; NID 2017).

In 2015, NOCR's representatives stated that the validity of old cards was extended by decree (meeting 2015). Landinfo does not know the exact deadline for handing in the old cards, but in the past, such deadlines seem to have been extended. The Norwegian embassy in Tehran pointed out in 2017 that people who did not exchange the card before the set deadline, would probably get an extended deadline (as referred in NID 2017).

Since March 2018, there have been delays in the issuance of smart cards. This is a result of increased expenses for importing the blank body of cards and chips from abroad due to sanctions. In early 2019, therefore, Iranian companies began producing the body of the cards themselves. By October 2020, their production capacity had increased, and backlogs had been reduced accordingly (diplomatic source in Tehran, e-mail November 2020).

Citizens who have applied for smart cards during this period have - as is common practice - had their old cards annulled. Instead they have been given a receipt slip to serve as a temporary ID proof until the smart card was ready. In practice, however, there have been many complaints that the receipt has not always been accepted as valid identification (diplomatic source in Iran, e-mail November 2020).

3.1.1 Issuing procedures

It is the National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR) that issues *kart-e melli*. Iranians can apply for the card at about 5,000 offices throughout the country, either post offices or so-called *Pishkhan*, which are local service centres established by NOCR in collaboration with private actors. The cards are personalised by NOCR centrally in Tehran (NID 2018).

In order to be issued with a smart card, applicants must first register personal information¹⁸ on the website *National Smart Card Registration System*.¹⁹ At the same time, they must request an appointment at an application office to complete the registration, as well as pay a registration fee and print out the form they have filled out during the online registration. This form contains a code (NOCR n.d.h).

When attending the application office, individuals must (NOCR n.d.h; NID 2018; IRB 2015):

- state the code they received when registering online
- state postal code and mobile number
- present original and copy of all pages in *shenasnameh* (with photo)
- present old *kart-e melli*, if in possession of this
- give fingerprints (ten fingers)
- take a photo

All information about the applicant is entered in a central database, before NOCR in Tehran assumes central responsibility for the case. Here the card is personalised and then sent for control in a separate department, the *CQC-department*. The card is checked digitally by a computer controlling personal data against the central database. In addition, the quality of the photo is reviewed, and the card is checked for any other errors. The card is also checked manually (NID 2016a).

¹⁸ Mobile number, national ID number, serial number on *shenasnameh*, *solar birth date*, *lunar birth date*, mother's name, gender (NOCR n.d.h).

¹⁹ www.ncr.ir/idcard - note that the website is unstable.

After the card is approved, it is sent back to the original application office, which delivers it to the applicant. To receive the card and at the same time activate it digitally, the applicant must submit fingerprints (NOCR n.d.h; NID 2018).

The card is issued with three sets of PIN codes, which the holder can change when he/she receives the card. The codes will provide access to online public services, and as such, the holder does not have to attend in person at various public offices (NID 2018).

- The first PIN opens personal information (including name).
- The second PIN opens fingerprint information as well as postal code and address.
- The third PIN number opens electronic signature information, which means that a person can submit an electronic signature using this PIN code (NID 2018).

3.1.2 Characteristics and content

The smart card is the size of a credit card. The front side shows the holder's personal data, while the back has a computer chip and barcode (Discs n.d.a). Electronic cards have been depicted on the government websites both with and without barcode on the back.

The card is valid for seven years (NOCR et al., p. 27).

The front of the card contains (NOCR, meeting 2015):

- an integrated photo of the holder
- name, surname and father's name
- date of birth
- national ID number
- expiry date (seven years after issue)

The computer chip contains the same information as the card in general, as well the holder's address and postal code. In addition, fingerprints and signature are stored on the chip. The barcode on the back contains the national ID number (NOCR, meeting 2015; NID 2017).

The biometric data in the card enables secure identity verification. By using card readers with a fingerprint sensor, the stored fingerprint in the card is checked against the holder's fingerprint (NOCR n.d.a).

The card is also designed for the storage of additional personal information. As explained in Chapter 3.1.1, the card can be used to access public services, including health and social services (NOCR n.d.g, p. 40).

The date of issue is not stated, but it should be seven years before the expiry date, which is stated on the card (NOCR, meeting 2015).

3.2 Previous version of the kart-e melli

The old version of kart-e melli contains no biometric data but has a barcode on the back. The card has a photo of the document holder, personal information, national ID number, shenasnameh number and postal code (NOCR n.d.g, p. 27; IRB 2013). Like the smart card, the card is the size of a credit card.

3.3 Information about religious affiliation

In the application form for kart-e melli, applicants must also state their religious affiliation (Sabeti 2020).

News releases from 2020 (Sabeti 2020; Ensor 2020) indicate that applicants now only can state one of the four recognised religions in Iran: Islam, Christianity, Judaism or Zoroastrianism. Previously, you could also check for «other religions», but this option now appears to have been removed from the application form. That means, for example that Baha'is are no longer allowed to state their actual religious affiliation when applying for a national ID card but must choose one of the four recognized religions. Baha'is have even informed news sources that the field of religion has already been ticked off as Islam when they received the application form at the application office (Sabeti 2020; Ensour 2020).

Religious affiliation does not appear on the card itself (DFAT 2020, p. 71).

3.4 Renewal and replacement of kart-e melli

The ID card must be renewed after seven years (NOCR, meeting 2015).

The card must also be renewed if it is damaged/worn, if the residential address is changed, or if an individual has changed personal information such as first name or last name in his/her shenasnameh. In the event of loss of card, a new one can also be issued (IRB 2013).

Landinfo has no specific information about which documentation requirements and procedures apply to having a kart-e melli renewed or replaced.

3.5 Issuing abroad

The Iranian Embassy in Norway no longer issues kart-e melli to Iranian citizens in Norway. Since fingerprints must be submitted to get issued with a kart-e melli, it is not possible to have the card issued via a proxy in Iran either (Iranian Embassy in Norway, telephone conversation June 2020).

Until about June 2019, the embassy issued the old version of kart-e melli, but not the smart card (Iranian Embassy in Norway, telephone call June 2020).

4 Passports

Iranian authorities issue ordinary passports, service passports and diplomatic passports. This report concerns ordinary passports only.

It is the Immigration and Passport Police who issues ordinary passports (Danish National ID Centre 2018, p. 3).

Since 1993, three versions of Iranian passports have been issued, with continuously improved security features. The Matiran Company (n.d.), which produces the passports, calls the first version of these, which was introduced in 1993, the A-series. In this series, the passport photo is pasted on a laminated, data-printed page with personal data. The passport also has fluorescent writing (Matiran Company n.d., p. 11).

The B-series was introduced in 2002, with the portrait photo printed onto the paper with an inkjet printer. The paper is laminated (Matiran Company n.d., p. 12).

The current version, the C-series (also referred to as the S-series), was introduced during the period 2012-2014. This version has a number of modern security features, including 3D watermark, invisible fibres, invisible text, laser perforation, security thread and a contactless computer chip. The passport is biometric and machine-readable in accordance with standard 9303 of the International Civil Aviation Organizations (ICAO) (Matiran Company n.d., p. 16; Danish National ID Centre 2018, p. 2).

NID refers to the three mentioned versions of Iranian passports respectively as the E-series (from unknown year), D-series (from 2002) and S-series (from 2014) (NID 2019a).

The passport in the C-/S-series is burgundy red and valid for five years. When the passport expires, its validity can be extended by a further five years (MFA n.d.b).

All Iranian passports issued after February 20, 2011, are biometric, according to the Australian DFAT (2020, p. 72).

4.1 Information in the passport

Passports in the C-/S-series contain the following information (DISCS n.d.b; DFAT 2020, p. 72):

- holder's signature and photo
- country of residence
- place of issue
- name and position/function of issuing authority
- passport type
- country code
- passport number
- national ID number
- holder's name
- father's name
- date and place of birth
- gender
- date of issue
- expiry date

The passport number follows the individual passport, i.e. it changes every time a citizen is issued with a new passport. However, the previous passport number is written into the last page of the new passport. The number is alphanumeric with one Latin letter followed by eight digits. On the personal data page, the passport number is written in Persian letters, without the first Latin letter (NID 2019a).

4.2 Application procedure in Iran

In order to be issued with a passport, applicants over the age of 18 must submit (Danish National ID Centre 2018, p. 3; The Danish Immigration Service et al. 2013, p. 71.):

- completed application form
- shenasnameh
- kart-e melli
- two passport photos

To obtain a regular passport valid for five years, male applicants of conscription age must also submit their military service completion or exemption card (U.S. Bureau of Consular Affairs n.d.). Those who have not completed military service, and have no exemption card, can, however, apply for permission to travel abroad for educational or medical purposes. For studies abroad the payment of a deposit is required (Danish Immigration Service et al. 2013, p. 70).

There are also other groups that need to acquire a specific exit permit and pay a deposit each time they travel abroad. These groups include (DFAT 2020, p. 69; legal source in Iran, e-mail December 2020):

- those employed in fields considered sensitive, or whose skills are in particular demand, such as employees of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation, military officers, employees of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the intelligence services
- those studying abroad – whether on government scholarships or privately funded

Once a passport application is submitted, the Immigration and Passport Police will compare the information in the supporting documents with registered information in NOCR's central database, i.e. the national register (The Danish Immigration Service et al. 2013, p. 71).

According to a legal source in Iran, those who need a specific exit permit each time they leave Iran, will be issued a passport valid for one journey only (e-mail December 2020). It is Landinfo's understanding that holders of ordinary passports with a five-year validity have the right to travel abroad as long as the passport is valid. Still, all nationals must pay an exit fee when departing Iran (DFAT 2020, p. 69).

4.2.1 Passports for children

All Iranian citizens can get their own passport. In the past, children would normally be written into the father's passport, and not receive an ordinary passport until they were 18 years old. However, around 2010, passport authorities introduced a change in practice which means that everyone, including children, now get their own passport. An exception is the youngest children, probably in the age group 0-2 years, but we do not know this for sure (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail April 2014).

However, the Passport Law has not been changed. This means that it is not illegal to enter children into the father's passport (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail April 2014).

For the issue of passports to children, the father or legal guardian must complete a written consent form (UNCHR 2010; Danish National ID Centre 2018, p. 3).

4.2.2 Passports for women

For a married woman in Iran to be issued with a passport, she must submit a written consent from her husband. For this, he must fill in the same form that is used when children receive their own passport (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail June 2019).

Unmarried women over the age of 18 do not need permission from their father or another guardian to get issued with passports or to travel abroad. This applies both in Iran and in foreign countries. However, some sources have stated the opposite. This misunderstanding seems to originate in a bill that was discussed in parliament in 2012, which would imply that unmarried, adult women had to obtain permission from the male guardian. The bill, however, was not adopted (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail June 2019).

4.3 Renewal and replacement of passports

Passports must be renewed in the following cases (MFA n.d.b-c):

- at the expiry date after five years
- if there are no blank pages left in the passport
- in the event of a name change or change of date of birth (the change must then be introduced in the shenasnameh)
- in case of significant wear

Landinfo does not have specific information about which documentation requirements apply for the renewal or replacement of a passport in Iran. However, we assume that applicants in all cases must present their shenasnameh.

We refer to Chapter 4.4 (especially 4.4.2 and 4.4.3) which deals with requirements abroad.

4.4 Application procedure from abroad

Iranian foreign service missions can issue passports to Iranian citizens, both first-time passports, separate passports for persons who have been entered in their father's passport, renewals of expired/damaged passports and replacements of lost passports (Danish National ID Centre 2018, p. 3; Econsulate n.d.g-k and m; MFA n.d.a-d).

According to the Danish National ID Centre, foreign service missions in countries with a large Iranian diaspora can personalize new passports on site. In countries where there are fewer Iranians, the passports are personalized in Iran and sent to the foreign service mission. Passports issued abroad will have the city of the embassy as the place of issue (Danish National ID Centre 2018, p. 3).

The issuing terms vary slightly depending on the status of the Iranian citizens in the country of residence. Econsulate presents separate procedures for Iranians with dual citizenship, Iranians with a residence permit based on asylum and Iranians with a permanent residence permit. In the application form, there is also a box for «Without residence permit», but the website has no descriptions of what is required in such cases (Econsulate n.d.).

4.4.1 General requirements for all passport applicants

Regardless of the applicant's residence status and what he or she is applying for (first-time passport, separate passport for a person accompanying them on a journey, renewal, replacement), there are some common requirements. First and foremost, Iranians must pre-register applications electronically.

Allegedly, this has been practiced since September 2019 for Iranians in Norway (Iranian Embassy in Norway 2019). Applicants must log onto the *clove system*, fill out the relevant forms, upload photos of required documentation and send it to the foreign service mission (MFA n.d.f). It is Landinfo's understanding that applicants must attend in person at the embassy to complete the application (MFA n.d.e).

The following documentation is required for all passport applicants (Econsulate n.d.g-k and m; MFA n.d.a-d):

- Original shenasnameh and two sets of copies of all pages (applicants over 15 years must have a photo in their shenasnameh).
- Copy of the kart-e melli ²⁰
- Three new passport photos (3x4 cm, showing full face, frontal view, without cap/hat or dark glasses, and women must wear full Islamic hijab).
- Receipt for a paid consular fee.
- Documentation of residence status in the country of residence.
- Completed application form for issuing of passport (form no. 721-1)²¹ - one or two copies. In addition to the usual personal data, the application form contains the following fields, to be filled in when relevant:
 - conscription status (completed/exempt/compulsory) (see Chapter 4.4.4)
 - personal data for spouse and children
 - occupation and job title for the last seven years

²⁰ The Iranian embassy in Norway no longer issues kart-e melli to Iranian citizens in Norway (see Chapter 3.5). The embassy has informed Landinfo that applicants lacking a kart-e melli can be issued with a passport if they can present a shenasnameh (telephone conversation October 2020).

²¹ It is somewhat unclear whether there is a separate form for issuing first-time passports, but we have not seen any indications of this.

- date and reason for the last departure from Iran, as well as which border crossing was used
- reason for and time period for the stay abroad
- residence status in foreign country (dual citizenship, residence based on asylum, permanent residence permit, no residence permit)
- in case of a lost/stolen passport – number of times, cause, place and date
- name, personal data, address and telephone number of three persons in Iran who know the applicant well
- address and telephone number in Iran
- address and telephone number abroad
- for students - name of place of study²²
- personal data for accompanying persons that may be registered in the new passport
- for those who have applied for asylum in the country of residence – field for a statement of regret (see Chapter 4.4.5)
- for those with foreign citizenship – field to confirm knowledge of the provisions of the Civil Code on Iranian citizenship (see Chapter 4.4.6)

Applicants who have been in Iran must document the date of the last legal departure from Iran. The exit stamp in the passport will be valid documentation. If an individual cannot document that the departure was legal, she/he must fill out a «form for examination and verification of the last legal departure from the country» (Econsulate n.d.o).

Applicants who have left Iran illegally must complete two forms: one for the investigation of the illegal exit, and one to get the exit approved (MFA n.d.a).

4.4.2 Additional requirements for renewal of passports

When renewing an expired or damaged passport, applicants must also attach the following (Econsulate n.d.j):

- Original current passport, copies of page 2-3 and of the page with a stamp for last legal departure from Iran. Those who cannot document the latest legal departure, must, as mentioned above, fill out a form for examination and verification of legal departure.
- If the passport is damaged: a detailed written statement in duplicate on how the passport has been damaged.

²² Additional information to be filled in here: start and – if applicable – completion date for the education abroad, last obtained degree, monthly expenses and sources of income, previous employment.

4.4.3 Additional requirements for replacement of lost passports

When replacing a lost passport, applicants must also attach (Econsulate n.d.k):

- Written declaration with a full explanation of how the passport disappeared (two copies).
- Description of the number of times, cause, place and date of when the passport was lost or stolen (separate field in a standard application form).
- Police report and confirmation from local police that the passport has been lost.
- If children and spouse are registered in the lost passport: their shenasnameh (original and two copies).

4.4.4 Additional requirements for men of conscription age

To obtain a passport, male applicants of conscription age must in principle attach a card showing completion of or exemption from military service, both in original and copy (MFA n.d.a-d; Econsulate n.d.h-i and m).²³

However, exceptions apply for persons who have lived abroad for a period. On certain conditions, they can be granted a specific exit stamp for conscripts, which means that they can travel to and from Iran a maximum of twice a year and stay there a total of three months each year (Econsulate n.d.n). According to the Iranian embassy in Norway (n.d.) the precondition is that they are either born abroad or have left Iran before reaching conscription age and have at least three consecutive years of residency abroad. Furthermore, applicants must change their permanent place of residence to the country in which they live, so that this can be entered as country of residence in the passport (Econsulate n.d.n; Embassy of Iran in Norway n.d.).²⁴

It has been common to purchase exemptions from military service by paying absence fines, but this scheme was allegedly discontinued in 2019 (DFAT 2020, p. 56; Iranian Embassy in the Netherlands n.d.)²⁵

²³ This is not mentioned in the procedures for issuing passports to persons with dual citizenship (Econsulate n.d.g).

²⁴ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA n.d.a) describes this exemption scheme somewhat differently.

²⁵ UK Home Office describes the procedures for paying absence fines in its latest report on military service in Iran (2020, pp. 20-21, 31-38). This information is taken from Iran's «interest section» at the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, D.C. However, the Home Office report also refers to information that the scheme has now been discontinued.

4.4.5 Additional requirements for applicants whose residence is based on asylum

Applicants whose residence permit is based on asylum must also submit a written statement explaining how they departed Iran, how they were granted asylum, and what their current situation/status is. This is done in a separate form (Econsulate n.d.i).

In the general application form, there is also a field where people who have applied for asylum, are required to give an apology. The person in question must tick off the following statement (Econsulate n.d.i):

The undersigned: ... while regretting having applied for asylum in my country of residence, requests to receive consular services from the Representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

4.4.6 Additional requirements for applicants with dual citizenship

Iran does not recognize dual citizenship. Iranians with another citizenship are still considered to be citizens of Iran and are required to use Iranian passports when entering and leaving Iran (Landinfo 2018, p. 2).

When applying for a passport, dual citizens must submit a copy of their foreign passport and apply to maintain their Iranian citizenship (separate form) (Econsulate n.d.g).

In the regular application form, reference is made to section 989 in the Iranian Civil Code, followed by a field in which applicants with foreign citizenship must confirm that they are aware of these legal provision (Econsulate n.d.g):

Article 989: For any Iranian citizen who has acquired foreign citizenship after 1280 [1901], without compliance with regulations, his foreign citizenship will be considered invalid and he will continue to be considered a citizen of Iran.

The undersigned: by confirming that I am informed of Article 989 of the Civil Code and of the maintenance of my Iranian citizenship, am applying for consular services from the Representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

4.4.7 Exit stamp for several exits or change of permanent residence

Iranian citizens abroad who have not registered a new foreign residential address with the Iranian authorities, are still considered to have their permanent residence in Iran. A person's permanent residence appears in the Iranian passport.

Iranians residing abroad who do not change place of residence to the country in which they live, need a special exit stamp in the passport to be able to enter and exit Iran several times. Passport applicants need to submit a separate application to get this permit. The permit only applies to Iranian citizens residing abroad and can only be issued by Iranian foreign service missions (MFA n.d.h). The exit stamp grants the right to exit Iran several times, provided that the stay in Iran has a duration of less than a year. If the stay exceeds one year, the Passport and Immigration Police must grant a specific exit permit (Econsulate n.d.l).

Iranians who change their place of permanent residence to a foreign address, and have this registered in their passport, do not need a specific exit stamp to be able to enter and exit Iran. To change the registered place of residence, a separate application must be submitted (Econsulate n.d.l and p).

4.4.8 Passports for children living abroad

Iranian foreign service missions require consent from the father to issue passports to persons under 18 years. A consent form can be downloaded from the Iranian Embassy website, and the father must deliver it in person. If the father is in Iran, he can deliver the consent form at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Iranian Embassy in Norway, telephone conversation July 2015).

If the child has previously been registered in the father's passport, this passport must be provided with the application. Copies of pages 2-3 and the pages showing the stamp for last legal departure from Iran and the stamp for a valid residence permit in the country of residence, must also be attached (Econsulate n.d.m).

4.4.9 Passports for women living abroad

In some cases, married Iranian women living abroad need a permit from their husband to obtain a passport. This depends on where they are registered as residents (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail June 2019):

- Married women whose foreign residential address is registered with Iranian authorities, do not need the husband's permission to get issued a passport. It will then be stated in the passport that the woman is domiciled abroad.
- Married women registered at an address in Iran must have the husband's permission to get issued with a passport. On the form that the husband must sign, he must tick for one or two foreign journeys or permanent consent.

Unmarried Iranian women over the age of 18 who live in Norway do not need a permit from their father or another guardian to obtain a passport or to travel abroad (see more about this in Chapter 4.2.2).

5 Marriage and divorce - registration and issuance of certificates

5.1 Procedures in Iran

To be legally valid, a marriage or divorce must be registered at special registration offices subject to the Ministry of Justice. According to the US Bureau of Consular Affairs (n.d), the English name for this government organization is the National Organization of Registration of Documents and Property.

Notary publics at these offices registers, signs and seals marriages/divorces and issues relevant certificates. This is done for both Muslims, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians (Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 31; US Bureau of Consular Affairs n.d.).

Marriage is also registered immediately in the couple's shenasnameh. For a divorce, however, it may take some time before the change in marital status is registered and shenasnameh is updated. The reason is that the couple has three months contemplation time after the ruling has been given by the family court (NOCR, meeting 2015). If the couple does not visit the registration office within three months, they must apply to the family court again and get a new, identical ruling (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail June 2018).

The registration offices will send updated marital status information to NOCR every fifteenth day (NOCR n.d.g, pp. 29-30; Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 31; US Bureau of Consular Affairs n.d.). Advances in the digitization of public services may have changed the way this is handled today, but Landinfo has no information about this.

According to US Bureau of Consular Affairs (n.d.), the following documentation is required to register a marriage and obtain a certificate:

- spouses' shenasnameh
- spouses' national ID card
- health certificate
- shenasnameh of the bride's father

The marriage certificate, *Sanad-e aghd / Sanad-e ezdevaj*, is a small, handwritten booklet with a red/burgundy cover (US Bureau of Consular Affairs n.d.).

Divorces are registered based on a ruling from the family court. If the parties are in Iran, they must appear in person in such a court (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, e-mail June 2018). We do not have specific information about which documents the couple must submit beyond the court ruling in order to register the

divorce with a notary public and get a divorce certificate issued. According to the US Bureau of Consular Affairs (n.d.) two witnesses must be present at the registration.

The divorce certificate, *Sanad-e Talaq*, is a small, handwritten booklet with a white cover (US Bureau of Consular Affairs n.d.).

5.2 Procedures abroad

5.2.1 Marriage registration at Iranian foreign service missions

Iranian citizens marrying abroad must visit the nearest foreign service mission to register the marriage in the Iranian national register (NOCR). The foreign service missions are required to send updates on marital status changes to NOCR every month (Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 31).

Econsulate (n.d.r) lists the following documentation requirements to register a marriage between two Iranian citizens:

- Completed registration form for marriage between Iranian citizens.
- Spouses' shenasnameh. If shenasnameh is a duplicate (replacement of lost document), an unmarried certificate must be submitted (this can be applied for via the foreign service mission).
- Spouses' passport (original and a copy of the passport photo page).
- Valid residence permit in the country of residence.
- Health certificate, with copy, which confirms that none of the spouses has diseases that prevent marriage.
- Marriage contract issued by an Islamic Centre or institution approved by the Iranian foreign service mission (original and two copies).
- Marriage certificate from the country of residence (original and two copies).
- Three new photos of the spouses (4x3 cm, showing full face, without hat or dark glasses, and the woman must wear a full Islamic hijab).
- Consent from the bride's father, if it is her first marriage. If the father lives abroad, the foreign service mission can assist in preparing a consent document. If he lives in Iran, a government office can help prepare a consent document.
- If the man is a widower, an original death certificate must be submitted for his late wife.
- If one of the spouses is previously divorced, and this is stated in shenasnameh, the original divorce certificate must be submitted.
- Receipt for a paid consular fee.

- Spouses' national ID card (copy)²⁶
- Visas for persons who have had their Iranian citizenship revoked.

5.2.2 Divorce registration at the Iranian Embassy in Norway

Iranian citizens who divorce while abroad can have their divorce registered in the national register in Iran via Iranian foreign service missions. This is stated in the Civil Registration Law (Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 31) and on the Econsulate websites (Econsulate n.d.s).

As a main rule, a divorce must be processed by an Iranian family court before it can be enforced in Iran and registered in the national register (Family Protection Bill 2011, art. 4, 16). The Iranian embassy in Norway (telephone conversations August 2020) states, however, that under certain conditions it is possible to register divorces that have not been processed in Iranian family courts, at the embassy. The parties must visit the embassy together and present the following documentation:

- A Norwegian divorce ruling from the [Norwegian] County Governor (separation is not sufficient). An official translation of this document must also be submitted.²⁷
- Documentation that an Islamic divorce was carried out by an Islamic Centre or an institution approved by the embassy.²⁸ The parties can obtain this from the Imam Ali Mosque in Oslo.

The divorce certificate from the Imam Ali Mosque must contain information about whether the parties agree on all aspects of the divorce, including financial settlement/dowry. If the parties do not agree on this, they can still choose to register the divorce at the embassy, provided both attend the embassy and agree about registering it. The parties can then, if a person wishes, take up the matter with an Iranian court later, for example, regarding an outstanding dowry. However, this will be a separate case unrelated to the divorce registration. The divorce can thus be registered independently of whether there is agreement on all financial matters, provided that both parties attend the embassy together (Iranian embassy in Norway, telephone conversations August 2020).

²⁶ The Iranian embassy in Norway no longer issues kart-e melli. See also footnote 20, which states that it is sufficient to submit a shenasnameh in order to be issued a passport abroad if you do not have kart-e melli. Landinfo assumes that the same applies when registering marriage and divorce.

²⁷ Econsulate (n.d.s) states that the foreign divorce ruling must be submitted in the original and two copies.

²⁸ Econsulate (n.d.s) states that the Islamic divorce certificate must be presented in the original and two copies.

Econsulate (n.d.s) also lists the following requirements for registering a divorce at foreign service missions:

- Both parties' shenasnameh (original), in which the marriage is registered.
- Valid documentation of the residence permit in the country of residence (original and copy).
- The original marriage certificate (original and copy).
- Both parties' national ID card (copy).²⁹
- Four new photos of both parties (4x3 cm, showing a full face, without a hat or dark glasses, and the woman must wear a full Islamic hijab).
- Receipt for a paid consular fee.

The embassy in Norway states (telephone conversations August 2020) that based on this documentation it will issue a divorce certificate and register the divorce in the shenasnamehs of both parties. The embassy also emphasizes that this practice has been in place for a long time and is in line with Iranian law. If, on the other hand, only one of the parties visits the embassy to get a divorce, and the other refuses, the person in question will be referred to take the matter up with an Iranian family court (Iranian embassy in Norway, telephone conversation August 2020).

An Iranian couple abroad can also file a divorce case in an Iranian court with the help of proxies. The Iranian embassy in Norway has stated that in such cases the parties must contact the embassy in order to obtain a certified power of attorney to the proxies in Iran. This also applies if one party is abroad; then the person who is in Iran attends in person, while the other is represented by a proxy. If the parties live in different countries, they should be able to go to the embassies concerned, which will certify their powers of attorney (Iranian Embassy in Norway, telephone conversation October 2014).

6 Death certificate

6.1 Registration of deaths and issuance of certificates in Iran

A death must be reported to one of NOCR's offices within ten days after it occurred (Civil Registration Law 1986, Article 22, 25; NOCR, meeting 2015).

The NOCR office registers the death in an archive document (*death document*) and issues a death certificate (NOCR n.d.j).

²⁹ See footnote 26.

Deaths can be reported (NOCR n.d.j) by:

- the deceased's closest relatives who were present when the death occurred
- another person who was present when the death occurred
- police officers
- proprietor or owner of the place where the death occurred
- officials of cemeteries
- judicial or military authorities
- relief workers

The registration of deaths requires the following documents (NOCR n.d.j):

- shenasnameh and kart-e melli (if available) of the deceased
- death notice stating the cause of death issued by a physician, hospital or officials of cemetery
- shenasnameh and kart-e melli to the person reporting the death

If there is no official death notice, two witnesses may appear at a NOCR office and record the death by submitting their shenasnameh (NOCR n.d.j).

Once the death has been registered, a death certificate can be issued in unlimited numbers to persons who apply for it, for a fee (NOCR n.d.j).

6.2 Registration of deaths abroad

To register the death of an Iranian citizen abroad, one must seek the nearest Iranian foreign service mission or one of the NOCR offices in Iran. Required documents are (GBIAIA n.d.):

- The shenasnameh and kart-e melli of the deceased «if they have been stamped». ³⁰
- Death notice from the country of residence (original and copy) approved by the Iranian foreign ministry service at that location.
- Certificate proving that the death has not been previously registered, issued by the local Iranian foreign service mission. ³¹

A consular fee must also be paid.

Once the death has been registered, a death certificate can be issued to persons who apply for it, provided that the person either submit the deceased's

³⁰ It is unclear what is meant by this.

³¹ This is the wording of the original English text: "A certificate evidencing death non-registration issued by the agency of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the deceased's place of residence".

shenasnameh or the registration number and date of registration of the death. The certificate can be issued in an unlimited number, for a fee (GBIAIA n.d.).

7 Consular services for regime critics

The extent to which the Iranian embassy in Norway provides consular services to regime critics is a question Landinfo has been asked by Norwegian immigration authorities. We have received information from a former Iranian diplomat (conversation August 2010) and exiled Iranians in Norway about this.

The former diplomat stated in 2010 that the embassy complied with their obligations to issue passports and ID papers to Iranian citizens in Norway, including political opponents. If the authorities had outstanding matters concerning an Iranian exile, they would still issue a passport to the person in question. The source pointed out, however, that a person with such a profile would risk being arrested and questioned in Iran.

This does not mean that the embassy provides consular services unconditionally to Iranians who have taken part in regime-critical activity. Over the years, exiled Iranians have told Landinfo that they have been asked about their social environment or about family members – both in Norway and possibly in Iran. Others have been asked if they come voluntarily, or if they had been pressured by the Norwegian immigration authorities to apply for Iranian passports. According to these sources, applicants responding that they have been forced, have been denied issuance of passports.

As mentioned above (Chapter 4.4.5), Iranians who apply for passports must also state their residence status in Norway. If their residence is based on an asylum status, they must sign a statement that they regret having applied for asylum abroad. This is a condition for obtaining a new passport (Econsulate n.d.i; Folkvord 2010).

8 Reliability of Iranian documents

With the introduction of the latest versions of the shenasnameh, kart-e melli and passport, the reliability of Iranian ID documents has been significantly improved. These documents have far more advanced security features than previous versions and are thus more difficult to falsify and manipulate. At the same time, the old versions of the shenasnameh and kart-e melli are still in use, and it is unclear to what extent they will be approved today as breeder documents for issuing passports.

To assess the reliability of Iranian ID documents, it is important to look at issuance procedures. The extent of corruption is one indicator, and the degree of control routines to ensure that ID documents contain correct personal data, is another. The next two chapters present the information we have about these indicators, whereas the last chapter deals with the availability of forged documents.

8.1 Corruption

Corruption is considered widespread in Iran. At Transparency International's Corruption Index for 2019, the country ranks 146th out of a total of 180 countries,³² and the trend is declining. The country scores 26 points out of a total of 100 on Transparency's corruption scale, where 0 is very corrupt and 100 indicates very little corrupt (Transparency International 2019).³³

Several laws criminalize various forms of corruption, both in the public and the private sector. Sources point out, however, that these laws are enforced ineffectively and arbitrarily, and that impunity is pervasive (GAN 2017; US Department of State 2020, p. 36).

The payment of bribes is said to be relatively common at many levels of the government sector, and officials often expect an informal payment to offer routine services (GAN Integrity 2017). Landinfo has little concrete information about how widespread this is in offices issuing passports and ID documents. Moreover, this kind of corruption does not necessarily mean that the actual content of the documents can be manipulated.

According to the Norwegian National ID Centre (NID), however, there may be some irregularities when a replacement document is issued for a lost shenasnameh. These duplicate ID booklets should have specific characteristics that they sometimes lack. NID does not conclude whether this may be caused by manipulation through the payment of bribes as well as a lack of control routines (NID 2019b and e-mail April 2020 – this is further detailed in Chapter 8.2.).

The Australian DFAT (2020) on their part, point out that the financial and other criminal consequences (including imprisonment) of aiding and abetting forgery constitute a major deterrent. DFAT does not rule out the possibility that corruption may occur when ID documents are issued but does not assess it to be

³² Transparency International's corruption index ranks countries by prevalence of corruption in the public sector. The indexation is based on perceptions of public corruption, which is obtained from a wide range of the population in the country in question. Country 180 is perceived to be the most corrupt.

³³ In comparison, Turkey scores 39 on this scale, Lebanon 29, Iraq 20, Syria 16 and Yemen 13 (Transparency International 2019).

widespread. In their opinion, the chances of obtaining a genuine passport through fraudulent means are low (DFAT 2020, p. 72).

8.2 Control routines for issuance of documents

As mentioned in Chapter 4, passport applicants must submit the shenasnameh and the kart-e melli to obtain a passport. The passport offices will then check the information in the breeder documents against information in the national register (Danish Immigration Service et al. 2013, p. 71). From 1989, local databases were established for population registration in the provinces, while NOCR's central database is said to have been established in 1997. All living and deceased persons in Iran and Iranians abroad must be registered in this database (NID 2016c).

NOCR's database also contains a digitized archive of old ID documents. In 2015, NOCR completed a long-standing project in which 130 million birth and death certificates were scanned and stored electronically (Samadi 2017, p. 36). Moreover, NOCR has had a national registration system for about 100 years (NOCR, meeting 2015).

The current system of birth registration and the initial issuing of a shenasnameh appears to be reliable. Almost 100% of all childbirths are now said to be registered, although in the provinces of Baluchistan and Sistan some Iranian citizens (Balochs) are still lacking shenasnamehs and registration (see discussion in Chapter 2.1). As was seen in Chapter 2, both family and the hospital/Ministry of Health notify the NOCR of child births. Furthermore, parents must submit their shenasnameh for the child to be registered and have its own ID booklet issued. When a birth is registered, the parents' shenasnamehs and civil status information in the national register is updated (NID 2016c).

Nevertheless, some routine failures have been reported. NID mentions cases where only the parents' first names have been registered in the child's shenasnameh. In such cases the shenasnameh cannot confirm whether two or more persons are siblings (NID 2019b).

When a duplicate shenasnameh is issued, the document sometimes gets incorrect and incomplete information (NID, e-mail April 2020). For example, information about marriage and divorce may be changed or omitted in the duplicate shenasnameh, as it is possible to withhold information about changes in marital status (NID 2019b; NID e-mail April 2020).

Furthermore, a replacement shenasnameh should have a duplicate stamp and a new date of issue. However, NID points out that these characteristics are sometimes omitted during printing. The document will then appear to be a first-time issuance. NID emphasizes that the scope of this practice is uncertain (NID, e-mail April 2020).

Finally, NID points out that some registry offices still make corrections and changes in shenasnamehs by hand, even in the latest version of the document. Information about marital status and children should be entered by inkjet printer, but such additions are still sometimes made by hand, since not all NOCR offices necessarily follow issuing and control procedures literally (NID, e-mail April 2020).

Regarding the kart-e melli, the central NOCR office in Tehran is supposed to conduct a digital and manual control of all personalized cards (NID 2016a). During the digital control, personal information should be checked against NOCR's central database. NID has no information about what control routines are carried out at the office where applications for a kart-e melli is submitted (NID 2016a).

8.3 Forged documents

Iranian ID documents have advanced security features: The passport is biometric, the kart-e melli contains computer chip and biometrics, while the shenasnameh is of passport quality, where changes should be entered using an inkjet printer. Because of these features, fake documents will be easy to reveal. According to the Australian DFAT (2020, p. 73), document forgery is now considered very difficult, and beyond the technical and financial means of most Iranians.

There is generally little information to be found about the use of forged documents in Iran. In 2016, however, International Business Times reported (as reproduced in DFAT 2018, p. 51) that a person had been arrested in Thailand for selling fake passports to people from Iran, Iraq and Syria. The passports were said to have been used for travelling to Europe. It is not clear from the news report whether in fact fake *Iranian* passports had been sold to Iranians.

As the old versions of shenasnameh and kart-e melli are still in use and are far easier to manipulate, we must also consider that there may be counterfeit versions of these documents in circulation.

DFAT (2020, p. 73) also highlight other types of official documents for which it is easier to obtain counterfeit copies, such as military exemption cards and paper-based court documents. At the same time, DFAT emphasizes that it can be costly to acquire some of them:

“Secondary forms of documentation like military exemption cards are technically more vulnerable to fraud, as they have less robust security features, but are expensive to obtain. Paper-based documents, including court documents, summonses, bank letters, real estate documents and tertiary certificates, are relatively easier to obtain through fraudulent means.” [In English in the original]

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