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2 August 2023

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Lebanon: Passports, including their content, appearance and security features; requirements and procedures for obtaining them in Lebanon and abroad; samples (2021–July 2023)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Overview

Sources indicate that the Lebanese passport is issued by the General Directorate of General Security (GDGS) (Australia 2023-06-26, para. 5.38; Lebanon n.d.a) or the Bureau of Public Relations, Nationality and Passports Office (US n.d.). Thales, a multinational company headquartered in Paris that operates in the digital identity and security sphere (*Forbes* n.d.), and which supports "more than 30 electronic passport programs," states that Thales "contribute[s] to the Lebanese biometric passport program" by "deliver[ing] ePassports" and "[i]ssuance solution" (Thales n.d.).

Sources report that in April 2022 Lebanese authorities stopped renewing passports (Al Jazeera 2022-04-29; AFP 2022-04-29). Sources indicate that the authorities explained that they were unable to meet the demand (Al Jazeera 2022-04-29; Al Arabiya 2022-05-11) or that the heightened demand for passports have "'affected available passport stocks'" (AFP 2022-04-29). *L'Orient Today*, an English-language news service that "aims to examine the failure of the Lebanese system and to hold political and economic powerbrokers accountable" (*L'Orient Today* n.d.), reports that the GDGS announced the resumption of passport issuance starting on 17 January 2023 after a "hiatus of 'several months'" (*L'Orient Today* 2023-01-16).

2. Content, Appearance and Security Features

Thales indicates that in 2017 the first Lebanon biometric passports were issued to members of parliament (Thales n.d.). According to a country information report on Lebanon by the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), since August 2016 "all" passports issued by the GDGS have been biometric, "although non-biometric passports remain valid until their expiry date" (Australia 2023-06-26, para. 5.39). Thale notes that "[t]he Lebanese ePassport incorporates additional visual security features and electronic layers, ensuring it

adheres to the highest ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) and ISO (International Standard Organization) standards and protects against fraud and counterfeiting" (Thales n.d.). According to the same source, the Lebanese biometric passport "incorporates a microprocessor which embeds photographic and biometric data such as fingerprints to enable verification of the holder's identity" and the enrollment process includes capturing ten fingerprints and the iris (Thales n.d.).

The DFAT report notes the following:

The new biometric passports are navy blue, with the Lebanese Cedar emblazoned in the centre of the front cover. "The Lebanese Republic, Passport" is written on the cover page in Arabic, English, and French. The passports include the following data: photograph of holder, full name, date of birth, sex, place of birth, date of issue, authority, and holder's signature. Passports are issued for five or ten years, depending on the applicant's preference. (Australia 2023-06-26, para. 5.39)

EU's Public Register of Authentic Identity and Travel and Identity Documents Online (PRADO) describes the characteristics of the ordinary passport as follows:

- Date of first issuance: 15 August 2016
- Overall colour: blue
- Overall construction: single booklet
- Format: width of 88 mm and height of 125 mm
- Number of pages: 48
- Maximum validity: 5 years
- Security features: UV features, numbering, printing techniques, substrate, watermarks, biographical data, and facial image (EU 2021-07-01a).

A sample of the ordinary passport is available on the PRADO website (EU 2021-07-01a).

PRADO describes the characteristics of the diplomatic passport as follows:

- Date of first issuance: 17 August 2017
- Overall colour: red

- Overall construction: single booklet
- Format: width of 88 mm and height of 125 mm
- Number of pages: 48
- Validity: 1 year or 5 years
- Security features: UV features, substrate, laminates, watermarks, biographical data, facial image, and printing techniques (EU 2021-07-01b).

A sample of the diplomatic passport is available on the PRADO website (EU 2021-07-01b). According to PRADO, there is another version of the diplomatic passport with a blue cover, which was issued for the first time on 1 January 2016; this version of the diplomatic passport is also available on the PRADO website (EU 2021-07-01c).

PRADO describes the characteristics of the special passport as follows:

- Date of first issuance: 17 August 2017
- Overall colour: green
- Overall construction: single booklet
- Format: width of 88 mm and height of 125 mm
- Number of pages: 48
- Maximum validity: 5 years
- Security features: UV features, numbering, printing techniques, substrate, laminates, bindings, watermarks, biographical data, and facial images (EU 2021-07-01d).

A sample of the special passport is available on the PRADO website (EU 2021-07-01d).

PRADO describes the characteristics of the service passport as follows:

- Date of first issuance: 17 August 2017
- Overall colour: grey
- Overall construction: single booklet
- Format: width of 88 mm and height of 125 mm
- Number of pages: 48
- Validity: 1 year or 5 years
- Security features: UV features, printing techniques, laminate, bindings, watermarks, biographical data, and facial images (EU 2021-07-01e)

A sample of the service passport is available on the PRADO website (EU 2021-07-01e). According to PRADO, there is another version of the service passport with a black cover, which was issued for the first time on 1 January 2016; this version of the service passport is also available on the PRADO website (EU 2021-07-01f).

3. Requirements and Procedures to Obtain a New Lebanese Passport or to Renew a Lebanese Passport

3.1 In Lebanon

The GDGS website states that Lebanese citizens applying for a new passport or renewing their passport "should show up personally at the competent regional center of general security, according to their place of residence, having in hand an application that's been filled [out], and certified by the competent mayor" (Lebanon n.d.b).

Concerning the requirement for minors, the GDGS website states the following:

Minors aged 7 years or younger have to accompany their parents to the mayor's office, but don't have to show up at the general security center. Both parents should sign a letter of consent at the mayor's office, and convey their request to the general security. One of the parents can go on his own to the general security office, if the other parent signed the letter at the mayor's office.

Minors aged between 7 and 15 years old, have to show up at the general security [office] with their parents. Both parents should sign a letter of consent at the mayor's office, and convey their request to the general security. One of the parent[']s can go on [their] own to the general security office, if the other parent signed the letter at the mayor's office. (Lebanon n.d.b)

The GDGS website indicates that the following types of individuals are exempt from the requirement to apply in person:

The individuals [that are] paralyzed or sick that are unable to leave their place of residence, or the hospital, are exempted from this requirement, but a written request has to be provided by the concerned citizen, or his parents, or the directory of the association in charge of the individual in question. A medical report issued by the competent doctor or the concerned hospital is also required. This request is addressed to the general director of general security. The latter takes a decision on the subject, if he agrees, digital fingerprints of the concerned citizen are taken, and his passport is issued. (Lebanon n.d.b)

According to the GDGS website, applicants must present the following documents when applying for a biometric passport:

- Completed application for passports format A4 (1 year, 3, 5 & 10 years) issued by the mayor in the place of residence.
- Lebanese ID card or/and an extract of civil status (whether the Lebanese citizen is applying for the 1st time for a biometric passport or not).
- A new colored photo ID photo taken against a white background, 4.5 by 3.5, on which the name of the individual appears, as well as the number and place of registered residence, signed and certified by the mayor.
- The old passport if the latter is available, as well as a copy of the pages that are not empty.
- The fees related to the application.
- When it comes to members of the general security, whether active or retired, and the applications sent by their families, they can hand out only one document of identification (identity card, or extract of individual civil status, which dates back to one year at the most).
- Minors aged 3 years and less are granted a passport (1 year, 3, 5 & 10 years) based on the extract of civil status issued 3 months ago at the most, a copy of the latter, and the above-mentioned documents. The authorization of the parents or the legal guardian is also requested (Lebanon n.d.c).

The US Department of State's Reciprocity Schedule describes the procedure for obtaining Lebanese passport as follows:

[t]he applications will be received at the bureau of public relations or any passport agency office, as well as all regional bureaus except the following: Babnin and Chabaa. Citizens that live in one of these areas, should deposit [their] applications in the nearest functional bureau (US n.d.).

Regarding fees required for a biometric passport, the GDGS notes the following:

- Passport valid for 5 years: 1,000,000 Lebanese pounds (LBP) [C\$87]
- Passport valid for 10 years: 2,000,000 LBP [C\$175]
- First class [1] passport valid for 5 years: 10,000,000 LBP [C\$874]
- Second class passport valid for 5 years: 8,000,000 LBP [C\$699]
- First class passport valid for 10 years: 22,000,000 LBP [C\$1,923]
- Second class passport valid for 10 years: 12,000,000 LBP [C\$1,050] (Lebanon n.d.c).

According to the same source, an additional fee of 4,900,000 LBP [C\$429] is required to receive the passport "immediately"; in this case, the applicant must apply to the Department of Public Relations of the GDGS (Lebanon n.d.c). The US Reciprocity Schedule indicates that "[f]ees vary depending on length of validity: [US]\$40 for one year and [US]\$200 for five years" (US n.d.).

The GDGS indicates the following procedures to retrieve an archived passport:

- The passport is given to the concerned party after matching his biometric prints to the ones collected and stored in the system. Minors are not allowed to retrieve their passports.
- Minors aged 15 or less are exempted from showing up during the retrieval of their passport.
- People with disabilities or sicknesses that prevent them from showing up, as well as patients in hospitals can draft a written request asking that their relative or the director of the institution that is taking care of him,

retrieves their passport. They also need to hand in a medical report explaining the medical cited case.

- Special cases are reviewed by the general director.
- The completed passports are handed [out by] all GS bureaus to the concerned citizen during the weekdays (including Saturday and even on public holidays), except on **Sundays**. The retrieval of the passport is possible during work hours. (Lebanon n.d.d, emphasis in original)

Information on processing times could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3.2 Abroad

The website of the Embassy of Lebanon in Ottawa indicates that for biometric passports, adults are "[o]nly" permitted to apply for the passport valid for ten years and minors for the passport valid for five years; for regular passports, "[o]nly" a "[o]ne time" renewal of one year is allowed for a "current" passport (Lebanon n.d.e). According to the same source, the procedure to apply for a new passport is as follows:

1. Complete [the passport form]

Complete the serially encoded [passport] form issued to the Embassy by the [GDGS] in Lebanon. This procedure also includes providing us with the signature and fingerprint of the concerned person at the Embassy in front of the Consular Officer at the time of the application. In case you reside outside of Ottawa, you need to send the Embassy your full address (by fax or e-mail) in order to receive the serially coded [passport] form, then you should fill out the [passport] [a]pplication & the mandatory [f]amily file update form and remit all documents upon completion to the Embassy [via] Canada Post.

In addition to this, the Embassy can either provide you with the serially coded [passport] form directly or forward you to an honorary consul or an Arabic speaking [n]otary [p]ublic near you who already possess[es] this form at their office.

When filling out this form at a notary public or an honorary consul, fill out only the name section then affix your right thumb-print and sign the application in front of

the notary public or an honorary consul on the designated areas of the serially coded [passport] form.

...

2. ... [T]he passport[t] form

The passport form has a computer number and can not be photocopied or even printed and must be filled with a blue ballpoint pen. ...

3. Requested documents (to be added to the form)

- a. Recent extract of individual registration [civil status] "Ikhraj Kayd Fardy" (date of issuance does not exceed 5 years) or a photocopy [o]f the Lebanese ID (new one, computerized) or a photocopy of passport of the person issued in Lebanon after the year 1990.
- b. A copy of the passport that the applicant intends to replace.
- c. Two recent colour photos ([s]ize 4,3 x 3,5 cm not drawn from another photos) showing full details of the face with a white background.
- d. The amount of:
 - \$72 CAD for one year
 - \$360 CAD for five years
 - \$720 for 10 years (Biometric only). (Lebanon n.d.e)

The same source also describes the following procedure to renew a "regular" passport:

- I. Fill out and stamp your right thumb on 1 identification card at the Embassy in front of the Consular Officer. In case you reside outside of Ottawa you need to send a self-addressed stamped envelope and the Embassy will mail you 1 identification card. You should stamp your right thumb in front of a Notary Public or an honorary consul.
- II. Proof of [s]tatus in Canada ([i.e.] valid PR Card or Citizenship Card). (Lebanon n.d.e)

Additionally, the same source indicates the following procedure to renew a biometric "blue" passport:

Fill out a [p]assport [a]pplication [f]orm and present it to the Embassy with the following documents:

1. Actual passport with 1 photocopy of the first two pages.
2. Recent Personal civil registration "Ikhraj Kayd Fardy" or the new Lebanese ID "Hawiya" with 2 photocopies.
3. 1 fingerprinted identification card.
4. Three recent colour photos ([s]ize 4,3 x 3,5 cm not drawn from another photos) showing full details of the face with a white background.
5. **For minors under 18 years of age**, a consent letter to issue a passport or a visa is required from both parents [a]uthorizing the child to obtain a passport.
In person: at the Embassy in front of the Consular Officer.
By mail: in front of a notary public.
6. The amount of **\$72** CAD for one year, or **\$360** CAD for five years, or **\$720** for 10 years (Biometric only).
In person: Cash.
By mail: Money order or certified cheque payable to the Embassy of Lebanon. (Lebanon n.d.e, bold in original)

4. Requirements and Procedure to Replace a Lost or Stolen Lebanese Passport

4.1 In Lebanon

The GDGS website describes the following procedures for the replacement of a lost passport:

Citizens must declare the loss of their passport in person at a regional office of general security, having in hand documents of identification[.]

If the citizen is a minor, his legal guardian must declare the loss, having in hand documents of identification that underline his appointment as a legal guardian. If the minor is aged 15 years or [more], his presence is a must, in such as case.

If the concerned party is a public figure whether political, spiritual, or a military entity, the declaration can be made by an appointed delegate, having in hand an authorization issued by the Operation Room.
(Lebanon n.d.f)

Concerning a stolen passport, the same source states that in addition to the following the same procedure to replace a lost passport, "[a] certified copy of the investigation report done by the ISF [Internal Security Forces]" is also required (Lebanon n.d.f).

4.2. Abroad

The website of the Embassy of Lebanon in Ottawa describes the following procedure to replace a lost passport:

1. **The new passport application process applies.**
Please refer to previous section " Getting a new Passport[.]"
2. The loss of a passport should be reported immediately to the **local police that will issue a police report.**
3. The Embassy can issue a new passport replacing the lost one only after authorization from the Directorate of General Security.
4. **Requested documents (to be added to the form):**
 - a. Original police report.
 - b. A photocopy of the lost passport (better if available).
 - c. An extract of family civil registration.
 - d. An extract of individual registration or the new I.D. card (computerized).
 - e. Fill out the form of a new passport in the same manner as paragraph I and amend article (h) only by putting an x at the proper place (Replace or lost passport).
 - f. Three recent colour photos ([s]ize 4,3 x 3,5 cm not drawn from another photos) showing full details of the face with a white background.

- g. The amount of **\$72** CAD for one year, or **\$360** CAD for five years, or **\$720** for 10 years (Biometric only).
- **In person:** Cash.
 - **By mail:** Money order or certified cheque payable to the Embassy of Lebanon. (Lebanon n.d.e, emphasis in original)

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Note

[1] Without providing further detail, *L'Orient Today* indicates that the "only difference" of the first class passport is having a "special number" (*L'Orient Today* 2023-05-12).

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Internet sites, including: Atlantic Council; *The Daily Star*; International Institute for Strategic Studies; Megaphone; National Public Radio; Triangle; UN – Refworld; Voice of America; *The Washington Post*.

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