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Algeria: The Civil Registration System

Introduction

The following note introduces elements of the Algerian civil registration system, starting with a brief overview of the Algerian population registration, followed by a description of some of the databases employed by the Algerian administration. It then offers a short account of three Algerian identity documents; passport, ID card and drivers' licence.

This note is based on interviews with Algerian authorities, conducted in Algiers in June 2023.

Population registration

Starting in 2009, Algeria have digitalised their civil records.¹ In this process, all citizens were assigned a national number. Today, all births are automatically and digitalised registered and ID numbers are issued at birth.²

Since 2010, Algeria have also conducted biometric registration of their citizens.³ They have used the data from the digitalised civil records as a base for a biometric ID database.⁴

Act of birth 12S

Act of birth 12S is a document which was used to enrol citizens in the biometric ID database. Every Algeria citizen was tasked with filling out a form with detailed information about his or her date of birth, residential address, education etc.⁵ The 12S was also used in connection with biometric passports issuance.⁶

¹ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023.

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023; National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023; National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023; National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023.

The act of birth 12S is not used inside of Algeria any longer. It is still used abroad as embassies do not have access to the biometric ID database and because not all Algerians residing abroad are enrolled in the biometric ID database.⁷

Databases

The Algerian civil registration system relies on at least two databases. The two addressed in this note are the digitalised civil registry database, and the biometric ID database.

The digitalised civil registry database has 72 million persons registered. Algeria currently has a population of 43 million. The number of registered persons is higher than the number of citizens because they have also digitalised the records of deceased citizens. The civil registry database holds records of birth, death and marriage, and is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior.⁸

The biometric ID database stores all fingerprints and facial photos taken for all Algerian identity documents. All Algerian passports and ID cards contain a facial photo. Fingerprints are not obtained before the age of 12.⁹ The biometric data is stored with the National Biometric Institute, which has two centres, one of which is located in Algiers. The other centre is located in Laghouat. The two centres exchange information in real time.¹⁰

The National Biometric Centre, which is the responsible authority for the biometric Database, emphasised that all identities in the ID database are linked to a fingerprint. There are only a few exceptions where a person can be registered in the database without having their fingerprints taken. This could be high age or disease. Moreover, when a new document is issued and a new fingerprint is registered in the database, the fingerprint is checked against previous entries to avoid double registration.¹¹

The Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the missions abroad, have access to the civil registry database. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs including the missions abroad do not have access to the ID database.¹²

Foreigners residing in Algeria are registered in a separate database.¹³

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023.

⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023; National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

⁹ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

¹⁰ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

¹¹ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023.

¹³ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

Identity documents

All Algerian citizens can have an ID card or passport issued regardless of age.¹⁴

Passport

Biometric Algerian passports has either 28 or 48 pages.¹⁵

An Algerian citizen can be eligible for a service passport, if they are employed in a ministry, which is not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In that case, a request is made from ministry of the employee to Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The law defines who is eligible for a diplomatic passport.¹⁶

ID card

The validity of the ID card is 5 years for applicants under the age of 19 and 10 years for applicants above the age of 19.¹⁷

There is no age limitation for having an ID cards issued, but children will need to present an ID card when they take the national exam. This typically occurs between the age of 12 and 14.¹⁸

Drivers licence

The Algerian driver's license is biometric. It is produced at the National Biometric Institute.¹⁹

Issuance of passport abroad

If you are Algerian citizen residing abroad, you can make a request to an embassy to have a passport issued. The embassy will forward the request to the relevant authority in Algeria from where the passport is issued. Embassies are not authorised to issue ID cards and passports.²⁰

¹⁴ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

¹⁵ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

¹⁶ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

¹⁷ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, June 2023.

¹⁹ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

²⁰ National Biometric Institute, Algiers, June 2023.

References

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