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Palestine: Birth registration and issuance of birth certificates

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Introduction

The following note describes the procedure for birth registration and issuance of birth certificates in the West Bank and Gaza. The note contains a short description of the Palestinian civil registry, the procedure for registration of a birth and the issuance procedure for the birth certificate. Furthermore, the note describes late registration of a birth and issuance procedure of an original copy of a birth certificate. The note also includes a short description of how children born abroad can be registered in the Palestinian civil registry.

The note is primarily based on interviews with Palestinian authorities and international organisations in Jerusalem and Ramallah in September 2019 and is one out of several notes published by the Danish National ID Centre focusing on Palestinian documents.

The Palestinian civil registry

In connection with the Oslo Accords in 1995, the Palestinian National Authority (PA) took over the administration of the Palestinian civil registry from Israel. In the beginning, the PA could only make changes in the registry, but since 2000, the PA has been allowed to register births and deaths and issue ID documents to Palestinians who are registered in the civil registry. Israel keeps a copy of the Palestinian registry and they receive information about updates in the Palestinian system. The PA cannot approve family reunifications or issue ID documents to persons who are not in the Palestinian civil registry, with exception of the 00-passport and ID cards to persons without a national number.¹

A Palestinian citizen receives an ID number when he/she is registered at birth (or later). The ID number is written on the ID card and on all other ID documents issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Interior, for instance the birth certificate.²

¹ Migrationsverket, Lifos, 15 October 2019, p. 22-33.

² Ministry of Interior, October 2019.

The Palestinian civil registry contains personal information such as: first name, last name, name of father, name of mother, name of grandfather on the father's side, date of birth, sex, religion, place and date of issuance of ID card, address, civil status, name and ID number of spouse and children.³

Palestinians are either registered as residents in the West Bank, East Jerusalem or Gaza. Registrations cannot be changed to another area without Israeli approval.⁴

Civil law in the West Bank and Gaza

Due to the Egyptian control of Gaza in the period 1948-1967, the Egyptian Law of Family Rights (1954) is applied in cases regarding matters of family law for the Muslim population in Gaza. Similarly, due to Jordanian control of the West Bank in the period 1948-1967, the Jordanian Law of Personal Status (1976) is applied in cases regarding matters of family law for the Muslim population in the West Bank. Recognised ecclesiastical societies have their own set of family law.⁵

Administrative structure in the West Bank and Gaza

There are 14 local directorates in the West Bank under the Ministry of Interior (Mol) plus a central civil registration unit in Ramallah.⁶ Hence, in Ramallah exist both the central civil registration unit and the local directorate of Ramallah. There are five local directorates in Gaza. Every local directorate is divided into six departments: civil status affairs, passports, administrative affairs, NGO and public affairs, policy and tribal law.⁷

All of the local civil status departments in the West Bank and Gaza have access to a digital database. Before 2007, there one database, but after the administrative split between the West Bank and Gaza in 2007, the database was separated into two separate systems; one in Gaza and one in the West Bank. There is no link between the two systems. Information stored in the database before 2007 appears in both databases, but information stored after 2007 is only stored locally in either the West Bank or Gaza.⁸

Birth registration

According to the Civil Status Law (1999, amended in 2009) birth registration is mandatory.⁹

³ Migrationsverket, Lifos, 15 October 2019, p. 22.

⁴ Migrationsverket, Lifos, 15 October 2019, p. 22.

⁵ Migrationsverket, Lifos, 15 October 2009, p. 19.

⁶ The 14 directorates in the West Bank are Jenin, Qalqilya, Tulkarm, Nablus, Tubas, Salfit, Ramallah, Ram, Jericho, Abu Dis, Bethlehem, North Hebron/Halhoul, Hebron, South Hebron/Dora.

⁷ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

⁸ Ministry of Interior, December 2019.

⁹ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

Within 10 days after the child is born, the birth must be registered. After 10 up until 30 days the penalty fee for late registration is three Jordanian dinars. From 31 to 90 days the penalty fee is five dinars and from 91 days up until one year the fee is ten dinars. After one year the penalty fee is 20 Jordanian dinars.

If the birth is registered within ten days, it is free of charge to have a birth certificate issued and to change the paper slip that is connected to the parents ID card and shows which family the cardholder belongs to, including his/her children.¹⁰

Approximately 99 % of Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza are registered before the age of five years.¹¹

Registration procedure

A parent who wishes to register a birth, must bring a birth notification from the hospital where the birth took place and a copy of his/her ID card to the nearest civil registration office. The registration can, however, also take place elsewhere than the area where the child was born.¹²

If the birth took place at home, the parent must bring a birth notification from a doctor or midwife licensed by the Ministry of Health. If the birth took place in a remote area, the parent must bring a birth notification from a licensed nurse as well as two witnesses.¹³

Persons entitled to register the birth

According to the Civil Status Law, those entitled to register a birth are:

- One of the parents of the child provided that their marital status has been amended in the population register.
- Those who attended the birth and who are adult relatives of the child.
- Hospital administrators, social welfare directors, prisons and midwives. These are only accepted if the previous categories are not available.¹⁴

According to the Ministry of Interior, the birth registration can be done by either the father or the mother, and if both parents are deceased, a person related to the child and who was present at the birth. A licensed doctor or the director of hospital can also register the birth.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

¹¹ UNICEF, July 2018.

¹² Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

¹³ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

¹⁴ Ministry of Interior, October 2019.

¹⁵ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

The birth notification form

The birth notification form is issued in three copies: a yellow copy, which is for the parents, a pink copy for the hospital or licensed doctor and a white copy for the Ministry of Interior. All copies are signed and stamped by the hospital or licensed doctor who fills out the notification. The copy for the Ministry of Interior archive and the copy to the parents are also signed and stamped by the Ministry of Interior. On the birth notification form is pre-printed an ID number which the person receives when the birth is registered.

The image shows three stacked birth notification forms, each with a different background color: yellow (top), pink (middle), and green (bottom). Each form is headed by the text 'دولة فلسطين' (State of Palestine) and 'وزارة الداخلية' (Ministry of Interior). The forms are labeled as follows: 'نسخة وزارة الداخلية' (Ministry of Interior copy), 'نسخة وزارة الصحة' (Ministry of Health copy), and 'نسخة الأهل' (Parents' copy). Each form contains a pre-printed ID number '437778012' and a field for 'رقم هوية المولود' (Child's ID number). The forms are signed and stamped by the Ministry of Interior.

Image 1: Top section of three birth notification forms equalizing one birth registration. Sample issued by the Ministry of Interior, Ramallah September 2019 (NIDC reference material).

The books with birth notification forms each contain 25 x 3 forms with a unique ID number for every fourth document, equalizing 25 birth registrations. The same unique pre-printed ID number appears on three following forms. Each book also has a serial number on the front related to the printing company. The books are printed in Nablus and Ramallah and are distributed by the Ministry of Interior to the hospitals and licensed doctors. The Ministry of Interior keeps a list of which documents that have been distributed to whom (both ID numbers and serial numbers).¹⁶

¹⁶ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.



Image 2: Cover of a book with birth notifications forms. Picture taken at a meeting at the Ministry of Interior, Ramallah September 2019 (NIDC reference material).

دولة فلسطين وزارة الداخلية		تبايغ عن مولود حي (نسخة وزارة الداخلية)	
رقم هوية المولود: 4 3 7 7 7 8 0 1 2			
تفاصيل المولود			
1. اسم المولود:	2. اسم العائلة:	3. الجنس: 1 ذكر 2 أنثى	4. تاريخ الميلاد: اليوم: الشهر: السنة:
5. مكان الولادة: 1 مستشفى 2 بيت 3 غورنك	6. اسم المستشفى:	7. فصيلة الدم:	8. وزن المولود (بالغرامات):
9. مدة الحمل بالأسابيع:	10. حالة الولادة: 1 طبيعية 2 خصرية	11. نوع الولادة: 1 حرة 2 عام 3 تحت 4 أخرى	
تفاصيل الوالدين			
12. رقم الهوية:	13. الاسم الرباعي:	14. تاريخ الميلاد (باليوم والشهر والسنة):	15. دولة الميلاد / المدينة:
16. مكان ولادة والد الوالدين:	17. الديانة:	18. الجنسية:	19. المستوى التعليمي:
20. المهنة الحالية:	21. عنوان الوالدين:	22. تاريخ عقد القران:	23. تاريخ الزواج الفعلي:
24. هذا زواج الأم 1 الأول 2 الثاني 3 أكثر من اثنين	25. ج. المجموع	26. تلقى الأم الرعاية خلال الحمل الحالي 1 نعم 2 لا	27. عدد مرات تلقى الرعاية خلال الحمل الحالي
28. جهة تلقى الرعاية: 1 حكومي 2 أهلي 3 وكالة الغوث 4 خاص	29. توقيع الوالد:	30. رقم هوية المولود:	31. تاريخ تحرير التبايغ:
32. الاسم الرباعي:	33. مهنة القرابة للمولود:	34. تاريخ استلام التبايغ:	35. تاريخ تسجيل الواقعة بسجل السكان:

* يجب تسجيل البود اعلان استنادا لهوية الوالدين (جواز سفر).
- في حالة التأخر عن تقديم تبايغ الولادة للأحوال المدنية خلال 11 يوم فأكبر يتم تسجيل رسوم تأخير على المعاملة حسب الرسوم المقررة لذلك.

Image 3: Sample of the birth notification form. Sample issued by the Ministry of Interior, Ramallah September 2019 (NIDC reference material).

Verification of data

The officer at the local registration office verifies that the birth notification is authentic by comparing stamp and signature from the birth notification form to a list of licensed doctors and stamps from different hospitals. The officer verifies that data in the electronic system matches the data on the birth notification. After verification of the data, the receiving officer of the local registration office signs and stamps the birth notification form for the local archive. Before 1998, birth and death certificates were always written by hand, but after 1998 they are printed on computer.¹⁷

Registration into the electronic system and issuance of the birth certificate

After the data has been verified, the birth is registered in the electronic system. Subsequently, the officer can issue and stamp the birth certificate and give it to the family. The birth certificate is uniform across the 14 offices in the West Bank.¹⁸

Content and layout of the birth certificate

The birth certificate contains details like full name, date of birth, name of hospital, address, mother's name plus her family name and the ID number of the child. At the bottom of the certificate, details of issuance place and date are written. For Palestinians without an ID number, the birth certificate contains a serial number instead of the ID number in the top left corner and has nine times the asterisk symbol (*****) where the nine digit Palestinian ID number normally would be.¹⁹

Stamps

All official documents issued by the Civil Status Department and the General Directorate of Civil Status are stamped with official stamps bearing the name of the Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Civil Status and the name of the area where the document was issued.²⁰ Every registration office has its own stamp. The Ministry of Interior keeps a central register of the stamps.²¹

¹⁷ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

¹⁸ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

¹⁹ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

²⁰ Ministry of Interior, October 2019.

²¹ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.



Birth Certificate

Id No. 4 420 8

First Name

Father's Name

G.F.'s Name

Family Name

Mother's Name

Mother's Family

Father's Nationality Palestinian

Mother's Nationality Palestinian

Sex

Religion

D. of Birth /2019

The First of September Twenty hundreds Nineteen

P. of Birth

Hospital

Red Crescent

Address

- 0 - 0

The details about the above mentioned birth have already been registered in the birth file of year 2019

by Department of Civil Affairs in Ramallah on 2019

Employee Signature

Seal

State of Palestine
Ministry of Interior
Department of Civil Affairs

دولة فلسطين
وزارة الداخلية
مديرية الأحوال المدنية

شهادة ميلاد

رقم الهوية *****

رقم الشهادة 1890 5

اسم الأب

اسم الجد

اسم الأم

اسم العائلة

جنسية الأب

جنسية الأم

الجنس

الديانة

تاريخ الميلاد 1949/

مكان الميلاد

المستشفى -

العنوان

من قبل مديرية الأحوال المدنية بـ

تاريخ 2019/

1949

إن التفاصيل المدونة بولادة المذكور أعلاه أدرجت في سجل الولادة لسنة

موقع الموظف المختص

الختم المداولة

Image 5: Sample of the birth certificate of a non-national in Arabic. Sample issued by the Ministry of Interior, Ramallah September 2019 (NIDC reference material).

Change of marital status

If the status of the parents has not yet been changed to married in the electronic civil registration system when a birth is registered, the parent must also bring his

or her marriage certificate. It is not unusual that change of civil status from single to married is done at the same time that a child is registered.²²

Late registration of a birth

Late registration of a birth follows the same procedure, but with the added fees according to the timeframe as described previously.²³

Archive

Post 1982 births are registered in the Population Register's computer system. Before 1982 births are registered in a paper archive.²⁴

Original copy of the birth certificate

A person can obtain an original copy of his/her birth certificate. There is no limit as to how many copies he/she can have.²⁵ If the original certificate is lost, the civil registration officer compares the data of the application with the data in the computer system if the date of birth was after 1982, or the application is checked and compared to the paper archive if the date of birth was before 1982.²⁶

Language

The applicant decides whether he/she wants a certificate issued in Arabic or English. The applicant also decides how his name is spelled in English, and can choose to have the spelling of his/hers name changed. The name in Arabic is the important factor for the registering authority because the name in English could be written in several ways. Names spelled differently at different documents can occur.²⁷

Registration of children born abroad

According to Israeli law, a child born abroad by either a Palestinian mother or father and who is 16 years or below, can apply for an ID number. However, only persons who are physically present in the Palestinian areas can be recorded into the Palestinian civil registry. Persons who wish to apply for an ID number must therefore also apply for a visa in order to enter the Palestinian areas.²⁸

²² Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

²³ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

²⁴ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

²⁵ Ministry of Interior, October 2019.

²⁶ Ministry of Interior, October 2019.

²⁷ Ministry of Interior, Ramallah, September 2019.

²⁸ Migrationsverket, Lifos 2019, p. 22.

Passports for travels related to registration of children born abroad

Children below the age of 15 born abroad can – based on the birth certificate and the marriage certificate and passport of the parents – be issued a passport without an ID number, so the child can travel with a parent to the West Bank and register the child in the Palestinian civil registry. If only one parent is present, a written approval of the other parent is not needed.

Once the child is registered, the child can have a PA-passport with ID number issued and travel back on this.²⁹

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ramallah, September 2019.

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