

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	917
Land:	Afghanistan
Kilde:	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Titel:	Afghanistan: Requirements and procedure to obtain tazkira (Tazkera), including from abroad; appearance and security features (2017- February 2019)
Udgivet:	6. februar 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	8. maj 2019

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6 February 2019

AFG106237.E

Afghanistan: Requirements and procedures to obtain *tazkira* [*tazkera*], including from abroad; appearance and security features (2017-February 2019)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

Sources indicate that *tazkira* are national identity cards (Afghanistan 2014, Art. 6; US n.d.). According to article 3(3) of the Law on Registration of Population Records [1], the *tazkira* "is an official document ... distributed to citizens of the country pursuant to provisions of this law" (Afghanistan 2014). A copy of an unofficial translation of the Law on Registration of Population Records of Afghanistan, as published by Afghan national legislative bodies and retrieved from the UNHCR's Refworld database, is attached to this Response (Attachment 1).

A 2016 report by Samuel Hall and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) [2] indicates that, based on a 2012 survey of Internally Displaced Person (IDP) households in Afghanistan, *tazkira* "are by far the most common document possessed," with 90 percent of men and 38 percent of women possessing a *tazkira* (Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 23). Similarly, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the

Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) [3] indicated that "many Afghans," particularly women, still do not have a tazkira, although their distribution is increasing as they are required for "bureaucratic needs," such as enrolment in school (AAN 28 Jan. 2019).

2. Requirements and Procedures to Obtain Tazkira

Article 9(2) of the Law on Registration of Population Records provides that "Afghans [*sic*] citizens, inside and outside Afghanistan, shall be obligated to record their identity with offices of registration of population records and acquire national identity cards pursuant to the provisions of this law" (Afghanistan 2014). Articles 4 and 5 of the Law on Registration of Population Records provide the following:

Implementing Authority

Article Four:

1. Ministry of Interior Affairs is implementing authority of registration of population records in the country and shall be responsible for the implementation of the provisions of this law.
2. For the realization of the objectives set forth in this law, office of registration of population records and evaluation of foreigners identity affairs within the Ministry of Interior Affairs shall operate in the center, provinces, districts, border ports and airports.

Registration Authorities

Article Five:

Offices of registration of population records shall be as follows:

1. Central Office of Registration of Population Records and Evaluation of Foreigners Identity Affairs.
2. Office of Registration of Population Records in the provinces, districts, municipality districts, border ports and airports.
3. Mobile team of Registration of Population Records.
4. Political or consular missions of Afghanistan abroad the country [*sic*]. (Afghanistan 2014)

According to a February 2018 article by AAN, article 4 of the Law on Registration of Population Records was modified to include the creation of a new government agency, the Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority (ACCRA) (AAN 22 Feb. 2018). According to the US Department of State's Reciprocity Schedule for Afghanistan, tazkira are issued by ACCRA, which is part of the Ministry of Interior (MOI)'s Population Registration Department (PRD) (US n.d.). The following requirements and procedures for Afghan nationals to obtain an e-tazkira in Afghanistan are provided on the ACCRA website:

- Identity Verification:
 - Submit filled form [Family or Individual] along with supporting documents listed in family and individual forms to nearest enrollment center for verification[.]
 - Receive appointment for eTazkera enrollment[.]

- eTazkera Enrollment:
 - Visit the enrollment center as per the appointment. Head of family along with available family members should be present for family enrollment.
 - Visit individual enrollment desk for demographic and biometric registration.
 - Pay eTazkera Card Fee
 - Receive appointment for eTazkera Card Collection.
- eTazkera Distribution:
 - Visit distribution center as per the appointment[.]
 - Submit receipt of eTazkera form[.]
 - Complete the one to one verification of the eTazkera Card[.]
 - Receive activated eTazkera Card[.] (Afghanistan n.d.a)

The following information regarding requirements and procedures for local Afghan nationals to obtain paper tazkira "as a whole family" and "[i]ndividually" (for "those who are above 18 years and have not gotten Tazkera yet"), is provided on the ACCRA website:

- The presence of the individual applicant is mandatory and, for family applications, the presence of children aged 7 years old and above is mandatory;
- Forms are available on the ACCRA website, as well as at "the reception department of ACCRA";
- The completed form must be submitted "to the nearest ACCRA reception department in the province" in which the applicant lives;
- The application form and "[s]ix passport size photos" must be submitted along with a "relative[s] (father, brother, uncle or cousin) original Tazkera or its copy ... to the relevant department where [the applicant's or applicants'] family row and series is found and written" in the form;
- When they are ready, the tazkera is to be retrieved from the ACCRA office (Afghanistan n.d.b).

Other sources similarly report that applicants must provide the following documents to obtain a paper tazkira:

- A [completed] application form (Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 17; US n.d.);
- Passport-sized photos (Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 17; US n.d.);
- A copy of the tazkira of a male relative (Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 17) or the applicant's father's tazkira or, if not available, the tazkira of a relative on the father's side "such as the father's sibling or aunt/uncle" (US n.d.).

The US Reciprocity Schedule for Afghanistan states that applicants over the age of seven "must apply in[]person and submit a thumb print" (US n.d.). The same source adds that parents can apply for tazkira "on behalf of their children" and that "Afghans usually apply for a tazkera when a child reaches school age, but it can also be obtained and/or modified throughout adulthood" (US n.d.).

Article 23 of the Law on Registration of Population Records provides the following:

Governors, district governors and mayors shall be obligated to attract the support and cooperation of village elders, neighborhood representatives, imams and health care officials of their related areas with regards to obtaining national identity card and registration of births, deaths, marriages and dissolution of marriages. (Afghanistan 2014)

The information on requirements and procedures for local Afghan nationals to obtain a paper tazkira, available on the ACCRA website, states that parts of the application form must be completed and "stamped by [a] county council[.]or, village representative or government current employe[e]," who must be "confirmed by their relevant department[t]" to vouch for the tazkira applicant (Afghanistan n.d.b). The US Reciprocity Schedule for Afghanistan indicates that before applying for a tazkira with the MOI, the applicants' identity must be confirmed; "[i]n a city or larger town, this confirmation will be handled by an Area Representative (*Wakil Gozar*), while applicants from villages will use a *Malik* (respected elder)" (US n.d.). Similarly, the report prepared by Samuel Hall and the NRC states that the procedure to issue tazkira varies "depending on, inter alia, where the application is submitted"; it indicates that:

- In the districts, the application is submitted to the district governor, the attestation of identity and residential status is made by a local community leader, and the district statistics department approves the application;
- In Kabul, the application is submitted to the provincial governor's office, the attestation of identity is made by the area chief in the city district authority in the place of residence, and the city district authority approves the application;
- In provincial capital cities other than Kabul, the application is submitted to the Central Registration Population Department, the attestation of identity is made by the area chief in the city district authority in the place of residence, and the city district authority approves the application (Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 16-17).

Article 36 of the Law on Registration of Population Records provides the following:

1. Price of an original national identity card shall be 100 Afghanis [AFN] [approximately C\$1.74] and the price of a duplicate national identity card shall be 500 Afghanis [approximately C\$8.72].
2. Ministry of Interior in consultation with Ministry of Finance may increase or decrease, after approval of ministers council, the price set forth in paragraph one of this article given the total cost of the national identity card or economical fluctuations. (Afghanistan 2014)

The ACCRA website also indicates that the issuance of an e-tazkira card costs 100 AFN (Afghanistan n.d.a). The same source indicates local applicants must pay 20 AFN [approximately C\$0.35] for a paper tazkira (Afghanistan n.d.b). However, according to the US Reciprocity Schedule for Afghanistan, tazkira cost 10 AFN [approximately C\$0.17] (US n.d.).

2.1 Applying from Abroad

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Consular Section of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa stated that since a "few years", it is possible for Afghans living outside Afghanistan to apply for tazkira at Afghan embassies or consular sections "in the country where they are living" (Afghanistan 29 Jan. 2019). On their website, the Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa states that it accepts applications for

tazkira, "only" for Afghan citizens residing in Canada and that the tazkira will be issued in Kabul "in [the] absence of the applicant[t]" (Afghanistan n.d.b). The same source provides the following list of requirements to apply for a tazkira:

1. Applicants should be present at the Consular Section of the Embassy for [fingerprinting].
2. Fill out the application form [available on their website in English, French, Dari and Pashto].
3. Two photos of 2 X 2 inches [50.8 mm x 50.8 mm][.]
4. Copy of a relative's Tazkira (i.e. Tazkira of father, brother, uncle or a relative from [the applicant's] father['s] side [of the family])[.]
5. Photocopy of document verifying [the applicant's] legal status in Canada, such as passport, PR [permanent resident] card, etc.
6. Documents verifying [the applicant's] current address, such as [a] driv[er's] license, utility bills or similar documents. (Afghanistan n.d.c)

The Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa notes that applications "must be accompanied by the original form of the document which requires authentication" (Afghanistan n.d.c). The same source indicates that there is no cost for the issuance of tazkira "in [a]bsence of the [a]pplicant [applications from outside Afghanistan]," although there is a postage cost of US\$16, only payable in US\$ (Afghanistan n.d.c). The postage cost is "[p]ayable only to [b]ank [p]ostal [a]ccount" and cannot be made "by cash, personal cheques or bank transfer" (Afghanistan n.d.c). The representative of the Consular Section of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa also stated that applicants from abroad must be present at the embassy or the consulate for fingerprinting (Afghanistan 29 Jan. 2019).

3. Appearance and Security Features

According to article 3(3) of the Law on Registration of Population Records, tazkira are printed on polycarbonate cards (Afghanistan 2014). According to sources, electronic tazkira (or e-tazkira) are being issued (Afghanistan 29 Jan. 2019; AAN 28 Jan. 2019). The AAN representative specified that the process is not yet finalized; therefore, paper-based tazkira are still in use (AAN 28 Jan. 2019). The report by Samuel Hall and the NRC indicates that tazkira "vary in format and have changed under the successive administrations in Afghanistan," although each version remains in circulation (Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 16). According to the representative of the Consular Section of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa, tazkira issued in the past have "different [appearances] and colors, but all of them officially have [the] same credibility" (Afghanistan 29 Jan. 2019). The US Reciprocity Schedule for Afghanistan similarly indicates that there have been "multiple variants of the document since 1976" (US n.d.). The same source adds that tazkira are "hand-written" and issued on A4-sized [210 mm x 297 mm] paper (US n.d.).

Article 6 of the Law on Registration of Population Records provides the following:

1. National identity card shall contain the following information:

1. Afghanistan national logo located in the center of national identity card and the number of national identity card written underneath it. On the right side of it the text below shall be written in Pashto with the Dari on the left: (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - Ministry of Interior Affairs - National identity card).
2. On the right side of the National identity card the following shall be written in official languages of the country:
 - Name
 - Father['s] name
 - Grandfather['s] name
 - Date of birth
 - Place of birth
 - Current residence
 - Permanent residence
3. On the left side of the National identity card photograph of the citizen shall be pasted.
4. At the back of the National identity card, in the middle, following texts shall be written in English language:

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan/National Identity Card

Underneath of this the following words are written:

ID Number:

Full Name:

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

Gender:

Date of Issue:

On the right and in official languages of the country and English (Signature and Date of Issue) shall be written.

...

(Afghanistan 2014)

According to the February 2018 article by AAN, article 6 of the 2014 Law on Registration of Population Records was amended in 2017 to include nationality and ethnicity (AAN 22 Feb. 2018). The same source adds that the reference to religion "is missing" under article 6 of the unofficial English translation of the Law on Registration of Population Records, which is available through the UNHRC's Refworld database (AAN 22 Feb. 2018).

Other sources state that tazkira may include the holder's physical description, marital status and profession (US n.d.; Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 16). The US Reciprocity Schedule for Afghanistan indicates that tazkira also includes the holder's military service, religion, and that it "lists the holder's age as of the year the document was issued, but this is usually just an estimate as birth records are seldom available" (US n.d.). According to the same source, the tazkira "traces its holder's roots through the father; mother's names are not usually listed on tazkeras" (US n.d.). Similarly, the report by

Samuel Hall and the NRC indicates, based on a report prepared by The Liaison Office (TLO) [4], that "most tazkera today" contain the holder's father's and grandfather's names, as well as the holder's place of origin, mother tongue, national identification number, and a registration number (Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 16).

Article 9 (1) of the Law on Registration of Population Records provides the following:

1. National identity cards shall be distributed, as follows, to citizens of the country for recognition of their identity and registration of population records:
 1. Up to completion of six years of age without the photograph and biometric information of polycarbonate card.
 2. From seven up to seventeen years of age with the photograph and without biometric information of polycarbonate card.
 3. Starting from eighteen years of age with photograph and biometric information of polycarbonate card. (Afghanistan 2014)

Similarly, sources report that tazkira include a photo of the holder (US n.d.; Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016, 16), although a minor's tazkira "may or may not include a photo" (US n.d.). Article 6 of the Law on Registration of Population Records states that the "[l]eft side of the national identity card shall hold electronic information that contain confidential and other personal information ... which shall be read by electronic machines" (Afghanistan 2014). Further information, including information on security features, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A copy of a handwritten tazkira, provided in an article published by AAN, is attached to this Response (Attachment 2). A copy of an e-tazkira, provided by the news agency Pajhwok Afghan News (Pajhwok), and published in another AAN article, is attached to this Response (Attachment 3).

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.

Notes

[1] According to a February 2018 article published by the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) [see note 3], articles 4 and 6 of the 2014 Law on Registration of Population Records were amended in 2017 (AAN 22 Feb. 2018). The amendments include the introduction of a new government agency, the Afghan Central Civil Registration Authority (ACCRA) in article 4, as well as the inclusion of nationality and ethnicity in article 6 (AAN 22 Feb. 2018). The same source indicates that the unofficial translation of the Law on Registration of Population Records, available on Refworld, "appears to be either incomplete or an older version, as under article six the reference to religion is missing" (AAN 22 Feb. 2018).

[2] Samuel Hall is a think tank (Samuel Hall and NRC 8 Nov. 2016) that "conducts research in countries affected by issues of migration and displacement" and aims to inform "policies, programmes and people" (Samuel Hall n.d.). The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is a Norway-based "independent humanitarian organisation" that assists people in 31 countries (NRC n.d.).

[3] The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) is a non-profit research organization that produces "analysis on Afghanistan and its region" (AAN n.d.). It is registered in Germany and in Afghanistan (AAN n.d.).

[4] The Liaison Office (TLO) is an Afghan NGO that conducts research and peacebuilding activities, among others (TLO n.d.).

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Afghanistan. N.d.b. Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority (ACCRA). "Services - National Identity Registration - Paper Tazkera for Local Afghans." [Accessed 28 Jan. 2019]

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Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). 28 January 2019. Correspondence from a representative to the Research Directorate.

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United States (US). N.d. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. "Afghanistan Reciprocity Schedule." [Accessed 23 Jan. 2019]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Afghanistan – Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority, Ministry of Interior; Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

Internet sites, including: Afghanistan – Ministry of Interior; Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit; EU – Public Register of Authentic Travel and Identity Documents Online; Keesing Technologies.

Attachments

1. Afghanistan. 2014. Law on Registration of Population Records. [Accessed 24 Jan. 2019]
2. Afghanistan. N.d. Sample of Tazkira. Published in Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). 7 January 2013. Obaid Ali. "E-Tazkira: Relieving Pre-Election Tension or Adding to the Confusion?" [Accessed 28 Jan. 2019]
3. Afghanistan. N.d. Sample of E-Tazkira. From Pajhwok Afghan News (Pajhwok), published in Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). 26 January 2016. Jelena Bjelica and Martine van Bijlert. "The Troubled History of the E-Tazkera (Part 2): Technical Stumbling Blocks." [Accessed 28 Jan. 2019]

Date modified:

2018-06-25