

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	159
Land:	Aserbajdsjan
Kilde:	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Titel:	Biometric passports, including issuance procedures withing the country and abroad
Udgivet:	9. juni 2014
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	21. oktober 2014

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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9 June 2014

AZE104877.E

Azerbaijan: Biometric passports, including issuance procedures within the country and abroad

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview of Biometric Passports

Several sources indicate that Azerbaijan began issuing biometric passports in September 2013 (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014; Turan 3 Sept. 2013a; Keesing's n.d.a). In an interview with the Research Directorate, an official at the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Ottawa said that the biometric passports began to be issued on 1 September 2013 (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014). Media sources report that the first biometric passport was issued on 2 September 2013 (Trend 2 Sept. 2013; Turan 3 Sept. 2013a).

Sources indicate that there are three types of biometric passports: civil, service and diplomatic (ibid.; Azerbaijan 21 May 2014; News.az 23 July 2012). According to the Turan Information Agency, an Azerbaijani media source, biometric passports are the same colour as non-biometric passports (Turan 23 July 2012). Common civil passports are green, service passports are blue and diplomatic passports are red (ibid.; News.az 23 July 2012; Azerbaijan 21 May 2014). The official at the Embassy of Azerbaijan explained that diplomatic passports are issued to diplomats, Members of Parliament, ministers, deputy ministers, presidents and former presidents, while service passports are issued to others who travel on behalf of the government, as well as to dependents of diplomats (ibid.).

A sample of an ordinary biometric passport, which was supplied to the Research Directorate by the National Document Centre of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), as well as a sample of a diplomatic biometric passport, which was found on Keesing Reference System, indicates that the following information is included in Azerbaijani biometric passports: Type; Code of State; Passport No.; Surname; Given Name and Patronymic; Nationality; Date of Birth; Personal No.; Nationality; Sex; Place of Birth; Date of Issue; Date of Expiry; Holder's Signature; Issuing Authority (Keesing n.d.b; Canada 20 May 2014). The passport sample provided by the CBSA is attached to this Response.

Sources indicate that the passport size is 125 x 90 mm (Keesing n.d.a) or 125x88 mm (News.az 23 July 2012) and contains 50 pages (ibid.; Keesing n.d.a.). According to Keesing, the passport number is 8 digits preceded by a letter (ibid.). The passports are reportedly made of "high quality polycarbonate material that is resistant to heat, light, deformation,

chemicals and moisture" (Turan 3 Sept. 2013b).

According to News.az, an Internet-based Azerbaijani media source, the biometric passports meet the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the biometric information contained in the electronic chip includes a digital photo and personal data (News.az 23 July 2012). According to the Azerbaijani embassy official, the biometric information includes fingerprints for persons aged 15 and over (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014).

2. Issuance Procedures within Azerbaijan

Sources indicate that civil passports are issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (ibid.; ibid. n.d.a; Canada 29 May 2014). According to the Azerbaijani embassy official, the issuing of ordinary biometric passports falls under the jurisdiction of the Main Passport, Registration and Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who are also responsible for issuing travel documents for stateless people (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014). He also indicated that diplomatic and service passports are issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ibid.).

According to the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there are 6 regional centres that issue passports, each covering 10-15 city-regions (ibid. n.d.a). Turan Information Agency indicates that there are nine regional centers that manufacture and deliver ordinary passports (Turan 3 Sept. 2013a). The same source notes that buildings for eight regional centres for the Ministry of Interior were built in Nakhchivan, Ganja, Lankaran, Sheki, Guba, Goychay, Barda and Shirvan (Turan 4 Sept. 2014). The embassy official said that passport applicants go to one-stop service centres known as "Asan" (meaning "easy"), where there are multiple services in addition to passports, such as ID cards, criminal checks, registration of land/apartments, pensions etc. (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014). He indicated that there are three centres in Baku as well as three passport application offices in each of three regions (ibid.). He added that passport applicants are required to apply in person due to the biometrics (ibid.). He said that the passport issuing offices sometimes provide mobile services to outlying areas (ibid.).

According to the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Azerbaijani embassy official, passport applicants are required to submit:

- Application form
- ID card
- Fee (ibid. n.d.a; ibid. 21 May 2014).
- In addition, the Azerbaijan official indicated that passport applicants are also required to submit:
 - Paper about military service for men 18 years and older
 - Fingerprints for people 15 years and over
 - Medical paper including blood type, height, and color of eyes (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014).

According News.az, children are not included within the passport of their parent and require a separate biometric passport (News.az 23 July 2012). The Azerbaijani official said that passport applicants under 18 years of age need to have legal permission from their parents or guardians in order to be issued a passport (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014).

Sources indicate that Azerbaijani citizens receive their biometric passports in 1, 5 or 10 business days depending on the fee paid (ibid.; Turan 3 Sept. 2013a; Trend 2 Sept. 2013). According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs website, passports are issued within one month

(Azerbaijan n.d.a).

For adults 18 years and over, the passport fees are: 40 manat [C\$55 (XE 30 May 2014a)] in 10 days; 80 manat [C\$110 (XE 30 May 2014b)] in 5 days; and 160 manat [C\$221 (XE 30 May 2014c)] in 1 day (Turan 3 Sept. 2013b; Azerbaijan 21 May 2014). The embassy official noted that in emergencies- such as medical emergencies or a death in the family- passports may be issued in one business day for the fee of 40 manat (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014).

There are reduced fees for passports for minors (Turan 3 Sept. 2013b). The fees for minors being issued a passport in 10 business days are: for children up to 1 year old: 10 manat [C\$14 (XE 30 May 2014d)]; children 1-3 years old: 20 manat [C\$28 (XE 30 May 2014e)]; children 3 to 18 years old: 30 manat [C\$41 (XE 30 May 2014f)] (ibid. 3 Sept. 2013). These fees double for issuance in 5 business days and are four times as much for issuance in one day (ibid.).

3. Issuance Procedures Abroad

The embassy official said that embassies do not issue biometric passports, but continue to issue non-biometric passports (Azerbaijan 21 May 2014).

He said that passport applicants are required to submit the following documents when applying for a passport at the embassy in Ottawa:

- ID card
- Previous passport
- Application form
- Proof of payment
- Letter of request (explaining reason why he or she came to Canada)
- Supporting Canadian documentation (such as citizenship card, permanent residence papers, study permit, work visa, or letter from place of employment) (ibid.).

The embassy official said that passport applicants are not required to go to the embassy in person and can mail the required documents (ibid.).

The official said that for cases of first time minor applicants, the person must also submit:

- Notarized permission from parents or guardians
- Birth certificate
- Marriage certificate of parents
- Medical document, including blood type (ibid.)

The official noted that passport applications made at the embassy are processed in Azerbaijan (ibid.). He explained that if the applicant has a court order or criminal charge against him or her in Azerbaijan, or has evaded military service, the applicant will not be issued a passport (ibid.). Similarly, the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicates that passport applicants may be refused a passport if there is a criminal or civil case involving the applicant or if the applicant was conscripted into military service (ibid. 4 Mar. 2014). However, the embassy official said that applicants who do not receive approval for passports can be

given a paper to allow them to return to Azerbaijan (ibid. 21 May 2014).

The Embassy of Azerbaijan in Turkey indicates that it does not issue passports, but that it can provide assistance in renewing expired passports through the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Azerbaijan (ibid. n.d.b.). According to information posted on its website, applicants must submit:

- Expired passport
- Four passport-sized photographs
- Application form
- Handwritten letter to embassy for passport renewal
- Renewal fee (ibid.).

The Embassy of Azerbaijan in Turkey indicates that citizens who lose their passports must report the loss to the police and to the consular section and must have the police reference letter in order for their application to be considered by the Azerbaijani embassy (ibid.).

The embassy official in Ottawa and the website of the embassy of Azerbaijan in Ankara both indicate that passports which are applied for abroad take approximately 2 to 3 months to obtain (ibid.; ibid. 21 May 2014).

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.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Azerbaijan - Embassy of Azerbaijan in Washington; ecoi.net; EU - European Commission; Factiva; Jamestown Foundation; United Nations - Refworld.

Attachment

Canada. N.d. Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). Sample of Passport of Azerbaijan.
(Provided in 20 May 2014 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate).