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Bangladesh, Canada, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and United States: Registration procedures and documents of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at (AMJ) [Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC), Ahmadiyya Muslim Association (AMA)] in Canada, the US and the UK, particularly for Ahmadis of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin (2020–December 2022) [ZZZ201290.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Canada

The information in this section was provided in January 2023 by the National General Secretary of the AMJ in Canada in correspondence with the Research Directorate:

1.1 Verification of Affiliation and Registration

Regardless of which branch the member resides in, members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community arriving in Canada must fill out a "Member Information Form" [1] and provide two credible references from Canada to the National Headquarters in Maple, Ontario. The form asks for information such as name, address, member code, whether the person is Ahmadi by birth or a convert, date and country of conversion, address in the country of origin, information about the spouse and other family members and references. These references must be "well known" to the AMJ. The form must be endorsed by the president of the applicant's local branch in Canada by checking the information in the form and contacting the references. As of January 2023, there are 130 branches in Canada. The local president must also establish, through an interview with the applicant and conversation with references, whether he or she is an Ahmadi by birth or a convert. Once he is satisfied, the local president forwards the form to the National President or Amir located in Maple, Ontario, who, in turn, double-checks the verification carried out by the local president. If everything is in order, the applicant is registered with the community and is eligible to receive a verification letter, if needed.

In the case that the applicant cannot provide satisfactory references, or he or she is not known to any well-known member or an official of the AMJ in Canada, then the case is forwarded to the applicant's country of origin for further verification. The local President in the country of origin then verifies references and other details. If the local President in the country of origin is able to provide verification, a letter is issued; if not, no verification letter is issued.

Processing times for verifying membership vary, depending on country of origin and the particular case of the applicant.

1.2 Registration Process for Persons Who Convert in Canada

All converts into the AMJ are required to fill out a *bai'at* [ba'iat; bait], or oath of allegiance, called the "Declaration of Initiation" which is either paper-based or available online. The form includes information such as name, address, date of birth, nationality, profession, Muslim name, family members, the name of the person who introduced the convert to the community, and names of the local missionary and missionary in charge. The form must be verified by the president of the local branch, the regional missionary, the missionary in charge, and the person introducing the new convert.

The approval process may take up to an average of six months of seeing how the new convert is integrating into the community, both socially and religiously; [this approval will be] provided by the local branch and/or the National Secretary for the new converts. The form is then "processed and upon approval," the person is enrolled in the membership database; however, confirmation of conversion is normally issued after one or two years, depending on one's satisfactory participation and involvement in the AMJ. The waiting period is set to discourage those who wish to become Ahmadis [for] ulterior motives. The confirmation letter indicates the date of conversion and clearly outlines that it took place in Canada.

1.3 Documentation that Proves Membership in the AMJ

Once membership is confirmed, the applicant is enrolled in a database, is assigned a unique identification code, and is issued a membership card. All members of the AMJ in Canada have the membership card, which contains his or her name, name of branch in Canada, and the identification code. However, for immigration purposes or for refugee determination procedures, the AMJ issues a specially formatted letter signed by an authorized representative. This letter is computer-generated on a special watermark paper, has a unique reference number and the names and dates of birth of the applicant and their family members and the relationship with the person in question. This letter is valid only when it has all these characteristics. The letter is kept in a secure database with a unique reference number that can be verified anytime by the National General Secretariat.

Every country has the authority to carry out its own verification process of a person claiming to be an Ahmadi. While the verification process may involve consultations with AMJ branches in other countries, including Pakistan (depending on the individual in question), the final verification letter issued for immigration-related procedures can only be issued by the AMJ National Head Office where the immigration case takes place and not by other AMJ branches in other countries.

Documents that an AMJ member might have include the following: a membership card, donation receipts from the country of origin or Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Inc., a marriage certificate issued by the community, a letter to and from the Caliph (Spiritual Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at), and/or any medals and certificates issued by the local chapter of the community (AMJ in Canada 2022-01-06).

2.

UK

2.1 Verification Process

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the AMA UK stated that information [on their verification process] is in the UK Home Office Country Policy Information Note (2022-12-20). According to this information note, in a 26 March 2015 meeting with the UK Home Office, the AMA UK explained the following:

[S]ince the head of the Ahmadiyya Community lives in the UK and has a '£1m pricetag on his head', they take their security very seriously and always get confirmation that a person is an Ahmadi. When applying for membership to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK, the person is asked to fill in a 'Membership Verification Form', which contains broad details such as: where the person is from; the president of their local Ahmadi branch; personal biodata; what position they held; and any activities they took part in. The person may also provide a statement of events or incidents that have happened to them in Pakistan, although the Association does not prompt this.

The completed membership form and, if provided, statement of events, is forwarded first to Rabwah, then to the person's local branch in Pakistan. This process usually takes 6-8 weeks. If additional information such as a First Information Report (FIR) or media article describing the event has been submitted to the AMA UK, this will also be forwarded to Pakistan for verification. Upon receipt, the local Ahmadi branch in Pakistan will confirm if the person is Ahmadi, and will attempt to verify the events raised in the statement. The AMA UK stressed that if an event cannot be verified this does not mean that the incident did not occur. Once confirmation from Pakistan – written in Urdu – is received by the AMA UK, the information is translated into English and provided in a confirmation letter. (UK 2019-03, 48)

The following information was provided by the AMA UK in correspondence with the Research Directorate: Where the applicant is from Bangladesh, the underlying verification is obtained from the National President of Bangladesh whereas in the case of Pakistan, it is obtained from the Headquarters Wakil-ut-Tabshir Rabwah

(Chenab Nagar) [Executive Director Ahmadiyya Muslim Foreign Missions] which obtains it from the Nazarat Umur Amma Rabwah [Executive Directorate Public and General Affairs]. Apart from this difference in the source of information, other procedures are largely identical. (2022-12-20, brackets in original)

2.2 Verification Procedure of Ahmadi Persons for Asylum Procedures in the UK

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the AMA UK stated that information [on the verification procedure of Ahmadi persons for asylum procedures in the UK] is in the UK Home Office Country Policy Information Note (2022-12-20). Annex B of this information note, prepared by the AMA UK and updated on 23 May 2018, provides the following details:

Asylum procedure

1. The procedure begins when the Association issues the applicant with a 'Particulars of the Ahmadi Applicant' form.
2. Thereafter, we expect the form (see 1. above) to be completed by the applicant and returned to us for processing. The form contains information such as name, address in Pakistan, marital status, spouse's name, name of parents, any positions they held in the community, reason and date for leaving Pakistan and present address.
3. In the case of positions held by that person, the applicant specifies the post held and the year(s) that that person held that post. This is normally completed on a separate form that forms an Annex to the Particulars of the Ahmadi Applicant form.
4. We ask the applicant, in the case of a male, to enclose a passport sized photograph and, where available, an official Home Office document/card quoting his UKBA [UK Border Agency] File or Port Ref[erence]. A photograph may not be obtainable in the case of an applicant in DFT (Detained under Fast Track).
5. In some cases, we hold an interview with the applicant in order to gain further information.
6. On receipt of the form we process the information. A lot of the information is needed for our Headquarters situated in Rabwah (Chenab Nagar) District Chiniot Tehsil Lallian Pakistan to verify the details given by the applicant. This process can take from 6 to 8 weeks (times will vary depending upon the remoteness of the issuing branch, whether that person had to flee to another town for his own or family's safety, reports required from the auxiliary organisations, efficiency of its office bearers and resources then available at the Headquarters).
7. This is then carefully verified by local official Ahmadi community leadership in Pakistan under a prescribed procedure. The information is collated in Pakistan by the Nazir Umur 'Amma (Executive Director of Public and General Affairs) by obtaining a direct report from the President of the branch where the applicant resided, or in the case of residence in more than one place, from each of those Presidents, and supplemented by the leaders of the relevant auxiliary organisation of the Community and then relayed back to us by the Wakil Tabshir [Wakil-ut-Tabshir; Wakilut Tabshir] (Executive Director of Foreign Missions) in our Headquarters through the Additional Wakil Tabshir London, (the Executive In-charge of the UK Chapter of the Director of Foreign Missions).
8. These persons (set out in 7. Above) represent the highest authorities within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Pakistan and the Additional Wakilut Tabshir London, the Executive In-charge of the UK Foreign Missions, enables this process to be completed.
9. To avoid any possibility of undue influence we do not confirm or verify specific financial donations made by applicants.
10. We issue letters confirming membership profile and any posts held as confirmed by our Headquarters in strict confidence and in the course of business and as a matter of policy and procedure.

11. Communication with the Home Office shall only be signed by the Secretary Umur 'Amma (Public or General Affairs) UK or by the National President or Vice President UK.
12. If a report has not been received from the Headquarters, a reminder letter shall be issued. Upon receipt, file the report and issue letter to the Solicitor.
13. Since we are a religious community with many activities taking place simultaneously, we do not have the resources to attend courts in support of applicants; nevertheless, our absence should not be taken adversely to undermine the confirmation issued on the authority of the report provided to us by our Headquarters.
14. All communications with the Headquarters must be sent through the Amir and through the Additional Wakilul Tabshir London. No one is authorised to communicate direct[ly] with the Headquarters.
15. In the case of applicants who have joined the Association by doing a ba'iat in the UK, the Association shall only confirm that the applicant joined the Association as a member two years after the ba'iat and may set out a report about the applicant's attachment to the Association after the second anniversary of that applicant's joining as a member. (UK 2019-03, 56–57)

2.3 Ahmadi ID card

In their 2015 meeting with the UK Home Office, according to a record of the meeting updated on 23 May 2018, the AMA indicated the following:

The UK Ahmadiyya Association membership card has a picture on the left; bar code on the bottom right; membership number above the bar code; name above that; picture of the Mosque underneath; bar strip across the top. The Member said that the Pakistani Ahmadi ID card is equivalent but without the barcode. (UK 2019-03, 52–53)

According to the same source, the AMA further indicated that each family member is verified before a membership card is issued (UK 2019-03, 54).

The AMA UK website provides the following information regarding Ahmadi converts:

TEMPORARY [Ahmadiyya Information Management System (AIMS)] ID CARDS FOR NEW AHMADIS

KEY INFO

- All New Ahmadis can and should be issued a temporary AIMS card as soon as possible after the Bai'at (initiation) form has been signed and sent to the centre. This applies to ALL new Ahmadis, including those who are claiming asylum, and/or do not have permanent immigration status.
- While the AIMS ID card that is issued is temporary, the AIMS ID number is permanent (i.e. it will remain the same when a permanent AIMS ID card is issued).
- The AIMS ID application form (aka. Tajneed form) should be sent to the UK General Secretary's (GS) office (NOT the New Ahmadi Dept).
- New Ahmadis should not use temp AIMS cards (or copies) as evidence in immigration cases.

PROCESS

The application process for New Ahmadi temporary AIMS ID cards is as follows:

1. **Tajneed form:** Local Presidents should complete and submit a (normal) Tajneed form (aka. AIMS ID form) for the New Ahmadi to the General Secretary's Office (NB. NOT the New Ahmadi Dept).
2. **Photo and a copy of [p]assport/[i]mmigration [p]apers:** The form should be submitted along with a photo of the new Ahmadi, and a photo-copy of their immigration documents (e.g. passport, refugee card, EU residence card[, etc.]). The form must be fully complete. If it is not, GS office will post it back to the local President.
3. **GS Office Review:** GS office will then review the Tajneed form, to ensure it is complete, and all [documents] are attached. If it is, it will go through the internal review process.

4. **Approval by Chairman Tajneed Committee:** If all checks are completed and the results come back as positive, the Chairman of the Tajneed Committee will sign/approve for Temp[orary] AIMS cards to be issued.
5. **Temp[orary] AIMS card issued:** The form will then be passed back to GS office, who will issue the AIMS number and temp[orary] AIMS ID card. GS office will contact the local President and New Ahmadi in order to inform them that an AIMS [number] and temp[orary] card has been issued.

PERMANT AIMS CARTDS FOR NEW AHMADIS

KEY INFO

- Permanent AIMS cards are, as a general rule, only issued one year after the issuing of temporary AIMS. If, a local President wishes to apply for permanent AIMS for a new Ahmadi before the expiry of one year, they should give their reasons in writing.
- When a new Ahmadi moves from a temporary to a permanent AIMS card, they will keep the same AIMS number (as AIMS numbers on temp[orary] AIMS cards are, in fact, permanent).
- Permanent AIMS cannot be issued until a New Ahmadi has been granted some form of permanent immigration status (e.g. [discretionary leave to remain], [indefinite leave to remain], refugee status, citizenship[,] etc.). Only temporary AIMS can be issued to those new Ahmadis who do not have permanent immigration status (e.g. those claiming asylum, on a visit visa, student visa, work visa[,] etc.).
- The original written request (for permanent AIMS) should be sent to GS office (**NOT** the New Ahmadi [Department]).
- The New Ahmadi [Department] should be contacted to assist if new Ahmadis are facing difficulties [regarding] permanent AIMS[,], e.g. if the process is delayed, or an application form has been misplaced. (AMA UK [2020-09-24], emphasis in original)

3. US

Information on registration procedures and documents of the AMJ in the US was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3.1 Ahmadiyya ID Cards

The website of the AMC United States of America (USA), in its Tajneed section on membership information, states that "[i]n case of Ahmadi members moving from other countries to US, we need complete information about their previous Jamaat [Jama'at]/Country for verification purposes. Absence of such information will only result in processing delays" (AMC USA 2022-04-24).

The same source provides two separate forms to request a Jamaat ID card, one for men and one for women; both forms are Google docs and ask for the applicant's member code, AMC branch code, name, date of birth, email, phone number and address (AMC USA n.d.a; AMC USA n.d.b).

The AMC USA website provides the following information regarding pictures:

- Photo size should be the 3 by 4 portrait.
- Background [s]hould be white[.]
- Female members should have their heads covered[.]
- All photos should be facing forward and looking straight at the camera with a neutral expression, and closed mouth, without a red eye.
- Lighting should be even and no shadow should be visible on the picture.
- If the applicant uses glasses (for [eyesight] only) it is recommended to have them also in the photo.

- Photos should be in the natural condition i.e. must not be enhanced or modified by any photo editing program. (AMC USA 2022-04-24)

3.2 New Member Information

The AMC USA website notes that, "[i]n case of new converts, we need both the tajneed form (online) and bait form properly filled out and attested from local Jamaat" (AMC USA 2022-04-24).

The New/Change Membership Information form is a Google doc [available on the AMC US website (AMC USA 2022-04-24)] which requests the applicant's AMC branch code, whether the person has been issued a member code in the US, the applicant's member code (if applicable), as well as their name, address, parents' names, profession, education, gender, marital status, date of marriage, date of birth, country of birth and ethnicity (AMC USA n.d.c).

The Bai'at (initiation) form requests the applicant's "previous" name, Muslim name, date of birth, former religion, nationality, occupation, jama'at, address, family members pledging initiation, and signature, as well as the signature of the person they were introduced by, the signature of the zonal missionary/president and the signature of the missionary in charge (AMC USA n.d.d).

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] The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at (AMJ) in Canada provides information on their forms on their website (AMJ in Canada n.d.).

References

- Ahmadiyya Muslim Association (AMA) UK. 2022-12-20. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.
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- Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC) United States of America (USA). N.d.a. ["T7 AMC Member ID Card Request \(Men Only\)."](#) [Accessed 2022-12-20]
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- Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at (AMJ) in Canada. 2023-01-06. Correspondence from the National General Secretary to the Research Directorate.
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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Canada – Maryam Mosque, Vancouver chapter; Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK – Edinburgh chapter, External Affairs, Dundee chapter, Glasgow chapter, Regional Amir; Ahmadiyya Muslim Community United States of America – Atlanta Chapter, Austin Chapter, Boston

Chapter, Miami Chapter, National General Secretary, National Office Tajneed, Seattle Chapter, Washington, DC Chapter.

Internet sites, including: Ahmadiyya Gazette Canada; Ahmadiyya Gazette USA; Al Islam; Amnesty International; Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Belgium – Commissariat général aux réfugiés et aux apatrides; EU – EU Agency for Asylum; France – Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides; Minority Rights Group International; UN – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Refworld, UNHCR; US – Department of State.