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Pakistan: The Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC), the Smart National Identity Card (SNIC), and the National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP), including issuance procedures, content, validity, and purpose (2017-December 2018) [PAK106220.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. National Identity Card (NIC), Including CNIC and SNIC

According to the Pakistani National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) website, Pakistani citizens 18 years of age or older are eligible for an NIC (Pakistan n.d.a). The NIC has a "unique 13 digit identification number" which is "recognized all over the country" and is mandatory in order to apply for documents such as licenses, an NTN [National Tax Number], a bank account, a passport, a cellular connection, etc. (Pakistan n.d.a).

According to the NADRA website, the SNIC is the same as the NIC but with "added security features" and there "may" be additional charges to get the SNIC (Pakistan n.d.b). According to a Country Information Report on Pakistan by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia, the SNIC has a "smart chip containing biometric information and a number of additional security features" (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 5.29). However, the source adds that while the SNIC is "highly secure," there is a lack of "rigorous identity checks" prior to issuance of SNICs (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 5.29). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.1 Issuance Procedures for First Time NICs

The NADRA website states that Pakistani citizens can apply for an NIC at either a NADRA Registration Center (NRC) or, for an SNIC, through [NADRA's] Pak-Identity website [1] (Pakistan n.d.a). The same source specifies that applications for a first CNIC are not possible through the Pak-Identity website (Pakistan n.d.a).

According to the NADRA website, in order to apply for a first registration of an SNIC, the following documents are required:

- Original [NIC]/[SNIC]/National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP)/Smart National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (SNICOP) of parent and any one original document (Child Registration Certificate (CRC) or matric certificate or mark sheet or domicile or passport).

- Attestation of CNICF [CNIC form] by any blood or immediate relative OR NADRA Regulation 9(a-h).
Or
- Original [NIC]/[SNIC]/[NICOP]/[SNICOP] of parent and presence & attestation/verification of any one blood relative(s) (preferably [f]ather). (Pakistan n.d.b)

The NADRA website indicates that, outside Pakistan, there are NRCs in the following countries: South Africa (Pretoria), Italy (Milan), the UK (London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford and Glasgow), Qatar (Doha), United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi and Dubai) and Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Madinah and Riyadh) (Pakistan n.d.c).

According to the NADRA website, a Pakistani citizen applying for an NIC at an NRC will have their photograph, fingerprints, and signature taken at the center, where they will also fill out the application form (Pakistan n.d.a). The source indicates that after filling out the form, the applicant must have it "attest[ed]" by a "gazetted officer" [2] (Pakistan n.d.a).

The NADRA website indicates that if a blood relative (father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter) of the applicant is present during the application process, it is possible to skip the attestation of the form by providing their biometrics at the NRC (Pakistan n.d.a).

According to the NADRA website, a new CNIC processed through "normal service" is free (Pakistan n.d.d) and takes 30 days to be delivered (Pakistan n.d.a). If the new CNIC is processed as "[u]rgent," it costs 1,150 Pakistani rupees (PKR) [approximately C\$11] (Pakistan n.d.d) and takes 15 days for delivery (Pakistan n.d.a). If it is processed as "[f]ast track," delivery takes 7 days (Pakistan n.d.a). The same source indicates that a new SNIC will cost between 750 PKR and 2,500 PKR [approximately C\$7 to C\$24], depending on the service chosen (Pakistan n.d.d). For applications completed through the Pak-Identity website, the processing time is 7 days, in addition to shipping time (Pakistan n.d.a).

1.2 NIC Content and Validity

According to the Australian DFAT report, the NIC [including CNICs and SNICs] displays the following information about its holder: "legal name; gender (male, female or transgender); father's name (or husband's name for a married female); identification marks; date of birth; [NIC] number; family registration ID number; current address; permanent address; date of issue; date of expiry; signature; photo; and thumbprint" (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 5.28). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The DFAT reports adds that the NIC is valid "for five or ten years" and that for senior citizens [above 65 years of age (*Pakistan Today* 30 Aug. 2018)] it is valid "for life" (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 5.28). Similarly, a country report on Pakistan prepared by the Office of Immigration and Nationality of Hungary, based on a fact-finding mission conducted in November 2014, states that an identity card is issued for a validity period of 10 years (Hungary 27 Feb. 2015, 27).

2. The National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP)

2.1 Overview

According to the NADRA website, the NICOP is

a registration document issued to a[n] eligible citizen of Pakistan who lives or has reference [*sic*] abroad.

Any citizen of Pakistan can apply for NICOP and can travel to Pakistan without requiring a visa in case of dual nationality. (Pakistan n.d.e)

The website of the High Commission for Pakistan in London states that Pakistani citizens in the following categories can be issued a "SNICOP [Smart NICOP]":

- a. Emigrant/employment abroad: A Pakistani citizen who is an "emigrant" as defined in the Emigration Ordinance 1979 who is required to register his foreign services agreement, contract or letter of employment with the Protector of Emigrants.
- b. Dual Nationality Holders: A Pakistani citizen holding both Pakistani and foreign citizenship/nationality with proof of such citizenship/nationality. ...
- c. Resident/immigrant visa holders: A Pakistani citizen holding a resident or immigrant visa or equivalent visa/authorization, permit or status of a foreign country.
- d. Resident or Intending to Reside Abroad: Any Pakistani citizen residing or intending to reside abroad for a period exceeding six (6) months and not included in any of the categories defined in para a, b and c above. [The] [f]ollowing persons are also included in this category:
 - i. Dependent: Dependents of emigrants/workers employed abroad/accompanying them abroad.
 - ii. OPF Members: Members of OPF (Overseas Pakistanis Foundation) are also included in this category.
 - iii. Others: All other persons proceeding or residing abroad for business, visit or any other purpose. (Pakistan n.d.f)

The same source indicates that holders of a NICOP are recognized as "regular Pakistani citizen [s]" and that they can enter Pakistan without a visa or a Pakistani passport, vote in Pakistani national elections, open a bank account in Pakistan, apply for a Pakistani passport, and buy and sell property in Pakistan (Pakistan n.d.g). The same source also notes that the SNICOP is a "[s]ubstitute" for the CNIC and that NICOP holders have access to the same benefits as CNIC holders (Pakistan n.d.g).

2.2 Application and Issuance Procedure

According to the NADRA website, the documents needed to apply for a NICOP for the first time are the following:

- Original [NIC]/[SNIC]/[NICOP]/[SNICOP] of parent and any one original document (Child Registration Certificate (CRC) or matric certificate or mark sheet or domicile or passport).
- Attestation of CNICF by any blood or immediate relative OR NADRA Regulation 9(a-h).
Or
- Original NIC/SNIC-NICOP/SNICOP of parent and presence & attestation/verification of any one blood relative(s) (preferably [f]ather). (Pakistan n.d.b)

According to the NADRA website, it is possible to apply for a NICOP either by visiting the nearest NRC or through the Pak-Identity website (Pakistan n.d.e).

2.2.1 At an NRC

According to the NADRA website, the application procedure to obtain a NICOP at an NRC is the following: the applicant will have their photograph, fingerprints, and signature taken; they will fill out the application form; and either the form must be attested by a gazetted officer or a blood relative (father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter) of the applicant must be present during the application process, in which case attestation is not required (Pakistan n.d.e).

For NICOP applications submitted through an NRC, delivery takes 7 to 30 days, depending on the selected processing speed (normal, urgent, or fast-track) (Pakistan n.d.e).

2.2.2 Through the Pak-Identity Website

According to the Pak-Identity website, it is possible to apply online for a new NICOP through the following options:

- If the applicant already possesses a 13-digit NADRA-issued identity number in a Child Registration Certificate (CRC), NICOP, CNIC or Smart ID [SNIC], the first identity document [CRC, NICOP, CNIC or SNIC] will be converted to a NICOP (Pakistan n.d.h).
- If the applicant does not possess a 13-digit NADRA-issued identity number, supporting documents are required (Pakistan n.d.h).

If the applicant does not have a NADRA-issued identity number, the following supporting documents are required:

- Valid copy of Pak[istani]/foreign [p]assport.
AND
- Birth certificate with father['s]/[mother['s]] name in case of foreign birth OR S-1 form. ([If] applicant's Pakistani passport is expired/invalid[,]) it may still be

considered as birth proof.)

AND

- Copies of [p]arent CNIC[.]

AND

- If the child[’s] NICOP is applied [for] within 6 months of the birth[,], then passport is exempted. (Pakistan n.d.i)

If the applicant does not have a NADRA-issued identity number and does not have a blood relative with a NADRA-issued identity document, the following documents are required:

- Valid copy of Pak[istani]/foreign [p]assport.

AND

- An affidavit with two witness attested by [the] concern[ed] [e]mbassy/[m]ission.

AND

- Any documentary proof to establish Pakistani link[.] Example: [d]omicile[,], etc.. (Pakistan n.d.i)

To convert a Child Registration Certificate (CRC) to a NICOP, the following documents are required:

- Valid copy of Pak[istani]/foreign [p]assport.

AND

- Copies of [p]arent CNIC.

AND

- Copy of CRC. (Pakistan n.d.i)

In order to apply for a NICOP on the Pak-Identity website, an applicant must first register for an account on the website (Pakistan n.d.h). The same source describes the following steps that must be completed to obtain a NICOP:

- Create an application in the NEW NICOP category.
- Choose from the IDENTITY HOLDER and NO PREVIOUS IDENTITY options to proceed.
- ...
- Provide the required personal details.
- Upload [applicant’s] photograph as per specification defined in Photograph Tutorial [3][.]
- Upload the supporting documents[.]

- Submit the verifier details.
- NOTE: Provide details of two verifiers if applying for NICOP. Each verifier must be an adult with a valid CNIC/NICOP[.]
- ...
- Download the form and capture 4 fingerprints, as requested by the system. Fill in the verifier information in the form.
- ...
- Review the information you provided, sign the declaration and then submit the application. (Pakistan n.d.h)

According to the NADRA website, once the application is submitted online, the application processing takes seven days, in addition to shipping time (two days within Pakistan, five days internationally) (Pakistan n.d.e). However, according to the Pak-Identity website, the estimated timelines depend on the service chosen: 7 working days for "Executive," 23 for "Urgent" and 31 for "Normal" (Pakistan n.d.j). According to the same source, this is in addition to shipping time (two days within Pakistan, five days internationally) (Pakistan n.d.j).

According to the fee structure presented on the NADRA website, a new NICOP costs between 4,500 and 9,000 PKR [approximately C\$43 to C\$87], depending on the service chosen (Pakistan n.d.d).

2.3 Content and Validity

According to Keesing Technologies' Documentchecker, the following information appears on the front of the NICOP:

- Name
- Father's name
- Gender
- Date [year] of birth
- Country of stay (Keesing Technologies n.d.).

On the back side of the NICOP, the following information is provided:

- Present address
- Permanent address
- NIC
- Issue date
- Expiration date

- An indication that the holder is entitled to visa-free entry into Pakistan (Keesing Technologies n.d.).

According to the High Commission for Pakistan in London, a NICOP is valid for seven years, "irrespective of age of applicant" (Pakistan n.d.k). However, the Pak-Identity website states that, for minors (under 14 years of age), a NICOP is valid for 10 years or until the holder reaches 18 years of age (whichever comes first) (Pakistan n.d.h).

3. NIC and NICOP Renewal Through Pak-Identity Website

The Pak-Identity website indicates that, upon renewal of their identity card, Pakistani citizens can choose to convert their document to a "chip-based Smart-ID card (Smart CNIC/Smart NICOP)" (Pakistan n.d.l). According to the same source, as part of the process to renew their NIC or NICOP, the applicant must upload their photograph and their fingerprints and provide the details of an attester/verifier (Pakistan n.d.l). According to the fee structure indicated on the NADRA website, an NIC renewal costs between 400 PKR and 2,150 PKR [approximately C\$4 to C\$21], depending on the service chosen, while an SNIC renewal costs between 750 PKR and 2,500 PKR [approximately C\$7 to C\$24] (Pakistan n.d.d). The same source indicates that the fee for a NICOP renewal is between 4,500 PKR and 9,000 PKR [approximately C\$43 to C\$87], while a Smart NICOP [SNICOP] renewal costs between 4,900 PKR and 9,400 PKR [approximately C\$47 to C\$91] (Pakistan 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.

Notes

[1] According to its website, Pak-Identity is NADRA's "online ID issuance system" (Pakistan n.d.m).

[2] According to the English-language Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, gazetted officers work in public institutions and have the authority to attest documents, such as NADRA forms or educational degrees (*Dawn* 13 Mar. 2011).

[3] According to the Pak-Identity website, the photograph must be taken professionally, be 45 mm by 35 mm, and be no more than 6 months old with a plain white background (Pakistan n.d.n).

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Pakistan – High Commission in Ottawa.

Internet sites, including: ecoi.net; EU – European Asylum Support Office; Pakistan – Consulate General in Montreal, Consulate General in Vancouver, High Commission in Ottawa; UN – Refworld.

ecoi.net summary:

Query response on Computerised National identity Card (CNIC), the Smart National Identity Card (SNIC) and the National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP) (2017 - December 2018)



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Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

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