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Pakistan: ID cards

Introduction

The following note describes the different ID cards in Pakistan, their issuance procedures and their trustworthiness.

The note is primarily based on interviews conducted in Islamabad, Pakistan in March 2018 and open source information.

For tactical information related to Pakistani documents, see »*Pakistan - Tactical information related to Pakistani documents*«.

The Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC)

NADRA issues five types of ID cards: 1) Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC), 2) National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP), 3) Pakistan Origin Card (POC) and 4) Juvenile Card (JV), 5) Smart National Identity Card (SNIC). The CNIC is the primary ID card and according to NADRA, every citizen of Pakistan at the age of 18 is eligible for the ID card.¹

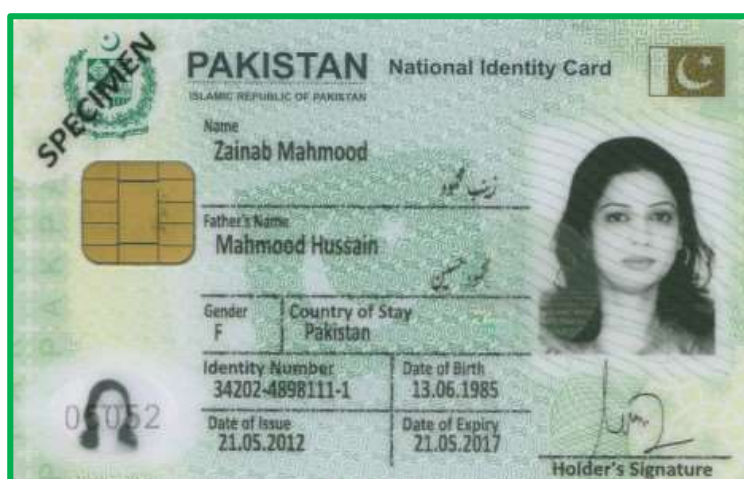


Image 1: Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) smart-ID version (PRADO, 9 March 2021).

¹ NADRA C, year of issue n/a.

Besides being the main form of identification in Pakistan, the CNIC is a requirement when applying for a passport, opening a bank account, applying for a driving licence, accessing aid or social services, registering as a voter and engaging in formal employment.²

The CNIC ID card displays a unique 13-digit number. This number is referred to as the citizenship number, but is also known as the CNIC number. According to NADRA, the CNIC number also appears on the Child Registration Certificate (CRC), and the number is a requirement for attending school.³ However, during the fact-finding mission in March 2018, the Danish National ID Centre came across an example where a girl had attended school for several years without having her birth registered. This finding is consistent with a report published 1 September 2017 by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The report states that the CNIC number is a requirement when entering college or university; hence not a requirement for entering primary school.⁴

It is possible to apply for a CNIC either through one of NADRA's Registration Centres or – in cases not related to first time applications – through the *Pak Identity* website.⁵ For a first time application, it is a requirement to submit the CNIC number of a blood relative together with the applicant's own CRC, school certificate or citizenship certificate. In the absence of a CNIC, the older manual national ID card (MNIC) can be used as well.⁶ An applicant who has turned 18 and holds a CRC must submit the CRC or a copy hereof.⁷

For a first time application, the applicant has to show up at a NADRA Registration Centre, which covers the applicant's place of origin. Here the applicant must submit the application, have his/her photograph taken and provide thumbprint and signature.⁸

During the delegation's meeting with NADRA in Islamabad in March 2018, NADRA made reference to its website when asked about other specific combinations of possible ways to meet the requirements for the issuance of a CNIC e.g. if previous CNIC is lost or a person has had his/her name changed.⁹

National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP)

According to NADRA, any citizen of Pakistan above the age of 18 years is eligible for a NICOP, but the card is intended for Pakistani citizens who live or have reference abroad. This ID card ensures visa-free entry into Pakistan.¹⁰

² NADRA, Islamabad, March 2018; Directorate General of Immigration and Passport, Islamabad, March 2018; UN Women, 4 October 2012; DFAT, 20 February 2019, p. 69.

³ NADRA, Islamabad, March 2018.

⁴ DFAT, 20 February 2019, p. 69.

⁵ NADRA C, National Identity Card (NIC), 2018.

⁶ DFAT, 20 February 2019, p. 69.

⁷ DFAT, 20 February 2019, p. 69.

⁸ DFAT, 20 February 2019, p. 69; NADRA C, year of issue n/a.

⁹ NADRA E, year of issue n/a.

¹⁰ NADRA D, year of issue n/a.

The only requirement for the issuance of NICOP is to present one's own CNIC and one's parents' CNICs.¹¹ In case the applicant does not have a CNIC, the applicant needs to show up at a NADRA registration centre for biometrics.¹²

Pakistan Origin Card (POC)

The POC is intended for persons of Pakistani origin. This card ensures e.g. visa-free entry into Pakistan, permission to purchase and sell property and indefinite stay in Pakistan.¹³ The POC is issued at NADRA offices and Pakistani embassies.¹⁴ The main requirements are a copy of the applicant's valid foreign passport and the applicant's surrendered Pakistani citizenship number. If the applicant does not have a surrendered citizenship number, a blood relative's citizenship number together with a document establishing the relationship with that relative is sufficient.¹⁵

Juvenile Card (JV)

The JV card is issued to children under the age of 18 and is distinguished from the CRC as it is an ID card containing image of the holder. According to NADRA, the JV contains biometrics of one of the holder's parents or blood relative.¹⁶

Smart National Identity Card (SNIC)

The SNIC card is a new electronic version of the CNIC card. The SNIC holds all the same information as the CNIC and has a chip with biometric information about the cardholder as well as security features. The chip also contains a digital signature, digital pictures and fingerprints of 10 fingers of the cardholder. On the rear side of the SNIC there is a QR code. Some versions has a Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) while others do not. All the text on the SNIC is in English.¹⁷

Starting from February 2023, the CNIC and SNIC are issued parallel and the Pakistani citizens can choose which one of the two ID cards they want.¹⁸

Trustworthiness of Pakistani ID cards

Pakistani ID documents are all based on the handwritten birth registration at union council level, which means that the credibility of a given ID document – due to no additional scrutiny at NADRA during the application and issuance process – ultimately lies in this hard-copy archive.

The CNIC, JV, POC and NICOP are all available in a chip-based version (*smart-ID*).¹⁹ According to NADRA, there are no additional requirements other than one's CNIC

¹¹ NADRA, Islamabad, March 2018.

¹² NADRA D, year of issue n/a.

¹³ NADRA F, year of issue n/a.

¹⁴ NADRA, Islamabad, March 2018.

¹⁵ NADRA E, year of issue n/a

¹⁶ NADRA B, year of issue n/a.

¹⁷ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 6 November 2013.

¹⁸ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 6 November 2013.

¹⁹ NADRA A, year of issue n/a.

when applying for a smart-CNIC and NADRA does not undertake any additional investigation.²⁰

²⁰ NADRA, Islamabad, March 2018.

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