



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Egypt
Question(s)	Formal requirements for the issuance of birth and marriage certificates
Date of completion	2 May 2018
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Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	

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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 2 May 2018. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.



COI QUERY RESPONSE

Consulted sources indicate that personal documents in Egypt, such as birth or marriage certificates, might differ depending on the religious affiliation of the person¹. For the purpose of this query response, we focus on the cases of Muslim Egyptians only.

Birth certificate

According to a survey conducted in 2016 and published by the African Union, Egypt is one of the four countries in Africa which 'have managed to maintain a compulsory and universal registration system that meets international standards, including a satisfactory level of registration coverage and completeness of recording vital events and information on cause of death'².

The birth registration in Egypt is covered by Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as amended by Law No. 126 of 2008³.

Chapter 2, article 14 of this law stipulates that:

'Reporting the birth of a child must take place within fifteen (15) days from the date of birth, on the form provided for such purpose, to the health office located in the area where the birth has taken place, if such office exists there, or to the health department in the districts with no health offices, or to the Umda (chief magistrate or the mayor of the village) in other sectors, as indicated in the By-laws.

The Umda shall forward the birth report to the health office or to the health department within seven (7) days from the date of reporting the birth.

The health office or the health department shall forward the birth report to the concerned civil registry office within three (3) days from the date it has been informed, for recording it in the births registry'⁴.

Article 15 of the same law states who is responsible for reporting the birth of a child:

'The persons responsible for reporting the birth shall be the following:

1 - The father of the child, if present.

¹ Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland), *Egypt: Information on religious freedom in Egypt, particular in relation to mixed marriage?*, 12 October 2012, ([url](#)); IRB (Canada), *Egypt: Process for applying for divorce for women who were married in the Muslim community, including laws, difficulties and obstacles (2004-December 2013)*, 23 December 2013, EGY104705.FE ([url](#)); US DoS, *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom - Egypt*, 28 July 2014, ([url](#)).

² African Union, *Report on the status of civil registration and vital statistics in Africa*, 2016, ([url](#)), p. 3.

³ Egypt, *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008 [Egypt]*, 28 March 1996, ([url](#)).

⁴ Egypt, *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008 [Egypt]*, 28 March 1996, ([url](#)).



- 2 - The mother of the child, provided that the marital relationship is confirmed as stipulated in the By-laws .
3. The directors of hospitals and corrective facilities as well as health quarantine houses and other places where births occur.
- 4 - The Umda or the sheikh (...)’⁵.

Article 16 further adds that:

’The following information and data must be included when reporting the birth:

- Date of birth;
- Gender (male/female), name and surname of the newborn;
- Name, surname, nationality, religion, home address and profession of the parents;
- Civil registry location of parents, if known to the person reporting the birth; and
- Any other additional information required by a decree of the Minister of Interior in agreement with the Minister of Health’⁶.

The Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Knowledge Center⁷ notes that a person reporting the birth of a child must present his/her ID⁸.

The state authority responsible for administering and providing Egyptian citizens with birth certificates is the Ministry of Interior (Civil Status Department). *Raqam qawmi*, or a national identification number, assigned at birth, is later included in the national identity card, which is issued to all Egyptian citizens at the age of 16⁹.

According to a report by Human Rights Watch dated 2007, birth certificates cost five Egyptian pounds. A source cited by this report states that ‘converts to Islam get a new birth certificate quickly and free of charge (...)’¹⁰.

In June 2017, the Refugee Studies Centre of the University of Oxford published an article according to which:

⁵ Egypt, *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008 [Egypt]*, 28 March 1996, ([url](#)).

⁶ Egypt, *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008 [Egypt]*, 28 March 1996, ([url](#)).

⁷ This Knowledge Center documents and disseminates United Nations methodological guidelines, research articles and country practices and activities in the area of civil registration and vital statistics. It aims at facilitating the international exchange and sharing of knowledge and information, as well as provision of guidance to countries, and monitoring progress made on civil registration and vital statistics. It is a searchable database that contains documents on civil registration and vital statistics guidelines, demographic methods, and development of civil registration and vital statistics in various countries. See: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/Knowledgebase.aspx> and <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/crvs/index.cshtml#data>

⁸ Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Knowledge Center, *Technical Report on the Status of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in ESCWA Region, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System in Egypt*, ESA/STAT/2009/9, 2008, ([url](#)).

⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, Volume 19, No. 7(E), 12 November 2007, ([url](#)).

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, Volume 19, No. 7(E), 12 November 2007, ([url](#)).



'In Egyptian civil law the birth certificate is the only legal document that proves the existence of a human being, and the validation of other identity documents relies on the birth certificate. The birth certificate is the document that identifies the nationality of the person and his or her parentage.

In Egypt the Civil Registry Office has responsibility for recording children born to both citizens and non-citizens. In the case of children born outside marriage, the mother has the right to have her child's birth registered and to be granted a birth certificate with the mother's name.

Under the Egyptian Personal Status Law, doctors and midwives must issue a certificate with the name of the mother, date of birth and sex of the child'¹¹.

According to information obtained through Wikileaks and published in the news website The Telegraph (UK), it is easy to issue a genuine Egyptian birth certificate based on a handwritten note from a doctor¹². An article by the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) suggests that only married couples can receive birth certificates for their children¹³.

Human Rights Watch notes that Egypt introduced computer-generated birth certificates and plastic national identity cards in 1995. Since then, 'persons needing a birth certificate or national identity card because they had come of age, or needing to replace their existing paper ID, have had no option other than a computer-generated card'¹⁴.

According to the same source of information mentioned by The Telegraph, civil documents, in the Civil Affairs Administration in Cairo, were computerised and centralised and the respective civil records 'have become easily verifiable and under close and constant control'¹⁵.

A computerised copy of a birth certificate includes the child's national identification number and four photographs¹⁶.

According to information collected by the European Union Election Observation Mission in 2014, there is still a segment of the population, which does not have birth certificates¹⁷.

¹¹ Refugee Studies Centre, *Forced Migration Review No. 55 - Shelter in displacement*, June 2017, ([url](#)).

¹² Telegraph (The), *Fraud Summary - Cairo*, 15 February 2011, ([url](#)).

¹³ IRIN, *Egypt: No ID, no government services*, 18 July 2012, ([url](#)), accessed 23 April 2018.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, Volume 19, No. 7(E), 12 November 2007, ([url](#)).

¹⁵ Telegraph (The), *Fraud Summary - Cairo*, 15 February 2011, ([url](#)).

¹⁶ DFAT (Australia), *DFAT Country Information Report Egypt*, 19 May 2017, ([url](#)).

¹⁷ European Union, Election Observation Mission, Arab Republic of Egypt, *Final Report, Presidential Election, 26/27 May 2014*, ([url](#)).



Marriage certificate

In Egypt, matters related to family life are governed by respective personal status laws based on a person's faith¹⁸. In case of Muslims, the law in question is the 'Personal Status Law (No. 25 of 1925, as amended in 1979, 1985, 2000, and 2004)'¹⁹.

In its 2017 report on Egypt, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) notes that 'there is no civil marriage in Egypt and the state administers marriages between Muslims in accordance with sharia, while Christians and Jews must seek marriage under their respective religious institutions. All marriages must be registered with the Ministry of Justice, which issues official marriage certificates'²⁰.

A 'country advice' on Egypt published by the Australian Refugee Review Tribunal in 2010 lists the following requirements for a valid marriage in Egypt:

1. The couple must be of minimum marriage age: 18 for males and 16 for females;
2. Must have consent of the couple;
3. Must have consent of their legal guardians;
4. Two legal witnesses;
5. Payment of dowry or mahr and;
6. In the case of Muslims, the bride cannot be under a marriage contract with another man'²¹.

The same source notes that:

'(...) "standard" marriage procedures in Egypt are "religious" and "civilian" at the same time. In Muslim weddings, the ma'zoun, for Muslims (literally "the authorized" imam), performs a religious ceremony and also acts as an agent for the state. The ma'zoun issues a formal Act of Marriage and also completes a state register, which provides detailed information and lists witnesses. It is also the duty of the ma'zoun to record basic legal details such as identity, age, consent, value of the dowry'²².

¹⁸ Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland), *Egypt: Information on religious freedom in Egypt, particular in relation to mixed marriage?*, 12 October 2012, ([url](#)); IRB (Canada), *Egypt: Process for applying for divorce for women who were married in the Muslim community, including laws, difficulties and obstacles (2004-December 2013)*, 23 December 2013, ([url](#)); US DoS, *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom - Egypt*, 28 July 2014, ([url](#)).

¹⁹ Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 - Egypt*, 3 March 2010, ([url](#)), p. 7.

²⁰ DFAT (Australia), *DFAT Country Information Report Egypt*, 19 May 2017, ([url](#)).

²¹ Refugee Review Tribunal (Australia), *Egypt: What constitutes a valid marriage in Egypt? In order for a marriage in Egypt to be considered valid, must the couple live together and have consummated the marriage?*, 22 March 2010, ([url](#)).

²² Refugee Review Tribunal (Australia), *Egypt: What constitutes a valid marriage in Egypt? In order for a marriage in Egypt to be considered valid, must the couple live together and have consummated the marriage?*, 22 March 2010, ([url](#)).



On the role of the *ma'zoun* (or *maazon*), Zawaj.com, a webpage providing information on the wedding customs around the Muslim world, notes that 'the marriage contract is signed and registered by "maazon", a man who has an official license to sign and register the marriage contract, in attendance of the couple and their families and friends, and this procedure happens in the bride's (sic) house or at a mosque'²³.

Several sources list the requirements for a legal marriage between an Egyptian and a foreigner²⁴.

For reference, below are the excerpts of the requirements for the registration of a marriage between an Egyptian and an American (in case both are Muslims) published by the U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Egypt:

'If both parties are Muslim, the fee is (0.02%) of the dowry (if applicable) or a fee of 35.00 LE. (...)

The Ministry of Justice will perform and register the marriage. Other forms need to be completed at the marriage court and can only be obtained on the day of the wedding or the day before. The following are required:

Proof of identity for both parties, with two photocopies of key biodata. (...)

Egyptian I.D. (Egyptian passport or the National ID)
Five personal photos for each person getting married.

A 50.00LE "Ta'meen Igtimaei" or "Tabe Zawag" stamp (purchased at any Egyptian post office).
Two male witnesses with identification documents (passport or I.D. card) must be present to sign the marriage documents. You are required to bring your own witnesses.(...)

If you are a female of Egyptian origin under the age of 21, you are required to either be accompanied by your father, a guardian, a person in loco parentis, or a written consent from any of the above. (...)

A pre-marriage medical examination at a government hospital is required for both parties. Certificates are issued (sic) to the parties for submission to the marriage office.

It will take at least ten business days for a marriage certificate to be issued by the Ministry of Justice. The marriage certificate must be picked up by one of the parties²⁵.

²³ Zawaj.com, *Egyptian Marriage Customs of the Past and Present*, n.d., ([url](#)).

²⁴ Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Cairo, *Registration of Marriage*, n.d.,([url](#)); Netherlandsworldwide.nl, *Getting married in Egypt*, n.d.,([url](#)); U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Egypt, *Marriage In Egypt*, n.d., ([url](#)).

²⁵ US Embassy and Consulate in Egypt, *Marriage In Egypt*, n.d., ([url](#)).



The state authority responsible for the administration of marriage certificates in Egypt is the Ministry of Interior (the Civil Status Department)²⁶. Obtaining a marriage license requires a birth certificate²⁷.

It should be noted that in Egypt, there are also customary forms of marriage (referred to as *Urfi* or *Orfi*, among others spellings) which are not registered with the state²⁸. An article published by Freedom House in 2010 describes Urfi marriages as:

‘informal civil contracts, signed in the presence of two witnesses, that allow couples to live together, often without the knowledge of their family. Some argue that urfi marriages have proliferated because of the high costs of traditional marriage, whereas others argue that their purpose is to legitimize sexual relations. Approximately three million urfi marriages have been documented by notaries in Egypt, although the actual number is thought to be much higher²⁹.

²⁶ Egypt, Civil Status Organization/Ministry of Interior, *Civil Status Organization, Presentation to the Economic Commission for Africa*, August 2010, ([url](#)).

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, Volume 19, No. 7(E), 12 November 2007, ([url](#)).

²⁸ IRB (Canada), *Egypt: Customary marriage (Zawaj Urfi; Zawj Orfy; Zawha Orfi; Gawaz Urfi; various other spellings) particularly with respect to interfaith marriages*, 1 May 1999, ([url](#)); US DoS, *2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Egypt*, 3 March 2017, ([url](#)).

²⁹ Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 - Egypt*, 3 March 2010, ([url](#)), p.8.



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