



Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 16 February 2015

Information on whether it is usual for somebody applying for a UK visa from Zimbabwe to do so from South Africa (Pretoria). Are there difficulties in applying for a UK visa from Zimbabwe?

A 2009 article from the online edition of the UK-based Zimbabwean newspaper New Zimbabwe states:

“The British embassy announced Friday that all visa applications by Zimbabweans would be handled in South Africa with effect from July this year. In a notice, the embassy said applications would be lodged in Harare and sent by courier to Pretoria for processing.” (New Zimbabwe (11 December 2009) *UK visa applications to be handled in SA*)

A 2011 article from Gambian newspaper The Point states:

“The UK Border Agency official further stated that simply because the visa section is moving where it takes decisions has no impact on what that decision may be, because they get exactly the same information. He also revealed that by the end of this year, there will be only four countries in Africa where decisions for visas will be taken namely, Pretoria in (South Africa), Accra (Ghana), Nairobi (Kenya) and Abuja (Nigeria).” (The Point (7 February 2011) *British High Commission relocates visa section to Accra, as UK Gov't faces massive budget deficit*)

A notice published on the Voyagers Zambia website states:

“The visa section at the British High Commission in Pretoria operates as the regional processing centre for Southern Africa. They already process all applications submitted in Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and Malawi as well as applications submitted in South Africa itself.” (Voyagers Zambia (undated) *Important notice about UK visa applications submitted at the British High Commission in Lusaka*)

A recent article from UK newspaper The Guardian refers to a Zimbabwean family applying for UK visas as follows:

“Andrea’s father said the grandparents and aunt had received a call from the Pretoria British visa office in South Africa, which processes the visa applications.” (The Guardian (5 February 2015) *Andrea Gada’s family granted visas to attend funeral*)

A document originating from the British Embassy in Harare states:

“The British Embassy would like to inform it’s UK visa customers in Zimbabwe that with immediate effect all visa applications are to be completed online at

www.Visa4UK.fco.gov.uk. This brings our application process in Zimbabwe in line with the rest of Southern Africa, where online applications have been in place for some time. After completing their application online, customers will select an appointment time at our Visa Application Centre in Harare to submit their biometrics and supporting documentation. With this change it is now mandatory that UK visa customers pay for their visa fee online by MasterCard or Visa credit or debit card. The move to online application and payments will deliver a streamlined application process and is consistent with a wider global trend to online transactions and payments. It meets the requirements of the UK Government's Digital by Default initiative and will help cut costs in the management of the visa operation, which in turn helps to keep visa fees down." (British Embassy Harare (31 March 2014) *New UK Visa Application Procedures for Zimbabwe*)

See also article from Zimbabwean newspaper News Day which states:

"The British Embassy in Harare on Monday announced that visa applications would now be done online and payment made by debit cards. Most Zimbabweans use hard cash and have no access to MasterCards, credit or debit cards. 'With this change, it is now mandatory that UK visa customers pay for their visa fee online by MasterCard or visa credit or debit card,' said the embassy in a statement on its website. 'The move to online application and payments will deliver a streamlined application process and is consistent with a wider global trend to online transactions and payments. This brings our application process in Zimbabwe in line with the rest of southern Africa, where online applications have been in place for some time.' According to the statement, Zimbabweans will no longer have to queue at the embassy to apply for a visa as they would now be required to visit the www.Visa4UK.fco.gov.uk website, to apply online and for an appointment time." (News Day (4 April 2014) *Britain introduces stringent visa conditions*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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