



Afghanistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 19 November 2014

Please confirm whether in Afghanistan in a taskera (tazkira) it is always the case that a person's age is stated to be "determined to be" rather than the actual age inserted as verified by for example a birth cert. When applying for a taskera, what documents are requested by the authorities to determine a d.o.b.? Is there any evidence of taskeras being capable of authentication forensically or by comparison with taskeras known to be genuine?

A document published by the US embassy in Kabul, in a section titled "An Introduction to Documents in Afghanistan", states:

"The most common Afghan identity document inside Afghanistan is the national id, or tazkera. Tazkeras are issued by local police stations. It is usually applied for when a child reaches school age but can also be obtained and/or modified throughout adulthood. Even if it is not obtained or modified fraudulently the tazkera is an unreliable identity document. Biometric information is limited to vague physical description and it may not even include a photo. Biographic information is even more opaque. The date of birth is usually a mere estimate and the place of birth is based on tribal origin, not the actual location of birth." (US Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan (Fraud Prevention Unit) (June 2011) *A Guide to Afghan Documents*)

An undated but apparently current US Department of State country reciprocity schedule for Afghanistan, in a paragraph headed "Other Records", states:

"The most universal and accurate document in Afghanistan is the national identity card (tazkera). The older version of the tazkera is a small, stapled booklet, while the newer version is a single sheet of paper. In addition to the name of the individual, the father's and paternal grandfather's names are provided. The mother's name is usually not listed. The year of birth (approximate for older persons) and marital status are also listed. Days and months of birth are routinely not used in Afghanistan. It is not unusual for individuals to not have a tazkera until they need one for such activities as school registration or immigration." (US Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs (undated) *Afghanistan Reciprocity Schedule*)

A country report published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia, in a section titled "Identification Cards" (paragraph 5.23), states:

"The Taskera certificate is the most common form of identification in Afghanistan. Taskeras are printed on plain paper and include information including the bearer's name, father's name, grandfather's name, place and date of birth, place of residency, type of occupation and status of military

service. Information included on Taskera certificates is sometimes incomplete. Other than stamped seals, Taskeras do not include any security features. (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia (26 March 2014) *DFAT Country Report: Afghanistan*, p.21)

Paragraph 5.25 of this report states:

“Official Taskeras are issued by the Population Registration Department of the Ministry of the Interior in provinces and districts throughout Afghanistan. Generally, the required supporting information for the issuance of a Taskera will be a copy of the father’s Taskera. Record keeping is not centralised or computerised.” (ibid, p.21)

In a section titled Document Fraud (paragraph 5.31) this report states:

“There are widespread concerns regarding the availability of fraudulent identity documentation in Afghanistan. Because the process for obtaining some documents, including Taskeras, is largely decentralised to the provincial level, it is vulnerable to fraud. Forgeries of Afghan documentation are able to be purchased with relative ease in many parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan.” (p.21)

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information on the Tazkira, in a section titled “Description of Tazkira Certificates”, refers to information provided by an official of the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan as follows:

“According to the High Commission official, Tazkira certificates are only available through the Ministry of Interior, and they have looked the same since 2001. However, the official stated that Tazkira certificates ‘are not always fully completed with biographical information and are always completed by hand’. He also noted that ‘clerk entries’ can vary.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (16 September 2011) *AFG103812.E – Afghanistan: Description and samples of the Tazkira booklet and the Tazkira certificate; information on security features*)

This section of the response also states:

“The applicant’s date of birth can be a guesstimate, at times expressing only the year and not the month, at times stating the month and year of birth according to the Persian solar calendar. Most common is a statement saying the applicant was a certain age in a certain year. The calendar used is Islamic and begins in 622 AD. Thus, adding 621 years and 3 months to the month and year of birth will be the equivalent of the applicant’s birthday under our Gregorian solar calendar.” (ibid)

In a section titled “Security Features” this response states:

“The counsellor at the Embassy of Afghanistan said that Tazkira certificates and booklets do not have security features. However, according to the High Commission official, the security features in Tazkira documents are ‘mainly present through official wet seals that bear the name of the issuing office (Ministry of Interior)’. He added that these seals ‘seem to be stamped

arbitrarily throughout the booklets'. The official mentioned that another security feature of Tazkira documents is that the photos are overlapped by the official wet seals. The official added that entries made in Tazkira booklets are also signed by a government official, while Tazkira certificates are signed by two government employee witnesses. Regarding the security features of Tazkira booklets issued during the Communist regime, the official stated that the pages inside the booklet are 'tinted pink by inkjet, and landscaped with the seal of the period. This goes for all pages except the last 4 reserved for military history, which are plain white'." (ibid)

This section of the response quotes the High Commission official as follows:

"Historically, Afghan culture has not placed emphasis on the same identity markers as is relied upon in the West. Where full and accurate names and dates and places of birth are key to establishing the identity of Western citizens, genealogy, lineage, and tribal ethnicity have been those markers used by Afghans to self-identify. Perhaps it is partially for this reason that security features on Tazkira documents are simple and as a result these documents can and are easily replicated and accessible." (ibid)

A 2014 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response, in a section titled "Background", states:

"Owing to the conflict in Afghanistan, there has been no regular, national issue of the tazkira since 1976. Different governments have issued tazkiras at different times that are still valid, but they have provided an opportunity for forgery and misrepresentation. Moreover, the document is still paper-based and hand-written, and people do not routinely register births or apply for a tazkira, unless they need one to go to school or university or to obtain a passport. As a consequence, there is not a consistent and reliable system of population registration in the country at the moment, and the true population of Afghanistan is unknown." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (14 February 2014) *AFG104742.E – Afghanistan: Requirements and procedures to obtain an e-Tazkira; description of the card, including appearance and security features*)

A report published by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, in a section titled "National Identification and Birth Registration", states:

"National ID cards have been printed on delicate paper that is very vulnerable and prone to decay. It is therefore difficult to maintain such cards. On the other hand, it is very easy to forge these cards. In addition, the relevant authorities are negligent and inattentive in recording applicants' data in national ID cards and there are mistakes when writing names, fathers' names, age, and other data of applicants on cards. This will cause many problems for the applicants in the future." (Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) (29 November 2011) *Fifth Report: Situation of Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan*, p.116)

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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Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) (29 November 2011) *Fifth Report: Situation of Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan*
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International Crisis Group

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