



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	NIGERIA
Main subject	<u>Exit Procedures and Controls</u>
Question(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Exit procedures and controls at airports</u>2. <u>Exit procedures and controls at land borders</u>
Date of completion	22 June 2021
Query Code	Q14-2021
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	N/A

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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on 22 June 2021. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.

COI QUERY RESPONSE – Nigeria

1. Exit Procedures and Controls

According to the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) ‘the general requirements for Nigerians to depart Nigeria are:

- a. ‘Nigerian passport with at least six (6) months validity
- b. Valid visa to onward destination except to countries Nigeria has Visa Abolition Agreement with
- c. Sufficient Funds’.

These requirements apply for exit from both airports and land borders.¹

1.1 Exit procedures and controls at airports

According to the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), there are eleven domestic airports in Nigeria and 6 international airports, which are: Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos (LOS), Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja (ABV), Port Harcourt International Airport (PHC), Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport in Kano (KAN), Akanu Ibiam International airport (ENU) in Enugu and Margaret Ekpo International Airport (CBQ) in Calabar.²

Various types of passports and travel documents currently in place in Nigeria are listed on the NIS’ website, including a description of each document and requirements for obtaining it.³ Under the ‘Passport’ section, the NIS mentions the following types:

- Enhanced E-passport⁴
- Standard Passport⁵
- Official Passport⁶
- Diplomatic Passport⁷

Additionally, an ECOWAS travel certificate also exists which allows Nigerian to travel through west African countries.⁸ The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) consists of fifteen countries located in the Western African region, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.⁹

On 4 December 2020, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with support from the Government of Canada, handed over equipment to the NIS in order to deploy the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS).¹⁰ MIDAS was officially presented in

¹ NIS, Operations, Airport and land, n.d., [url](#)

² FAAN, International Airports, n.d., [url](#)

³ NIS, Services, n.d, [url](#)

⁴ NIS, Services, Enhanced E-passport, n.d, [url](#)

⁵ NIS, Services, Standard passport, n.d, [url](#)

⁶ NIS, Services, Official passport, n.d, [url](#)

⁷ NIS, Services, Diplomatic passport, n.d, [url](#)

⁸ NIS, Services, ECOWAS travel certificates, n.d, [url](#)

⁹ ECOWAS, Member states, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰ UN Nigeria, UN, Canada hand over MIDAS equipment to Nigeria Immigration Service as international travel resumes, 31 December 2020, [url](#)

2019 by NIS at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, which is the second busiest airport in Nigeria, serving approximately five million passengers annually. This system ‘enables immigration and border officials to process travellers more rapidly and professionally, making their border-crossing experience safer and more humane’.¹¹ The system aims to strengthen migration and border management capacity in the country as it ‘allows to collect, process, store and analyse traveller information and share data in real-time across an entire national border network’. Its equipment includes ‘56 desktop computers, 50 sets of fingerprint scanners, passport readers and webcams, among other items which will be distributed among the international airports in Abuja, the country’s political and administrative centre, and Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial capital’.¹²

NIS Comptroller General, Muhammad Babandede, explained that MIDAS “ensure that those crossing Nigerian borders do not pose threats to national and international security”. Furthermore, the system ‘enables States to more effectively monitor those entering and exiting their territory by land, air and sea while providing a sound statistical basis for migration policy-related planning’. Nationwide system of MIDAS ‘enables real-time data synchronization between the airports and the NIS Headquarters in Nigeria’s capital to effectively monitor those entering and exiting through the country’s air borders. The system can also send automatic queries to INTERPOL databases and relevant watchlists in order to detect travel documents and individuals potentially linked to transnational organized crime, including human trafficking and migrant smuggling.’¹³

Nigerian news website The Guardian stated that according to this new system, clearance procedures are established, which provide that all persons crossing Nigeria’s international borders must appear before an immigration officer at an immigration counter for verification. These passengers must also submit their national passports and any kind of relevant travel documents that may be requested. These procedures are in line with the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) guidelines on international travel and all persons travelling outside the country are to comply with the procedures on passenger clearance, as stipulated in the Immigration Act, 2015.¹⁴

Local media sources reported that, in March 2021, a ‘temporary passport’ was launched by the Nigerian government to replace the Emergency Travel Certificate (ETC).¹⁵ The specific passport is an ‘electronic document with all the features of a regular passport but valid for one trip’ and it will be issued at the entry point. Minister of Interior, Rauf Aregbesola declared that “the temporary passport will no doubt help to checkmate the excesses of criminal elements that take advantage of the ETC to infiltrate the country”.¹⁶

The Council of Foreign Affairs stated that, according to Nigerian media, the FAAN has received guidelines from the Federal Ministry of Aviation to increase airport security in April 2021. An increased presence of Nigerian military personnel was referred in the airports of Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kano, and Maiduguri, as the Nigerian army has already assumed responsibility for security at the airports in northern Nigeria.¹⁷

¹¹ IOM, Nigeria Immigration Service IOM launch border management information system at largest airport at date, 15 November 2019, [url](#)

¹² UN Nigeria, UN, Canada hand over MIDAS equipment to Nigeria Immigration Service as international travel resumes, 31 December 2020, [url](#)

¹³ IOM, Nigeria Immigration Service IOM launch border management information system at largest airport at date, 15 November 2019, [url](#)

¹⁴ Guardian (The), NIS introduces MIDAS, clearance procedures for int’l travellers, 8 January 2020, [url](#)

¹⁵ Guardian (The), FG launches E-Temporary Passport to replace ETC, 9 March 2021, [url](#); Premium Times, Nigerian govt replaces emergency travel certificate with temporary passport, 10 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶ Premium Times, Nigerian govt replaces emergency travel certificate with temporary passport, 10 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷ CFR, Nigeria beefs up airport security, 23 April 2021, [url](#)

1.2. Exit procedures and controls at land borders

Until 2016, there were no data systems in Nigeria's land borders control 'commonly used for inspecting travel documents, conducting automated security checks, and tracking movements in and out of the country'.¹⁸ The aforementioned Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS), launched for airport controls in December 2019, also supports operations at land borders controls and according to IOM effectively monitors those exiting the territory by land.¹⁹

Nigeria closed its land borders with neighbouring countries Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger in August 2019 for the movement of goods, while people were allowed to pass through. Nigerian officials said the measure was taken in order to prevent the smuggling of goods, particularly rice. A partial reopening of the land borders was announced on 16 December 2020 and passage by light vehicles and pedestrians was allowed only since January 2021.²⁰

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) interviewed trade officials who said that 'the closure had probably resulted in new smuggling routes as illicit dealers are determined to move their goods across borders.' Already, unapproved routes facilitate informal trading as a long-standing economic practice in local communities. The Benin-Nigeria borders due to their porosity consist numerous informal routes, and as a result individuals and networks are enabled to smuggle goods without detection by customs and immigration officials on both sides. The border provides cover for smugglers, as it is over 780 km long and often passes through thick forests and rivers.²¹

ISS research reveals that there are instances where officials accept bribes which range depending on the size of the consignments and the assistance they provide. Unapproved Benin-Nigeria routes are used during the night for smuggling goods and local communities, taxi and motorbike riders, small boats and border officials help the illicit trade. The Okpara River and forest areas in the Borgou Department of Benin, the Porto-Novo Lagoon in Benin to Badagry in Nigeria, and the swampy areas in Benin's Ouémé Department are the places where many of the movements take place.²²

An article by the local news website, The Guardian, on 23 December 2020 mentioned that seven days after the reopening of the borders, the Joint Border Patrol Teams (JBPT) which was put in place to enforce movement restrictions during the 16-month border closure, were still operational in Seme.²³ Furthermore in an article by the Vanguard, it is reported that Nigeria's border security officials under Operation Swift Response (OSR) have established a joint patrol team in a cooperation with their counterparts from the Republics of Benin and Niger. The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) said that 'OSR has transformed into Nigeria's Joint Border Patrol Team (JBPT), in a renewed effort to combat transnational crimes along the borders of the 3 countries'.²⁴

The UK Home Office declares that additional checks take place at the Nigeria-Benin, Nigeria-Niger and Nigeria-Cameroon land borders and warns travellers to Nigeria who are planning to make a land crossing from Nigeria, to check with the local authorities for the latest information before travelling.²⁵

¹⁸ IOM, Solar powered data systems bolster border management in Nigeria, 19 May 2017, [url](#)

¹⁹ IOM, Nigeria Immigration Service IOM launch border management information system at largest airport at date, 15 November 2019, [url](#)

²⁰ ISS, Nigeria; s border closures haven't served their purpose, 22 March 2021, [url](#)

²¹ ISS, Nigeria; s border closures haven't served their purpose, 22 March 2021, [url](#)

²² ISS, Nigeria; s border closures haven't served their purpose, 22 March 2021, [url](#)

²³ Guardian (The), Border reopening joint border patrol teams still in operation at Seme, 23 December 2020, [url](#)

²⁴ Vanguard, Smuggling: Nigeria's security officials begin joint border patrol with Benin and Niger, 7 January 2021, [url](#)

²⁵ UK Home Office, Foreign travel advice Nigeria, updated 11 June 2021, [url](#)

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