

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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> Responses to Information Requests

## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email [Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca](mailto:Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca).

14 January 2015

### PAK105021.E

Pakistan: Fraudulent documents, including non-identity documents such as academic qualification documents, travel documents, First Information Requests (FIRs), land ownership titles and newspaper articles, and identity documents including identity cards and birth certificates; methods of obtaining fraudulent documents and assessing the credibility of fraudulent documents(2012-December 2014)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### 1. Availability of Fraudulent Documents

The website of the US embassy in Islamabad indicates that the availability of fraudulent documents in Pakistan is "widespread" and that the quality of local documents is "inconsistent" (US n.d.). 2012 sources quote Adam Thomson, then British High Commissioner to Pakistan, as saying in 2012 that "'fraud and forgery were very strong industries in Pakistan'" (*The Express Tribune* 27 July 2012; *The Telegraph* 27 July 2012). A July 2013 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report on human trafficking and human smuggling to and from Pakistan states that "[I]legitimate documents obtained through fraudulent means, either through false marriages or other misrepresentations, are on the increase" (UN July 2013, 36).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a lawyer at an Islamabad-based law firm whose areas of practice include commercial fraud, intellectual property, real property, banking and finance, wrote that it is "very easy" to obtain fraudulent documents in Pakistan (Lawyer 30 Nov. 2014). He also indicated that fraudulent documents are used for "fraud and misrepresentation" before private and public authorities (*ibid.*). The lawyer stated that fraudulent documents can be obtained either on the black market, through people who operate with the "connivance" of junior employees working at different institutions, or directly through the payment of bribes (*ibid.*).

#### 2. Types of Fraudulent Documents

The lawyer indicated that the types of documents routinely found to be fraudulent in Pakistan include documents regarding academic qualifications such as degrees and transcripts, bank statements, "agreements", "references", and "ownership deeds" (*ibid.*). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), an "independent, non-partisan and a not-for-profit civil society organization working on issues of peace and development in Pakistan" (CPDI n.d.), similarly said that fake property documents and documents concerning "valuable entitlements" are routinely found in Pakistan (*ibid.* 22 Dec. 2014).

##### 2.1 Documents Regarding Academic Qualifications

The lawyer indicated that fake degrees can be obtained from unregistered Madrassas [Islamic religious schools (PBS n.d.; Al Jazeera 2 Mar. 2014)] by paying "some money" (Lawyer 30 Nov. 2014). Corroborating

information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

TOLOnews, a news broadcaster based in Kabul, reports that, according to an official of Afghanistan's general consulate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, Pakistani education credentials are forged in Pakistan for use in Afghanistan (TOLOnews 10 Mar. 2014). The official is quoted as saying that "hundreds" of Afghans have been recruited into government jobs and universities by submitting forged credentials (ibid.). In June 2014, the *Express Tribune*, an English-language newspaper based in Karachi, reported the detention of a person who was "operating a racket" for forging educational degrees in South Cantt (12 June 2014). The newspaper reports that, after being questioned by the South Cantt police, the individual admitted that he had forged "hundreds" of educational certificates for people applying for jobs abroad (ibid.). He told police, according to the article, that he charged 40,000 Pakistani rupees (PKR) [C\$465] for a fake FA certificate [pre-university Faculty of Arts certificate] and 30,000 PKR [C\$348] for a matriculation certificate [secondary school certificate] (ibid.). The South Cantt police indicated that the individual arrested had counterfeit stamps and special paper for the certificates, and that he had accomplices in "various cities" (ibid.). Additional information on the arrest of the individual by the South Cantt police could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources reported in April 2014 that, in compliance with a decision by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has been verifying the education credentials of 16,000 employees, and the airline terminated 300 employees discovered to have fake degrees (*Dawn* 5 Apr. 2014; *The Express Tribune* 4 Apr. 2014). The *Express Tribune* reported that the employment status of 50 other employees is pending a court decision (ibid.). Information on the employment status of these employees could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. Sources indicate that among those with fake degrees were pilots, air hostesses, and engineers (*Dawn* 5 Apr. 2014; PTI 5 Apr. 2014).

Sources reported in May 2014 that, since January 2014, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) had dismissed 20 of its employees after it found that they had fake education credentials (*Pakistan Today* 6 May 2014; *Daily Times* 6 May 2014).

The website of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, the government agency that supports higher education in Pakistan (Pakistan 21 June 2013), indicates that it can attest degrees either in person [at a HEC office], which can be done the same day, or by courier, which takes more than 15 days within Pakistan or more than 20 days from another country (ibid. 2 Dec. 2012a). The HEC has offices in Islamabad (ibid. 2 Dec. 2012b), Lahore, Peshawar, and Karachi (ibid. 11 Sept. 2014).

## 2.2 Travel Documents

Article 6 of the *Passports Act, 1974*, outlines the penalties related to passport fraud (Pakistan 1974). Article 6 is attached to this Response.

Sources report that unlicensed travel "consultants" in Pakistan offer services for individuals to travel abroad with forged documents (*The Express Tribune* 31 Mar. 2013; UN July 2013, 35). The UNODC report indicates that, according to an official of Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), these "consultants" are not regulated in Pakistan, "which leaves opportunities for such businesses to act as fronts for smuggling networks" (ibid.). The FIA official interviewed by the UNODC also said that smugglers offer a "guarantee system," meaning that if a migrant is caught using fraudulent documents abroad and that migrant is sent back to Pakistan, the smuggler provides a "supply of fresh documents for the migrant to attempt migration two more times. A total of three times is usually included in the price" (ibid.). An April 2013 report produced by the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX), a European Union agency set up to "reinforce and streamline cooperation between national border authorities" (EU n.d.), indicates that, of 7,888 cases of persons using fraudulent documents during entry into the European Union or the Schengen area in 2012, 262 involved Pakistani nationals (ibid. Apr. 2013, 75).

July 2012 sources quote Adam Thomson, then British High Commissioner to Pakistan, as describing Pakistan as a "world leader in the visa fraud business, which is why [the British High Commission has] to check very scrupulously every single application, every single passport, every single document" (*The Express Tribune* 27 July 2012; *The Telegraph* 27 July 2012). He added that, in 2011, the British High Commission detected about 4,000 fake documents submitted by Pakistani citizens when applying for a UK visa (ibid.; *The Express Tribune* 27 July 2012). Additional information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources report that, after India declared polio certificates mandatory from 30 January 2014 for Pakistanis wishing to obtain a visa to travel to that country, the Indian High Commission in Islamabad

indicated that it had detected "several" forged polio certificates accompanying visa applications (PTI 9 Oct. 2014; *Dawn* 9 Oct. 2014).

On 3 October 2013, the *Nation*, a newspaper based in Lahore, reported that, according to FIA data, a "number" of Pakistanis were sent abroad on forged documents between January 2012 and January 2013 with the help of FIA officials (*The Nation* 3 Oct. 2013). The article cites 89 cases of Pakistani individuals who travelled abroad on fake passports and lists their respective passport numbers (*ibid.*). Sources report that, in September 2014, at London's Heathrow airport, UK immigration officials detained 10 Afghan nationals who were in possession of fake Pakistani passports and UK visas (*Dawn* 6 Oct. 2014; *The News International* 4 Oct. 2014). Sources report that the FIA tried to "cover up the scandal," but the British High Commission complained to the Pakistani government (*ibid.*; *The Nation* 14 Oct. 2014).

*The Nation* reports that, according to a Pakistani immigration official, human smugglers charge 2.5 million PKR [C\$28,946] for sending a person to Canada on forged documents and 1.5 million PKR [C\$17,367] to go to Europe (*ibid.*). The UNODC report indicates that visa "consultants" charge between US\$14,000 and US\$16,000 for obtaining a legitimate UK visa by fraudulent means such as using false statements and fake documents (UN July 2013, 35). The report also indicates that a forged visa on an authentic passport can cost between US\$2,000 and US\$3,000 (*ibid.*). The UNODC report further indicates that, in order to avoid being charged under the *Pakistan Penal Code*, forgers and other "agents and facilitators" pay back the money received from the migrants and reach a compromise with them to drop the charges (*ibid.*, 62).

### 2.3 First Information Response (FIR)

A February 2013 article in the *Nation* reports that of a total of 400,000 cases registered with the police in the province of Punjab in 2012, 42,000 cases were cancelled after the police found that the charges were "totally baseless" (*The Nation* 9 Feb. 2013). The same article notes that, in 2011, Punjab police had declared 41,820 cases to be "bogus" (*ibid.*).

The US *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013* for Pakistan indicates that "[s]ome police charged fees to register genuine complaints and accepted bribes for registering false complaints" (US 27 Feb. 2014, 41). Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2013* report on Pakistan indicates that the police "takes bribes to file false blasphemy charges against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, and occasionally Muslims ... with several dozens of cases reported each year" (2013). International Christian Concern (ICC), a Christian advocacy organization based in Washington, DC that describes itself as "a bridge between believers in free countries and believers in persecuted countries" (ICC n.d.), reports that, according to a human rights activist in Faisalabad, Pakistan's blasphemy laws are used to lay false charges against local Christians (*ibid.* 4 Sept. 2014). For additional information on blasphemy law in Pakistan, please refer to Response to Information Request PAK104260.

According to a High Court advocate in Islamabad, Pakistan, it is "easy" to file a false FIR by bribing a police officer, and the motives for such filings include "personal enmity, desire to harass others, or to involve [an] innocent person from a rival tribe" (High Court advocate 5 Jan. 2015). The High Court advocate explained that accused persons, half of them innocent according to him, have to attend court hearings that are often adjourned as well as incur expenses (*ibid.*). He also indicated that, by contrast, genuine FIRs are "difficult to lodge," and that victims or their relatives have to file a "Writ Petition" with the High Court to obtain an order so the police register an FIR (*ibid.*).

For additional information on FIRs, including false reporting, please refer to Response to Information Request PAK104714.

### 2.4 Land Ownership Titles

The representative of the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives indicated that fake property documents and "documents concerning valuable entitlements" are routinely found in Pakistan (22 Dec. 2014). The High Court advocate noted that fake land ownership titles are "generally" obtained with the "connivance" of officials from the government's revenue agency and are used to obtain loans, occupy someone else's property, or involve the true owner of the land in a "long-drawn litigation" (High Court advocate 5 Jan. 2015).

### 2.5 Newspaper Articles

The High Court advocate indicated that "fake" articles can get published in newspapers, especially those publications that have limited circulation, but expressed the opinion that "it is not very common these days to find a fake or bogus article" (*ibid.*). The same source added that, often motivated by their own agenda or the owner's business or political interests, newspapers publish "fake" articles with stories that "may not be entirely false but nevertheless untrue" (*ibid.*). He concluded by saying that there are no sanctions established in

Pakistan regarding the publishing of "fake" stories (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 2.6 Identity Cards and Birth Certificates

*Dawn*, an English-language newspaper based in Karachi, reports that, during a 22 January 2013 meeting of the Pakistani Senate's Standing Committee of Interior, the Director of NADRA indicated that foreigners use forged documents such as birth certificates or education certificates to obtain Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) (22 January 2013). The Director also indicated that, since Pakistan does not have "any concept of [a] work permit," foreigners who get employment in Pakistan eventually use employment-related documents to obtain legitimate CNICs (ibid.). He noted that NADRA had "blocked" CNICs of 27,000 foreigners over the previous 12 years, and that investigative agencies had "cleared" almost 90 percent of them (ibid.).

In an article published by IFEX, a global network of NGOs that promotes freedom of expression as a fundamental right (IFEX n.d.), Nighat Dad, a lawyer based in Pakistan, with experience in criminal, civil, and corporate law (Future Challenges n.d.), indicates that despite the security features of CNICs, "identity fraud is still a massive issue" in Pakistan (ibid. 23 July 2014). Dad interviewed an "identity agent" who does travel arrangements for Afghans entering Pakistan and who indicated that

[t]he process can involve finding a Pakistani family willing to sell their own identity for a hefty amount in exchange for registering aliens as family members and providing the necessary documentation for registering [them] as siblings. Alternatively, it can also involve using already available identity cards from banks, universities and government offices where people provide copies of their CNIC as part of documentation. ... The last step in the fraud is to educate the applicant about his 'parents' and 'siblings' so he can identify them when interviewed by NADRA officials. To do that ... there are certain people who will sell the entire files of information regarding families at a reasonable price. Once you have your ID card, you can apply for a passport to travel onwards. (ibid.)

The "identity agent" further indicated to Dad that he charges about US\$1,313 per Pakistani ID card (ibid.).

On 22 September 2012, the *Express Tribune* reported that NADRA had initiated a national crackdown against holders of fake CNICs (*The Express Tribune* 22 Sept. 2012). The initiative came after the FIA arrested 24 NADRA and Immigration and Passports officials in July 2012 for issuing fake CNICs in Lahore (ibid.). Sources report that, on 19 February 2013, the FIA arrested four NADRA employees accused of providing fake CNICs to Afghan refugees (DND 19 Feb. 2013; *Dawn* 19 Feb. 2013). The arrested NADRA officials had been providing these ID cards since 2009 in exchange for a "huge amount" of money (ibid.; DND 19 Feb. 2013). Sources report that 74 employees were dismissed from NADRA after its "automated auditing system," which records every transaction made by employees processing CNICs, detected malpractice by these employees (PPI 29 Nov. 2013; *Dawn* 4 Nov. 2013). *Dawn* further reports that, in connection with the dismissal of the 74 employees, an investigation identified a "group of agents" who were bribing NADRA employees to process fake ID cards (ibid.). On 6 May 2014, sources reported that the NADRA dismissed 20 employees after it found that they were engaged in "illegal" processing of CNICs (*Pakistan Today* 6 May 2014; *Daily Times* 6 May 2014). Information on whether charges were laid could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

On 30 July 2012, *Pakistan Today*, an English-language newspaper based in Lahore, reported that the union-council secretaries of the Tehsil Municipal Administration were issuing fake birth certificates in exchange for "handsome graft." Additional or corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A health official interviewed by *Dawn* in May 2014 indicated that the issuance of bogus birth and death certificates was on the rise (5 May 2014). On 26 March 2014, *The Express Tribune* reported that NADRA "took notice of 100,000 bogus birth certificates issued in Lahore," which were alleged to have been issued by around 150 union councils in exchange for bribes. Additional and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 3. Effectiveness of the Law

Chapter XVIII of the Pakistan Penal Code addresses "[o]ffenses related to documents and to trade or property marks" (Pakistan 1860). A copy of the chapter is attached to this Response.

The US *Country Reports* indicates that

[t]he law provides for criminal penalties for official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices. Corruption was pervasive in politics

and government, and various politicians and public office holders faced allegations of corruption, including bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement. (27 Feb. 2014, 41).

Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2014* report on Pakistan indicates that

[c]orruption, lack of accountability, and lack of transparency are pervasive problems at all levels of government, politics, and the military. ... The National Accountability Bureau has made little progress in tackling official graft, due largely to inadequate political will and institutional capacity. (2014)

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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**Oral sources:** A representative of the Digital Rights Foundation and a professor of sociology at the University of Punjab were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Attempts to contact the following individuals and organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Citizens Police Liaison Committee in Karachi; Pakistan – Higher Education Commission; a professor of international law at Fayetteville State University of North Carolina, a professor of sociology at Quaid-i-Azam University.

Representatives of the Canadian embassy in Islamabad and the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives did not provide information.

**Internet sites, including:** *The Age*; Amnesty International; Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation; British Broadcasting Corporation; Daijiworld; eoi.net; Factiva; *The Hindu*; Huffington Post; Human Rights Watch; India – High Commission in Islamabad; International Crisis Group; Minority Rights Group; Pakistan – Balochistan Police, Lahore High Court, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Punjab Police, Sindh Police, Supreme Court; Pakistan Press Foundation; Saach TV; *The Salem News*; *The Sun*; United Kingdom – Border Agency; United Nations – Refworld, ReliefWeb; United States – USAID; Zee News.

## Attachment

1. Pakistan. 1974. *Passports Act, 1974*. Article 6.  
<[www.pakistansocietyofcriminology.com/laws/ThePassportAct1974.doc](http://www.pakistansocietyofcriminology.com/laws/ThePassportAct1974.doc)> [Accessed 28 Nov. 2014]
2. Pakistan. 1860. *Pakistan Penal Code (Act XLV of 1860)* (amended 2012).  
<<http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/1860/actXLVof1860.html>> [Accessed 28 Nov. 2014]

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