

Document #1424014

IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Pakistan: Airport security screening procedures for passengers departing on international flights, including whether authorities verify if a passenger is wanted by the police (2015-December 2017)
[PAK106025.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Authorities Responsible for Screening Procedures at International Airports

According to the website for the Jinnah International Airport at Karachi, the body responsible for airport security in Pakistan is the Airports Security Force (ASF), which "safeguards the aviation industry against unlawful interferences, adopting counter terrorism measures, preventing crime and maintaining law within the limits of Airports in Pakistan" (Jinnah International Airport n.d.a). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a professor with the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at the State University of New York, Oneonta, whose research focuses on the criminal justice system in Pakistan, similarly stated that the main security force guarding airports is the ASF, and they may also check passports (Professor 15 Dec. 2017).

According to the website of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), an organization of the Ministry of Interior of Pakistan, the Immigration and Anti-Human Smuggling Wing of the FIA "regulates the flow of incoming and outgoing international passengers" (Pakistan n.d.a). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), a Lahore-based NGO that monitors and advocates for human rights and democracy in Pakistan (HRCP n.d.), indicated that the FIA is the only agency that conducts screening at airports (HRCP 22 Dec. 2017). The professor stated that the FIA is the main authority that checks passports (Professor 15 Dec. 2017).

2. Databases and Systems

2.1 National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA)

According to its website, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA)

was established as National Database Organization (NDO), an attached department under the Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan in 1998. On 10 March, 2000, NDO [and] Directorate General of Registration (DGR) merged to form NADRA[,] an independent corporate body with requisite autonomy to operate independently and facilitate good governance. [NADRA] has gained international recognition for its success in providing solutions for identification, e-governance and secure documents that deliver multi-pronged goals of mitigating identity theft[,] safe-guarding the interests of our clients and facilitating the public.

... NADRA's team indigenously created a state of the art centralized Data Warehouse, Network Infrastructure and Interactive Data Acquisition Systems to issue secure National Identity Cards (NIC). (Pakistan n.d.b)

The professor explained that NADRA began as an agency to be used for gathering ID information, however, they currently have access to more information, including fingerprints, passports, and religious cards (Professor 15 Dec. 2017). Further information, including use and implementation, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.2 Exit Control List

Section 2 of the *Exit from Pakistan (Control) Ordinance, 1981* provides the following:

2. Power to prohibit exit from Pakistan. —

1. The Federal Government may, by order, prohibit any person or class of persons from proceeding from Pakistan to a destination outside Pakistan, notwithstanding the fact that such person is in possession of valid travel documents.
2. Before making an order under sub-section (1), the Federal Government shall not be necessary [sic] to afford an opportunity of showing cause to the person against the order.
3. If, while making an order under sub-section (1) it appear [sic] to the Federal Government that it will not be in the public interest to specify the ground on which the order is proposed to be made, it shall not be necessary for the Federal Government to specify such grounds. (Pakistan 1981)

According to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *Country Information Report on Pakistan*,

[u]nder the Exit from Pakistan (Control) Ordinance 1981, the Pakistan government can prevent any person, including those with valid travel documentation, from leaving the country. The government maintains an Exit Control List (ECL), and can prevent those whose names appear on the list from leaving the country, including those wanted for criminal offences. People can be placed on the ECL for a range of reasons. In 2016, journalist Cyril Almeida was reportedly placed on the ECL following publication of a story he wrote on a sensitive rift between the civilian government and the military establishment. His name was removed from the list a few days later. (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, 39)

According to Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2017* report,

[t]here are few legal limitations on citizens' travel or their choice of residence, employment, or institution of higher learning. The main tool for restricting foreign travel is the [ECL], which blocks named individuals from using official exit points from the country. The list is meant to include those who pose a security threat and those facing court proceedings, but on occasion it has been used against civil society activists who have worked on issues embarrassing to officials. [...] In October 2016, a senior reporter was added to the list after publishing an article discussing counterterrorism strategy, but was soon removed following an outcry from media freedom advocates. The Supreme Court in December ordered the removal of former president Pervez Musharraf from the list, allowing him to leave Pakistan for medical treatment; Musharraf faced treason charges at the time. (Freedom House 31 Jan. 2017)

According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016*, the "stated purpose of the [ECL] was to prevent departure from the country of 'persons involved in antistate activities, terrorism, or related to proscribed organizations and those placed on the orders of superior courts'" (US 3 Mar. 2017, 31). The US *Country Reports for 2014* stated that "[a]lthough the list was intended to prevent persons with pending criminal cases from traveling abroad, the Ministry of Interior added names of other persons such as human rights activists or leaders of nationalist parties" (US 25 June 2015, 28). According to the professor, all exit points have access to the ECL (Professor 15 Dec. 2017).

According to sources, the Pakistani government removed approximately 5,000 names from the ECL in 2015 (Pakistan 24 Nov. 2015, para. 115; US 13 Apr. 2016, 30; Freedom House 31 Jan. 2017). The US *Country Reports for 2015* further stated that the Minister of Interior

reportedly cited historical abuse of the process for adding persons to the list, or keeping persons on it, as grounds for the list's adjustment. The minister said that, 'in [the] future people would be placed on the ECL only on the recommendations of defense institutions, intelligence agencies, high courts, and the Supreme Court'. (US 13 Apr. 2016, 30)

According to a September 2015 article in *The Nation*, an English-language Pakistani newspaper, quoting the Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, "[u]nfortunately, some people were on it for [the] last 30 years and some were placed on [it] over petty

domestic issues.... The list is not a joke. There was no rule or policy in the past for putting people on the no-fly list" (*The Nation* 17 Sept. 2017). According to the same article, the parameters for placement on the ECL include:

- a. espionage, subversion, act of terrorism, conspiracy against state
- b. any act pre-[j]udicial to the integrity, security of defence of Pakistan
- c. drug trafficking/human trafficking/money laundering
- d. persons belonging to proscribed organisations
- e. deserters from a defence or a security force or strategic organisation
- f. economic crimes involving public funds and institutional frauds
- g. tax/loan default or other state liability of more than 50 million [C\$566,900] or fraud in a public corporate entity (office holder as director) subject to certificate by referring authority that the fraud amount is Rs100 million [C\$1,133,576] or more that will be subject to satisfaction by a committee constituted for the purpose. (*The Nation* 17 Sept. 2017)

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

According to a September 2015 article in *Dawn*, an English-language Pakistani newspaper, there was also a Black List, that

was originally [created] to deny the issuance or re-issuance of a Pakistani passport to a wide variety of individuals, including Pakistanis who had attempted to acquire multiple passports; foreigners who had acquired fake CNICs [Computerized National Identity Cards] to obtain a passport; citizens who had been deported by a third country and who were required to be denied travel abroad again; children involved in custody disputes; and a list of individuals that various government agencies had deemed should be blocked from holding a passport. It is this last category - those placed on the immigration and passports department black list at the behest of government agencies - that was particularly prone to abuse. (*Dawn* 18 Sept. 2017)

According to Pakistan's October 2015 submission to the UN Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 40 of the Covenant*, when the Pakistani government deleted the names from the ECL, it also removed 59,603 persons from the Black List (Pakistan 24 Nov. 2015, para. 26). The same source states that "[o]f this number, 22,491 names have been deleted completely from the Black List while 9,660 and 27,452 names have been shifted to Passport Control List and Visa

Control List, respectively" (Pakistan 24 Nov. 2015, para. 26). Information on the Passport Control List and Visa Control List could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.3 Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES)

According to the FIA website, the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) enhances "the capability of immigration staff of FIA to monitor immigration work more efficiently," (Pakistan n.d.c). PISCES was established in 2002 with partial assistance by the US government (Pakistan n.d.d). PISCES "provides Immigration officials and law enforcement agencies with a tracking system to capture vital information of travelers and allows them to identify and, if necessary[,], detain individuals of interest" and "has made the immigration staff capable of keeping full record[s] of all incoming and outgoing passengers, which will be used for detection of any suspect," and it may also have other uses, such as immigration policy development (Pakistan n.d.c).

2.4 Integrated Border Management System (IBMS)

According to the FIA website, the PISCES project expired in June 2008, and the Integrated Border Management System (IBMS) "has been systematically replac[ing] PISCES" (Pakistan n.d.d). According to the same source, IBMS "will be integrated with the Pakistan Machine Readable Passport server," allowing the IBMS to:

- "trace and identify Pakistani citizens going abroad on fake documents and staying abroad illegally";
- track "all Pakistani citizens going abroad and identif[y] illegal immigrants," and;
- create a "[c]ountry-wide network between all Entry/ Exit points, law enforcement agencies and Ministry of Interior linked with all Pakistani missions abroad" (Pakistan n.d.d).

The FIA website lists the following international airports in Pakistan and the corresponding deployment dates of IBMS:

1. Benazir Bhutto International Airport [Islamabad/Rawalpindi], 15 February 2011;
2. Allama Iqbal International Airport [Lahore], 11 July 2012;
3. Jinnah International Airport [Karachi], 10 April 2012;
4. Bacha Khan International Airport [Peshawar], 18 November 2011;
5. Quetta International Airport, 21 November 2012;

6. Faisalabad International Airport, 18 July 2013;
7. Sialkot International Airport, 12 March 2013;
8. Gawadar International Airport, 3 March 2013;
9. DGK [Dera Ghazi Khan] International Airport, 13 January 2014;
10. Multan International Airport, 14 February 2014;
11. RYK [Rahim Yar Khan] International Airport, 31 March 2014;
12. Bahawalpur International Airport, 1 April 2014;
13. Turbat International Airport [no date specified]. (Pakistan 3 Apr. 2014)

According to its website, NADRA developed the "Integrated Border Management according to the immigration rules and regulations of government ... [NADRA is integrated] with other stake [h]olders whose documents are presented at the border including visa, passport and other travel documents" (Pakistan n.d.e). According to the same source, the IBMS central server has access to the following databases: NADRA, Passport, Visa, Exit Control, ASF Surveillance Feeds, and Advance Passenger Information (Pakistan n.d.e).

3. Exit Procedures from Pakistani Airports

The following information on the departure procedures is posted on the websites of the Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore (AIIAP), Benazir Bhutto International Airport Islamabad (BBIAP), Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar (BKIAP), and Multan International Airport:

For departure ... [the] following valid documents are required:

1. Valid [a]irline [t]icket
2. Valid [p]assport
3. Valid [v]isa (if applicable)
4. CNIC
5. Photo ID
6. Health Certificate (if applicable)
7. NOC [No Objection Certificate] or Ex-Pakistan Leave ([m]andatory for [government] [e]mployees)

Passenger[s] traveling through International / Domestic Flights will use respective gates designed for entry into briefing lounges following the procedure mentioned below.

1. Follow the queue while entering through respective gate.
2. Refrain from using your mobile phone while waiting.
3. Show valid [a]irline ticket at the entrance gate.

...

Baggage Screening

1. Make a queuing line at ASF security screening desk.
2. Pass your baggage from the scanning machine, present yourself for body search and your baggage for inspection, if required[,] and proceed to the respective airline counters for check-in

...

Airline Check-in

All [i]nternational departing passengers are required to check the validity of passport and ticket information prior to the departure. Also passengers are required to check the information on security, immigration and customs from the airport website prior to the departure

...

Immigration Process

At [i]nternational [d]eparture Immigration desks are divided into different sections.

1. All Passports
2. Overseas Pakistani Passenger / Card Holder
3. Foreigners / Taxpayers
4. Old Citizens / Special Person / Women / Children
5. Diplomats / Foreigners / Taxpayers

Passengers departing from Islamic Republic of Pakistan are required to submit the embarkation form. Pakistani Passport holder / International Overseas Pakistani Passengers will not submit embarkation form at international airports in Pakistan. Special Desk for Overseas Pakistan Passengers is also available to facilitate and provide assistance on 24 x 7 basis.

Passengers are advised to queue-up at the immigration desk and have their traveling documents ready (passport, embarkation form and other necessary documents). The Immigration officer will verify your Photo ID and may ask several questions in accordance with the immigration procedures. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Procedure

1. Stand in your corresponding lane
2. Stay behind the queuing line at the immigration desk.
3. Submit your [p]assport having valid [v]isa, Polio Certificate and embarkation card (only for foreigners) and other necessary documents (NOC, [p]hoto ID). Once your passport is returned, you may pass through immigration and you will wait for boarding.
4. Please check your passport before leaving immigration counter that it is properly stamped. (AIIAP n.d.; BBIAP n.d.; BKIAP n.d.; Multan International Airport n.d.).

The websites for the AIIAP, BBIAP and Multan International Airport provide the following additional information for health screening at the airport:

After entrance, please proceed to the Airport Health Desk; show your polio health certificate for further clearance. If you are not having the Polio Certificate then follow the instruction of the Representative of Airport Health Department.... (AIIAP n.d.; BBIAP n.d.; Multan International Airport n.d.)

The website for the departure procedures at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi adds that after obtaining their boarding pass and checking luggage, all international travellers must go to the "Immigration Desks / FIA Counters" (Jinnah International Airport n.d.b).

The HRCP representative indicated that during passport screening the FIA consults NADRA data and the ECL, and the ECL data "is checked by FIA for departure clearance of passengers" as well as to verify "if any special instructions are given by any government department or agency for any particular suspect" (HRCP 22 Dec. 2017). The same source also indicated that security screening is a standardized procedure for all passengers at all airports, and that "[n]o exceptions are made in the procedure" (HRCP 22 Dec. 2017).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, an immigration consultant based in Canada, with an office in Pakistan, indicated that according to security procedures, there are "absolutely no exceptions" as everyone's passport is scanned at least twice at the airport, and every airport has computers with Internet access at all times (Immigration consultant 28 Dec. 2017). Without providing further details, the consultant noted, however, that there are instances where authorities "turn a blind eye," and that there have been instances of bribery (Immigration consultant 28 Dec. 2017).

The professor described immigration as a "very dysfunctional system," and stated that immigration officers often receive an inadequate salary (Professor 15 Dec. 2017). The source further stated that people may be able to avoid going through security checks by using money and connections to acquire fake passports from Afghanistan, and that "this is pretty common" (Professor 15 Dec. 2017). A November 2017 article published by *Pakistan Today*, a Pakistani English-language daily newspaper, indicates that in 2014, the British High Commission wrote a letter to the Prime Minister's special assistant on aviation alleging that "18 Afghan nationals including women had reached Heathrow Airport from Islamabad Airport with fake British travel documents" (*Pakistan Today* 18 Nov. 2017). The article indicates that the matter was investigated under order of the Interior Minister, and an FIR (First Information Report) "was registered against FIA officials" (*Pakistan Today* 18 Nov. 2017). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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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Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Asylum Research Consultancy; Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation; ecoi.net; European Union – European Asylum Support Office; Factiva; Human Rights Commission Pakistan; Human Rights Watch; International Air Transport Association; International Centre for Migration Policy Development; Ireland – Refugee Documentation Centre; Pakistan – Civil Aviation Authority, Directorate General of Immigration and Passports, Ministry of Interior; UK – Home Office; UN – Refworld.

ecoi.net summary:

Query response on airport security screening procedures for passengers departing on international flights (2015 - December 2017)



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