

Report

## Documents in Somalia and Sudan



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For information on all of the reports published by Landinfo, please contact:

**Landinfo**  
**Country of Origin Information Centre**

Storgata 33A  
P.O. Box 8108 Dep  
NO-0032 Oslo  
Norway

Tel: +47 23 30 94 70  
Fax: +47 23 30 90 00  
E-mail: [mail@landinfo.no](mailto:mail@landinfo.no)  
Website: [www.landinfo.no](http://www.landinfo.no)

## **Summary**

This report gives an overview of various personal documents issued in Sudan and Somalia, including ID cards, national identity documents, passports, birth certificates and marriage certificates. While Sudanese authorities have established relatively good registration procedures, the situation in Somalia is very different. Although a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has been established in Somalia, no agencies have been mandated to issue personal documents. Furthermore, there are no registries containing information which can establish the identity of individual citizens.

In Somaliland – the breakaway republic in the north-western part of Somalia which has failed to win the recognition of any country in the world – government agencies do however issue various documents. Lack of registration procedures and internal control mechanisms as well as corruption give serious cause to question the reliability of these documents.

## **Sammendrag**

Temanotatet beskriver de forskjellige identitetsdokumentene, det vil si blant annet ID-kort, nasjonalitetsbevis, pass, fødsels- og fødselsattester som utstedes i Sudan. Mens sudanske myndigheter har relativt gode registreringsrutiner og oversikt over sine borgere, er situasjonen ganske annerledes i Somalia. Selv om den somaliske overgangsregjeringen nå har sete i Somalia finnes det ingen etater som kan utstede dokumenter eller registre som kan dokumentere innbyggernes identitet. I Somaliland, utbrytterrepublikken i den nordvestlige delen av Somalia som ikke er anerkjent av noe land, finnes det myndigheter som utsteder ulike dokumenter. Mangelen på registreringsrutiner, kontrollmekanismer og korrupsjon medfører imidlertid at notoriteten på disse dokumentene er tvilsom.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A general overview of public administration and issuing of documents in Africa south of the Sahara is provided in Landinfo's report "*Afrika sør for Sahara – om dokumenter og offentlig forvaltning*" (2007). The reference list included in the report contains a number of sources not quoted in this report, where one can find useful background and supplementary information.

Despite vast differences between the countries in Africa south of the Sahara, many common denominators can be identified (Landinfo 2007).

As past European colonies, these countries inherited public administration systems and bureaucratic languages from their colonial powers. The countries have generally weak economies - based primarily on export of a few raw materials – and marginal industrial activity. Population growth is high, there is substantial migration from rural to urban areas and between the countries in the region, infrastructure is poorly developed and politics is largely dominated by neopatrimonial<sup>1</sup> structures (Landinfo 2007). Corruption and nepotism<sup>2</sup> is widespread.

Sudan has more in common with Arabic countries in North Africa than with other countries on the continent. Arabic is used as administrative language and the system is less influenced by neopatrimonial structures than many other African states. Sudan is ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world;<sup>3</sup> however corruption is mainly linked to major contracts within the oil industry and to a lesser extent to the "purchase" of public services (such as issuance of documents or certificates). The average Sudanese man nevertheless perceives corruption to be a problem:<sup>4</sup>

*Research in Sudan is a difficult undertaking due to the many logistical challenges of travelling around the country. An even greater challenge, however, lies in ensuring that participants feel free to speak openly and forthrightly about their thoughts and feelings. This is especially true in a conflict society such as Sudan, and it was clear that some participants were*

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<sup>1</sup> In an African context, this entails that government institutions and public administration mainly act as a facade for a political system whose workings are essentially different from that in Norway, and where those working within government administration often have completely different goals, motives and priorities for their work than that of West European bureaucrats. Throughout the state sector, from the highest to the lowest level, positions (both elected and state employed) are a means to safeguarding a share of government resources for the individual concerned and his/her clients. It is important to emphasise that even idealistic persons who fight these structures in African countries are often defeated by the neopatrimonial system because of tremendous difficulties in resisting pressure from families, relatives, local communities or persons from their own ethnic group to exploit their position in order to help them. In other words: It is extremely difficult to accept such a position and define oneself as a non-patron because large parts of the surroundings will regard the person as a patron and himself as a client regardless – although they may be critical to how the system works. (Landinfo 2007:12).

<sup>2</sup> Nepotism is when personal relationships are exploited to achieve benefits.

<sup>3</sup> According to Transparency International (2007), Sudan is rated 172 out of 178 countries. The indicators applied are based on how business people, academics and risk analysts perceive the situation. The scale ranges from 0 (very corrupt) to 10 (completely clean). The indicator covers corruption in the public sector and in politics.

<sup>4</sup> NDI's report is based on interviews with sample groups in North Sudan in 2005, and can be regarded as giving a good impression of public opinion.

*cautious about speaking fully on subjects such as corruption and political parties. (Cook 2005:6).*

*Willingness to discuss the absence or existence of corruption varied significantly by group. Women, in particular, were reluctant to speak of corruption or would only speak of social corruption, such as drugs and alcohol. Of the participants who chose to speak about corruption, the vast majority say it is prevalent across all areas of Sudanese life. Nepotism and corruption in employment were most often spoken of but larger issues of corruption in different levels of government activities, especially as it related to development, was a concern as well.*

*Nevertheless, corruption was often at the bottom or near the bottom of participants' priorities, in part because other needs are so pressing but also because some participants view corruption as less of an issue in Sudan than in other countries or organizations. (Cook 2005:2)*

In terms of history and culture, the countries of the Horn of Africa – Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia – are distinct from other African countries. Local languages dominate the administration in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. As former colonial power<sup>5</sup> of Somalia and Sudan, the UK, like other colonial powers in the region, invested relatively few resources in developing a state sector beyond what was absolutely necessary. The developments and reforms that were undertaken mirrored the needs of the colonial powers rather than those of the colonies themselves (Landinfo 2007).

Bar a few particularities, the historical roots of the public administrations of both Sudan<sup>6</sup> and Somalia<sup>7</sup> can be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon tradition (as is also the case with other former British colonies in Africa). The Anglo-Saxon tradition is characterised by indirect governing of colonies rather than heavy state dominance (Landinfo 2007).

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<sup>5</sup> At the Berlin conference in 1885, the superpowers distributed Africa between them. The British wanted control of the Nile in order to carry out major irrigation projects in Egypt. In 1899, Egypt and the UK agreed on jointly control Sudan. When the British governor general in Sudan was killed in Cairo in 1924, the British took over the entire administration together with local chiefs.

In the 1880s, the UK created a protectorate in North West Somalia; British Somaliland. In 1889, Italy bought rule over South Somalia (Italian Somaliland) from the sultan of Zanzibar. After World War II, Italian Somaliland was administered by the UN, but the day-to-day administration was taken care of by Italy up to independence in 1960, when the former British Somaliland and the Italian South Somalia merged into one state – Somalia.

<sup>6</sup> Although the Islamic influence on the Sudanese legal system and legislation was important, the British influence on the Sudanese administration and legal system was strong both during and after the colonial period. However the law reforms after the military coup in 1969 contributed to a considerable Egyptian influence particularly within civil, commercial and criminal law. Resistance to these changes was great and particularly with regard to criminal law. The Egyptian model that replaced the Sudanese model was based on the French legal system, which was completely alien to the Sudanese. The system was changed in 1973 and the country regained its former British/Islamic system (US Library of Congress 1991). After the coup in 1989, which brought President al-Bashir to power, Islamic family law was codified in Sudan for the first time (Tønnesen 2007).

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 5. The Italians followed the same track as the British but the authorities were mainly limited to the capital and urban areas. Among the nomads and in remote villages in the country, the population was mainly unaffected by the authorities' existence. Traditional Somali law was used here (CRD 2005).

To a large extent, the British tried to control their areas through local hierarchies. These hierarchies governed using both secular laws and religious/traditional legislation. In both Sudan and Somalia, procedures such as marriage, divorce and the transfer of custody of children still follow religious and/or traditional regulations. In Somalia these regulations do not exist in written form.

## **2. SOMALIA**

Somalia has not had a functioning state government since 1991, and large parts of the territory are under no actual central administration or governing. This means that Somalia's inhabitants have been unable to obtain official documents such as ID cards, passports or various certificates<sup>8</sup> for the past 17 years.

### **2.1 PUBLIC REGISTRATION AND POPULATION DATA**

Somalia held its last census in 1975. Currently, no national or local authority administers or possesses population data. The Federal Somali Transitional Government, TFG, appointed in the autumn of 2004, has not yet established any state institutions mandated to issue or register official documents (Interviews with representatives for various international organisations in Nairobi in June 2008). However, the authorities started issuing new passports via the United Arab Emirate Sharjah on 1 April 2007 (see point 2.8).

Consequently, all documents and certificates issued by various private agencies rely on information provided by the individual concerned (with witnesses when appropriate) or relatives.

All archives and public offices were plundered or destroyed during the civil war, leaving Somalia with no remaining registers, copies or originals which can be used for comparing or referencing documents and certificates. Based on Landinfo's knowledge of Somali circumstances, the reliability of original documents issued prior to 1991 may in some instances – and after careful individual evaluation – be ascertained.

Landinfo would recommend that, when possible, comparison be made of the information contained in these documents and the information provided in asylum interviews.

### **2.2 NAME AND AGE**

Formally, Somalis use three names in official documents: their given name at birth, their father's name and their grandfather's name (on father's side). An example would be: Ahmed Mohammed Abdulle (Ahmed being the person's own name,

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<sup>8</sup> A number of private institutions issue certificates however, e.g. certificates from schools and private universities, birth certificates/confirmation of birth from hospitals and marriage certificates drawn up by Sharia courts. See IRB 2007c for more information on Somalis' access to documentation after 1990.

Mohammed being his father's name and Abdulle being his grandfather's name). Note that the father's name does not correspond to what we call a middle name, nor is the grandfather's name to be confused with a surname.

A child can be given more than one first name at birth. It is also common to give the child a nickname, such as a family name, a descriptive<sup>9</sup> name or an abbreviation of the given name. It is often the case that these names are mixed together, and sometimes a person will use his/her nickname in an official context. A large percentage of the Somali population is still illiterate and there is sometimes a lesser focus on formalities. All these factors might often create confusion as to a person's "correct" name and identity.

There are also cultural differences between Norwegian and Somali concepts of time and management of time. Like many other Africans, Somalis are not particularly concerned about age. Very few know their exact date of birth.

When Somalis use terms such as years and months, two different systems are at work – depending on the context. Urban people normally use the Gregorian calendar, while the Islamic calendar is generally used in rural areas. The Islamic year is based on the lunar cycle, which is shorter than the Gregorian year. Many rural areas also use a system where time is divided into groups of seven years, each of which is named after a weekday. Additionally, a nickname for the year might be used, which refers to a special event, e.g. "the Tuesday year with the long tail". In South Somalia, this name refers to the year (probably 1961) when a jet plane was seen for the first time crossing the sky (Helander). Usually, stating one's age will be stating the number of years a person *believes* to be, even though this might not always be correct. Knowledge of one's age is largely based on what parents have communicated, but confusion can arise due to the variable use of calendar and chronology.

### **2.3 REGISTRATION OF DATA AND ISSUING OF CERTIFICATES**

Up until 1975, certificates and documents issued in Mogadishu and other towns in South Somalia were mainly issued in Italian, although Somali was introduced as the country's official written language already on 21 October 1972 (IRB 1998). In British Somaliland (see chapter 3), documents were issued in English until around 1973 (IRB 1994).

### **2.4 BIRTH REGISTRATION AND BIRTH CERTIFICATES**

Although no Somali authorities register births or issue official birth certificates, certain certificates are issued in connection with births in hospitals. There is currently little or no possibility of verifying such certificates. Prior to 1991, mainly hospital births were registered.<sup>10</sup>

In order to obtain a birth certificate, a person would have to approach the municipal administration, which in turn would create a family file and allocate a family

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<sup>9</sup> Examples of nicknames/descriptive names are Yusuf Mohamed Siyad "Indha'Adde" (white eyes), warlord and former governors in Lower Shebelle, and Mohamed Hassan Nur "Shaatigaduud" (red shirt), head of the RRA, (Rahanweyn Resistance Army). See IRB 1991 for more information on name practice.

<sup>10</sup> Landinfo has in its possession a copy of a birth certificate from before 1991.



number. The applicant would have to bring two attending witnesses from the clan/sub-clan, with good knowledge of the applicant (IRB 1994).

## **2.5 MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Prior to the collapse of the Somali national state in 1991, the so-called *wadaat* - religious experts with competency to perform marriages – were appointed and registered by the authorities through the regional Khadi's Court, administered by the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs. The person authorised to perform the marriage, the marrying couple (the woman not necessarily present), the woman's guardian and two (male) witnesses - a requirement according to Islamic religious law, Sharia – would be present at the wedding ceremony. After the ceremony, the marriage would be registered and the couple would receive a marriage certificate.

This centrally administered system for appointments and registration was discontinued in 1991.<sup>11</sup> However, since 1991, local Sharia courts have to a certain extent retained some form of oversight and control over those authorised to perform marriages. Marriage certificates have also been issued by Sharia courts in Mogadishu and other towns after 1991.

Prior to 1991, certificates were prepared by the local sheik and certified with a stamp from the Sharia court (Udlændingestyrelsen 1991). If the sheik himself was a member of the court, he could stamp the document himself. No national or local registers containing information on marriages certified by these courts exist, and the Sharia courts have only invariably kept possession of copies of the issued certificates. Hence it is very difficult or impossible to verify such certificates.<sup>12</sup>

Civil marriages have never been performed in Somalia.

## **2.6 DEATH**

Prior to 1991, registration of death was largely limited to those occurring at hospitals. Although hospitals today might issue written statements or death certificates, there are very limited ways of verifying such documents. No central or state authority has registered deaths since 1991.

## **2.7 ID CARDS**

ID cards are not currently issued in Somalia. Prior 1991, however, ID cards were issued in all towns and districts.<sup>13</sup> An ID card was required in order to obtain a passport, start school, open a bank account etc. To obtain an ID card, the applicant had to submit a birth certificate (see point 2.4 above). The ID cards contained both a family number and a registration number (IRB 1991, see IRB 1990b and IRB 1993 for more information).

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<sup>11</sup> One exception is Somaliland, see chapter 3. For information on the conditions surrounding such registration before 1990, see IRB 1990a.

<sup>12</sup> The first Sharia courts (after the civil war) in Mogadishu were established in August 1994. Landinfo is in possession of a copy of a marriage certificate issued by the Sharia courts after 1991.

<sup>13</sup> Landinfo is in possession of a copy of such ID cards.

## **2.8 PASSPORTS**

Because Somalia has not had a functioning central government since January 1991, very few countries have accepted the Somali passport as a valid travel document. There are reports that Somali embassies, during and after the 1990s, have issued (sold) passports to Somalis residing abroad (Reuters 2007). Somali foreign services have operated outside the control or command of central authorities, and have had no opportunity to verify documents presented to them (as proof of a person's identity).

According to media, the Somali transitional authorities have approved the introduction of new electronic passports (Reuters 2007). The new passport, according to Afro1News (Awdal News Network 2007), contains an electronic chip and biometric technology in order to prevent counterfeits. The new passport is priced at USD 100 in Somalia and USD 150 outside Somalia (Awdal News Network 2007). According to Afro1News (Awdal News Network 2007), the passport will be issued via the United Arab Emirate Sharjah to Somalis living in the Emirates. News reports allege that Kenyan and Ethiopian authorities, as well as the authorities in the Emirates, have approved the new Somali passport as a valid travel document (Reuters 2007, Awdal News Network 2007). The passports have not been approved by Norwegian authorities or by other Schengen countries. Similarly, the passports have not been approved by Canadian authorities (Norway's embassy in Nairobi December 2007) or US authorities (US Department of State, no date).

Lack of approval by the above authorities is not caused by a sub-standard quality of the passport itself, but rather because there are no national authorities with notoriety to issue such documents. Introducing new passports will not change this situation. This has caused the common rejection by all Schengen countries.

## **3. SOMALILAND (NORTH WEST SOMALIA)**

The Somaliland area (North West Somalia) declared itself independent in May 1991, but has failed to gain recognition by any country in the world. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in 2003 and 2005 respectively. Somaliland has established its own judicial system, legislation, police etc. However, there is no centralised overview of the inhabitants in the area and family disputes are primarily handled by religious courts serving under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Sharia family law is used as the principle source of legislation. Six regional religious courts (Regional Khadi's Court) are vested with authority to make legal decisions in accordance with this legislation. Decisions made by these courts can be appealed to the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Hargeisa.

The six regional courts are located in the towns of Borama (in the Awdal region), Hargeisa (in Waqoyi Galbeed), Berbera (in Sahil), Burao (in Togdheer), Erigavo (in Sanaag) and Las Anod (in Sool).

In addition to deciding on family disputes and performing or confirming marriages, the regional religious courts also function as "Commissioner of Oaths". The Commissioner of Oaths can issue and/or authorize written statements/certificates,

from which the information provided by the applicant to the Court is given under oath.

### **3.1 REGISTRATION OF DATA**

Due to corruption, inadequate registration routines and the use of unverifiable self-declarations, both accurate and inaccurate or false documentation can be obtained. Thus documents issued in Somaliland are generally regarded as having low notoriety.

### **3.2 BIRTH REGISTRATION AND BIRTH CERTIFICATES**

Birth certificates are rarely issued, and in principle, it is only issued if the child is born in a hospital. The majority of babies are born at home. However, in the case of home births, a declaration of the event can be given under oath (affidavit). Certificates and declarations (affidavit) can and should be confirmed/authorized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Hargeisa. The Ministry is supposed to keep an overview of the regional courts' jurisdiction and over personnel within the Courts who are authorized to sign the documents.

### **3.3 MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Marriages and divorces take place at the regional courts, from which marriage certificates are issued. However, it is primarily those who live in the towns (where the courts are located) who will enter into marriage at these courts. Rural populations and persons who live in smaller towns will usually marry (or divorce) where they live.

Here, the marriage ceremony is led by a person whose authority stems from his competency in the Koran as well as local recognition. Such a person will often have the right to carry the title *sheikh* or *aw*.

The regional religious courts are supposed to have an overview of persons (in the respective regions) qualified to perform a marriage, and should subsequently be able to confirm that the marriage has been performed by a recognised person of authority.

There is no system for civil weddings.

### **3.4 DEATH**

Death certificates are rarely issued, and in principle, it is only issued if the person dies in a hospital. However, in the event of a death, a declaration of the event can be given under oath (affidavit). Certificates and declarations (affidavit) can and should be confirmed/authorized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Hargeisa. The Ministry is supposed to keep an overview of the regional courts' jurisdiction and over personnel within the Courts who are authorized to sign the documents.

## 4. SUDAN

### 4.1 PUBLIC REGISTRATION AND POPULATION DATA

Sudan has a central national register,<sup>14</sup> but in practice there is reason to assume that the authorities do not have a proper overview of all inhabitants. Sudanese people living in the towns and urban areas are generally much more likely to have registered than those in sparsely populated areas.<sup>15</sup> This is because people residing in towns can more easily visit public authorities in order to be registered. The authorities also vest more efforts in registering urban than rural populations, and furthermore the population in urban areas is more often faced with requirements to produce official documents than those living in rural areas.

According to a well-informed international organization working in Khartoum, it is also important to note that it's not corruption that makes it difficult for ordinary people to for instance obtain ID documents, but the very complex bureaucracy and the formal fees (Interview in Khartoum 5 May 2008). Lack of ID documents primarily affects Sudanese from conflict areas, while Sudanese from the Nile Valley have fewer problems with obtaining documents and the number of registered people is larger in this area (both urban and rural) than in conflict areas.<sup>16</sup>

Censuses were conducted in Sudan in 1973, 1993, 2004 and 2008. The 2008 census was planned for autumn 2007, but was postponed until spring 2008 (SSCCSE, 2007).<sup>17</sup>

### 4.2 BIRTH REGISTRATION AND BIRTH CERTIFICATES

According to Sudanese law all births should be registered with the public authorities. UNICEF has focused on a child's fundamental right to be registered (Unicef 2007), and reports that 63.8% of Sudanese children between 0-4 years of age are registered. In urban areas the percentage is considerably higher at 82.2%. This is because most births in urban areas take place in hospitals where births are automatically registered. In rural areas, children are born at home, often attended by a midwife or other public sector obstetrician who will register the birth. Where no midwife is in attendance, the duty to register is only met to a limited extent and the number of children registered is much lower. In general, however, the percentage of registered births is high in Sudan compared to many other African countries (Unicef 2007).

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<sup>14</sup> This register is not electronic. See IRB 2007a for more information on the issue of ID documents in Sudan.

<sup>15</sup> Less than 8% of the population are nomads, approx. 29% live in urban areas and around 63% live in scattered rural settlements.

<sup>16</sup> IOM's 2006 return intention survey shows that, of the 228 households from Southern Darfur living in Northern Sudan, 51.8% had proof of nationality and 10.5% had ID cards, while 22.8% had no form of identification documents. Of the 261 households from Northern Darfur, 41% had proof of nationality, 20.7% had ID cards and 26.8% had no form of identification documents. Among the 337 households from Western Darfur, the figures were relatively similar to the figures from the two other regions – 47.5%, 12.8%, and 21%, respectively. For more information about IDPs in Sudan, see Landinfo, 2008, Report: *Sudan – Internally displaced people in Khartoum*.

<sup>17</sup> The 2008 census is vital to the execution of the planned elections in the country in 2009. See UNFPA 2007.

The Department of Statistics' Birth and Death Register<sup>18</sup> is responsible for issuing birth certificates.<sup>19</sup> Unregistered persons without birth certificate can contact the register to receive confirmation that he/she has not been registered. Subsequently, the written confirmation can be submitted to the Health Commission, who will issue a so-called substitute health document or age certificate based on the given information and confirmation from two witnesses (NRC, Alexander Jones. Interview in Khartoum 5 May 2008). A substitute health document will indicate a person's year/date of birth, but not necessarily place of birth. The date of birth in this type of document is normally stated as 1 January followed by an estimated year.

However, in March 2008 the Sudanese authorities implemented new requirements regarding the witnesses. The witnesses must have ID documents and they have to be related to those who apply for a substitute health certificate /age certificate. This implies that few of those who need the document will be able to obtain one, since those who are unregistered seldom have relatives who themselves are registered (NRC, Alexander Jones. Interview in Khartoum 5 May 2008).

A birth certificate or substitute health document is required in order to obtain an ID card, proof of citizenship or passport (IRB 2007a, Embassy of the Republic of Sudan, in Oslo, 3 January 2008).

According to a well-informed international source Landinfo met in Khartoum in May 2008, few internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Khartoum for instance, have ID documents. This is however due to lack of resources and does according to the source not reflect a lack of political will. This was confirmed by the Norwegian Refugee Council which has been active in Sudan since 2004, providing protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons (Alexander Jones. Interview in Khartoum 5 May 2008). NRC co-operates with the Sudanese authorities in order to assist those who need ID documents to obtain these documents through their so-called ICLA-project.<sup>20</sup>

### **4.3 MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

The Sudanese family law – Muslim Personal Law Act 1991 – is based on Sharia. Marriages among Muslims often take place at home, attended by a representative from a Sharia court. The representative completes a registration form together with the spouses, which is later registered and archived by the authorities. A marriage certificate is issued on the basis of the registration. Christians are normally married in the church. The church will register the marriage and issue a marriage certificate. Both Muslims and Christians can be married in civil courts. Unlike marriages in Christian churches, civil court marriages are registered by the authorities.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> According to the administrative attaché at the Sudanese embassy in Oslo, the Department of Statistics sorts under the Ministry of the Cabinet, not the Ministry of Social Affairs.

<sup>19</sup> Landinfo has in its possession a copy of a Sudanese birth certificate.

<sup>20</sup> ICLA = Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance project for the benefit of IDPs. The NRC has ICLA-centres in six camps in the Khartoum area.

<sup>21</sup> See Embassy of the United States, Khartoum, Sudan 2001 for more information. Landinfo is in possession of copies of Sudanese marriage certificates.

However, in some areas of Sudan there are only a limited number of officials who are authorised to perform marriage ceremonies. This pertains in particular to the Darfur area and East Sudan, where marriages are often held in a traditional manner and without subsequent registration. The age of consent for marriage in Sudan is 18 for men and 16 for women. Exceptions can be made, in which case a guardian or a judge will have to give their consent.

Traditional marriages are legally valid in Sudan, but do not guarantee the legal rights of the woman in the event of a divorce.

Sudanese marriage certificates need to be stamped by the court (or church) where the marriage was entered into or registered. The document must also be verified/stamped by the justice authorities and the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, even if a document should lack the required stamps, it might still have been issued by a qualified authority and be genuine (verification report 12 November 1999).

According to Islamic law, there are three types of divorce: talaq, khul and tafriq.<sup>22</sup>

Divorces are not normally registered with the authorities, but persons who have entered into a marriage at a civil court (civil marriage) can obtain a divorce ruling from the same court.

#### **4.4 DEATH**

The Department of Statistics' Birth and Death Register in Khartoum registers deaths and can issue death certificates. If the death has not occurred in a hospital or if it has happened some time ago and was not registered, the deceased's relatives can apply to the authorities in Khartoum for registration and to obtain a document of confirmation.

#### **4.5 ID CARDS**

ID cards are issued by the Ministry of Interior Affairs to all Sudanese over the age of 18. The card has a light blue cover and contains a photo, personal data, fingerprints and details of blood type and any known illnesses. Applicants must apply in person for a card. A fee must be paid in order to obtain an ID card. The cost is not currently known (Embassy of the Republic of Sudan, Oslo, 3 January 2008).

#### **4.6 PASSPORTS**

Passports are also issued by the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The passports are valid for 10 years, but must be renewed five times during this period, i.e. every two years (Embassy of the Republic of Sudan, Oslo, 3 January 2008). The renewal can be done either at the Ministry of Interior Affairs or via the Sudanese embassy abroad (Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan, Oslo, 3 January 2008), see also IRB 2007b for more information on routines for the issue of passports).

#### **4.7 CERTIFICATE OF NATIONALITY**

The certificate of nationality is an essential document for Sudanese citizens. Without a certificate of nationality, a person will not be able to sit exams at school or

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<sup>22</sup> See for example Uhlman 2004 and Dahl 1992.

university, or obtain a passport. The certificate is issued by the Ministry of Interior Affairs upon application. It has a green cover and contains a photo, personal data, father's name, fingerprints and details of the applicant's tribe. Where no birth certificate is submitted to document or verify the personal data, a witness must be called to confirm the information (Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan, Oslo, 3 January 2008).

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