

I HOLD REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION: CAN I GET AN IDENTITY CARD OR A TRAVEL DOCUMENT?



WHERE CAN I FIND THIS IN THE LAW?

The laws on refugee IDs and travel documents can be found at Sections 27 and 30 of the [Refugees Amendment Act](#), and should be read together with Regulations 18 and 19 of the [Refugees Regulations](#).

As a recognised refugee in South Africa you must apply for and be issued with an identity card. This is called a Refugee Identity Document, or Refugee ID. It is a small, red book and it will have the same expiry date as your refugee document. The Refugee ID will have your file number on it which is the same as the one on your refugee document. It will also have a photo of you in it, and a 13-digit ID number. This number starts with your birth date. This Refugee ID is important because it is needed when interacting with government departments, schools or universities, private businesses, banks and social grant applications. You will also need the Refugee ID to apply to a refugee travel document.

WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY FOR A REFUGEE IDENTITY DOCUMENT?

To apply for a refugee ID, you will need:

- > A copy of your refugee document,
- > to be over 16 years of age,
- > to make the application on Form 11 (found at the Refugee Reception Office, or in the Refugee Regulations), and
- > to submit biometrics (for example, your photo and fingerprint).

Applications for the Refugee ID must be made at the Refugee Reception Office where your original application was lodged.

AS A REFUGEE, CAN I TRAVEL USING OTHER DOCUMENTATION?

No! As a refugee, you cannot use any passport or travel documentation issued by your country of origin. If you do, you risk having your refugee status document revoked (cancelled). If you hold refugee documentation, you can only travel abroad only with a refugee travel document issued by the South African Department of Home Affairs, at the Refugee Reception Office.

GOT MORE QUESTIONS?

If you have more questions, please do not hesitate to seek legal advice right away. Turn to Question 16 for a list of organisations you can contact.

WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY FOR A REFUGEE TRAVEL DOCUMENT?

You are advised to apply for your refugee travel document at least two months before your date of travel. To apply for refugee travel document, you will need:

- > a copy of your refugee document (it must have a remaining period of validity of at least 180 days),
- > a copy of your valid Refugee ID,
- > to submit biometrics (such as a photo and fingerprints)
- > to pay a fee (which is set each year), and which is paid in cash at the Refugee Reception Office. When paying cash, always ensure you get a receipt noting details (for example, the amount you paid, your name, and the name of the official that you gave the money to).

Applications are made at the Refugee Reception Office where your original application was lodged. For those refugee document holders who are under the age of 16 and cannot have a Refugee ID, a parent or guardian must assist them to obtain the refugee travel document and include their own details, as above.

AS A REFUGEE, WHERE CAN I TRAVEL?

The refugee travel document allows you to travel abroad - but your entry to other countries is dependent on that country's visa requirements. You are responsible for arranging your visa to enter any other country. You must research and arrange your visa before travelling. Note that there is a high risk of having your status as a recognised refugee in South Africa being withdrawn if you travel to your country of origin.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS?

The Refugees Regulations contain more details about applying for a refugee travel document. We suggest you take a look as soon as you consider travelling. For example, Form 12 advises that this application should be lodged at least two months before travelling. It also indicates that the period of validity of a refugee travel document is capped at one year (or, until the expiry date of your refugee document - whichever is sooner). NOTE: Always keep details of your travel, and keep copies of old refugee and travel documents. You may need this for future documentation.

DISCLAIMER

This is a guide: not a legal document. It explains what is stated in the Refugees Act, as amended, and the Refugees Regulations. It should not be used to substitute legal advice. This guide does not reflect our opinion on these laws. This information is subject to change.

This guide is about the Refugees Amendment Act of 2017 which was implemented from 1 January 2020.

