



> Return address: P.O. Box 20061, 2500 EB The Hague

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Ministry of Asylum and Migration  
Immigration and Naturalisation Service  
Research and Expertise Team for Country and Language  
(TOELT)

**Directorate for Sub-Saharan Africa**  
Country of Origin Information  
Unit

**Contact person**  
CAB secretariat

**T** +31  
**E** @minbuza.nl

Date 30 April 2025  
Subject Explanatory notes to General Country of Origin Information  
Report on Eritrea, December 2023

Dear ,

On 7 January 2025, you asked for clarification of the following passage on pages 20-21 of the General Country of Origin Information Report on Eritrea dated 19 December 2023:

The exit visas of persons who left the country legally also mentioned the date of exit. The validity period of exit visas varied and was very inconsistently and arbitrarily applied. Generally, an exit visa would be issued for a single visit abroad, with a validity period of one month. However, it was reportedly also possible to issue exit visas for multiple visits abroad, with a total validity period of three months. According to one source, exit visas were initially issued for a short period, but this period was lengthened the more often an exit visa was issued, as the authorities gained more trust in the applicant. According to a confidential source, persons who returned from abroad later than permitted could face adverse consequences, including detention. According to another report, returning to the country after an exit visa had expired did not necessarily imply an illegal residence abroad, unless there were exceptional circumstances. Persons who travelled abroad for an official visit were expected to return to Eritrea after the visit (the period for which the exit visa was issued). If they did not return after the visit, their stay abroad might be considered to be illegal (see also Chapter 5 'Return').<sup>1</sup>

In response to your request, additional public and confidential sources were consulted. Based in part on those sources, the following explanatory notes have been formulated. These should not be read as replacing the above passage, but as an addition to and particularisation of that passage.

From the two sources cited on pages 20-21 of the COI Report of December 2023, it may be ascertained that the exit visa was subject to a time limit within which the holder must return to Eritrea. One of those sources is the report cited in the first paragraph of page 21. This is a report drawn up by

<sup>1</sup> Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report (COI Report) on Eritrea*, 19 December 2023, page 20, [url](#).

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experts for two German NGOs. The report states that in general, a return to Eritrea after the expiry of an exit visa was “not a major cause of persecution”. Only under exceptional circumstances might a non-timely return be treated as an illegal stay abroad. Persons who travelled abroad for an official visit, for example, were expected to return to Eritrea following that visit. If they did not return after the visit, their stay abroad might be considered to be illegal. For other travellers, this risk was described as “almost non-existent”.<sup>2</sup>

Although it may be ascertained from the two sources cited in the COI Report that (in certain cases involving official travel) the exit visa was subject to a time limit within which the holder must return to Eritrea, various other sources consulted on this matter explicitly stated that exit visas were not subject to a deadline for return.<sup>3</sup> The sources reveal that the exit visas of persons leaving the country legally carried an expiry date, which meant that the holder of the exit visa must have left Eritrea before that date.<sup>4</sup> Following departure, the holder could return to Eritrea at any time.<sup>5</sup>

Yours sincerely,

Director of the Directorate for Sub-Saharan Africa

*Disclaimer: The Dutch version of this report is leading. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands cannot be held accountable for misinterpretations based on the English version of the report.*



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<sup>2</sup> Mekonnen and Yohannes, *Voraussetzungen und rechtliche Auswirkungen*, pages 17-19, May 2022, [url](#) (English title: *Independent expert report written to Connection e.V. & Förderverein Pro Asyl e.V. [Germany]*, [url](#)).

<sup>3</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC), Research Directorate, *Responses to information requests; ERI105741.E; Eritrea: Information on exit procedures, including type of exit document issued and validity period of the document; whether exit stamps that were issued in 2012 or prior, were valid for 2016 (2011-February 2017)*, 13 March 2017, [url](#); European Asylum Support Office (EASO), *Eritrea: National service, exit, and return*, page 45, September 2019, [url](#); Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), *Focus Eritrea*, page 36, 21 January 2021, [url](#); Confidential source, 12 February 2025; Confidential source, 26 February 2025 and 3 March 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Eritrea, *Regulation No. 4/1992 of 1992 of Travel Documents and Immigration*, 15 July 1992, [url](#); Danish Immigration Service (DIS), *Eritrea: National service, exit and entry*, page 34, January 2020, [url](#); SEM, *Focus Eritrea; Identity and civil status documents*, page 36, 21 January 2021, [url](#).

<sup>5</sup> IRBC, *Responses to information requests; ERI105741.E*, 13 March 2017, [url](#); EASO, *Eritrea: National service, exit, and return*, page 45, September 2019, [url](#); SEM, *Focus Eritrea*, page 36, 21 January 2021, [url](#); Confidential source, 12 February 2025; Confidential source, 26 February 2025 and 3 March 2025.