World Passport

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The **World Passport** is a document issued by the World Service Authority, a non-profit organization founded by Garry Davis in 1954,[1] citing Article 13, Section 2, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[2]

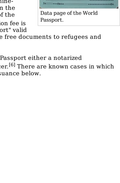
Contents

1 Appearance and issuance fees
2 Issuance center (s)
3 Acceptance
  3.1 Notable acceptances
  3.2 Notable rejections
    3.2.1 Commonwealth of Independent States
    3.2.2 United States
    3.2.3 Other countries
  3.3 Use by refugees and stateless persons
4 As an identity document
5 As a political statement
6 Counterfeits and fraudulent issuance
7 See also
8 References
9 External links

Appearance and issuance fees

The World Passport is similar in appearance to a national passport or other travel document. The appearance is so similar that in 1974 a criminal case was lodged against Garry Davis in France regarding his issuance of World Passports.[3] In 1979, the World Passport was a 42-page document, with a dark blue cover, and text in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and Esperanto. It contained a five-page section for medical history and a six-page section for listing organisational affiliation. The fee charged at that time was $25 and postage for a five-year document with the possibility of two years' extension of validity.[4]

The latest edition of the World Passport was issued January 2007. It has an embedded "ghost" photo for security, covered with a plastic film. Its data page imitates the format of a machine-readable passport, with an alphanumeric code bar in the machine-readable zone (MRZ) enabling it to be scanned by an optical reader. However, it is not a valid ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 code in the MRZ "issuer" and "nationality" fields, it uses the non-standard acronym "WSA". According to the WSA, the latest version of the World Passport was filled with the international standard number of pages, 48 pages.[5] In other words, the application fee is $45 for a three-year document, $75 for a five-year document, and $100 for an eight-year document. A "World Donor Passport" valid for fifteen years with a special cover is issued for a donation of at least $400 which, according to the WSA, is used to issue free documents to refugees and stateless persons.[6]


Data page of the World Passport.

The applicant for World Passport needs to provide as proof of his or her identity along with the application for the World Passport either a notarized photocopy of the identity card, passport or other national identity papers or a fingerprint of the right index finger.[7] There are known cases in which people have been able to obtain World Passports without issuance fees than their legal names, see the section on Fraudulent issuance below.

Renewals page.	Children's information page.	Notes.	Affiliations page.	Visa page.	Attention.

As a travel document

Notable acceptances

According to the World Service Authority website, some World Passports have reportedly been accepted on a case-by-case basis by immigration officials (i.e., they have been stamped with a national visa or entry or exit stamp), and several countries have accorded the document legal recognition.[8][9][10]

Success in crossing a border using a World Passport is generally attributable to the whim or ignorance of individual immigration officers, not official recognition of the document.[27] The World Service Authority maintains lists scans of letters from six countries (Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Mauritania, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia) according legal recognition to the World Passports. These letters of acceptance were several decades old (e.g., 1979 for Ecuador, 1972 for Burkina Faso) and reasonable doubt exists about today's effective acceptance.[28]

The World Passport came under increased international scrutiny in 1996, after the hijacking of the MS *Achille Lauro*. In the aftermath of the incident, one of the captured hijackers, Youssef Majed al-Molqi, escaped imprisonment in Italy and used a World Passport he acquired in 1988 to leave the country and travel to Spain before he was recaptured.[29][30][31]

Notable rejections

Many countries and territories have stated that they do not recognize the World Passport because it is not issued by a competent government authority, and thus does not meet the definition of a passport. Despite, travelling with it for many years has never been easy. By 1975, Garry Davis had already been imprisoned 20 times for his attempts to cross international borders with nothing but a World Passport.[32] In 2010, a spokesperson for Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was Don't ask.

Commonwealth of Independent States

The Russian government states that it does not recognize the World Passport. In a 1995 interview with Kommersant, a spokesman for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Consular Services stated that the World Passport is not an acceptable document for proving identity or citizenship status at Russian border crossings; only a diplomatic passport, official passport, seaman's passport, or general civil passport are accepted.[33] However, one Russian media report claims that some members of the House of Romanov, travelling to Saint Petersburg for the memorial ceremonies of the end of the Romanov dynasty, presented the Russian authorities with a World Passport, in light of the special situation.[34]

In December 2008, a man claiming to be a Russian citizen attempted to cross the border from Latvia into Belarus at the Urbanyy checkpoint using a World Passport; he stated he lost his Russian documents while in Sweden. He was arrested by the Belarusian border guards. A spokesman for Belarus' State Border Committee in an interview with a local newspaper stated that Belarus does not accept the World Passport at border crossings. He also claimed it was the first known case of its kind in the country.[35][36]

United States

The United States Department of State's official position on the World Passport is that it is just a booklet issued by a private organisation upon payment of a fee, and not a passport. As early as 1991, the US Air Transport Association specifically included the World Passport in a training film as an example of unacceptable travel documents.[37] In 1992, a US citizen attempted to enter the US crossing the Victoria International Bridge at Los Tebeños using a World Passport. The man in question had prior felony convictions for drug trafficking and immigration offences, and had previously been deported from the United States multiple times. He claimed he was attempting to speak with President Obama about genocide in Belize. In a bench trial, Judge Andrew S Hanen found the man guilty of felony attempted re-entry after deportation.[37]

Other countries

Peace activist Kenneth O'Keefe tried to travel to Iraq using a World Passport in 2003, but was rejected transit rights by Turkey, and had to apply for an American passport to continue his journey.[38]

In 2004, two men from China on board Cathay Pacific Flight 302 from Hong Kong to Guangzhou attempted to pass through immigration at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport using World Passports. The officers at the airport arrested them for illegal entry.[40]

Also, though Garry Davis himself traveled to India some decades ago using his World Passport and gave one personally to Jawaharlal Nehru,[41][42] in May 2007 an Indian citizen was arrested for attempting to leave India at Begumpet Airport using his World Passport. The man had intended to travel to the United States, Singapore and Air India staff both accepted his World Passport, but Indian immigration did not.[43]

The Council of the European Union states that the World Passport is not an acceptable proof of identity, and lists it as a fantasy passport.[12]

In February 2013, both Panama and Costa Rica rejected the use of the World Passport by Sape Miller, a fugitive from Hawaii.[44]

The passport is considered by the State Border Service of Ukraine as a souvenir.

Hip-Hop artist and actor Yasiin Bey (Mos Def) was arrested in South Africa on January 15, 2016 for attempting to leave the country using a world passport. He claimed the country was using an American passport and has lived in Cape Town since May 2013. South Africa's Department of Home Affairs released a statement saying that Mr. Bey will be allowed to appeal the immigration action and possibly seek permanent residency.[45][46]

Use by refugees and stateless persons

The World Service Authority issues World Passports to refugees and other people who are unable to obtain valid, usable travel documents. According to the WSA, refugees in camps are issued free World Passports. WSA reports that it "has issued more than 10,000 free World Passports to refugees residing in camps throughout the world" and that it "has documentary evidence that the issuance of such passports may permit refugees to leave such camps to seek asylum elsewhere or to claim other rights often denied to refugees".[47] However, many of those refugees, after getting their hopes up, have found World Passports to be worthless. In 2000, Australian Garry David in the mid-1970s, major users of World Passports at the time included persons in Southeast Asia fleeing from the wars there, as well as holders of Rhodesian passports who were otherwise unable to travel internationally as no other country accepted their passports following the South African "UDI" in 1965.[48]

Individuals held in arrest due to lack of valid (or any) identity papers were sometimes released after receiving World Passports, according to reports by the WSA.[3][47]

Another category of users of World Passports are stowaways on ships. Vessel owners are legally responsible for the stowaways until they can find a country to accept them. Stowaways are often unable to answer questions over the validity of the stowaways' documents. Lawyers working for maritime insurers sometimes turn to the WSA when all other options are exhausted. From 1992 to 2006 the WSA issued five such documents.[51]

As an identity document

The World Service Authority promotes the World Passport not just as a document for international travel, but a "neutral, apolitical document of identity".[52] Hrvoje Dougy Cassy, himself a World Passport holder, has suggested that a World Passport is useful at hotels and other non-governmental institutions where a country is unstable; if one is asked to show a country's passport in such situations, one can provide the World Passport instead of a national passport.[53] Governmental authorities do not share this assessment.

In the United Kingdom, the Criminal Records Bureau of the United Kingdom's Home Office states that registered bodies should not accept the World Passport as an identity document, as it is not a valid travel document issued by a government authority and therefore should not be confused with a genuine passport.[54] The Isle of Man's Financial Supervision Commission, which regulates the isle's banks and company formation agents, states that the World Passport is not an acceptable document to prove either the nationality or identity of the bearer. Specifically, it classifies it as a spurious or fantasy passport, a term which it defines to mean as documents which "have the appearance of a passport, but are issued by organisations with no authority and to which no government recognition has been given".[55]

With regard to the United States, the Social Security Administration will also not accept any World Service Authority document (including the World Passport and World Donor Passport) as evidence of identity, age, citizenship, alien status, or marital status for either claims or enumeration purposes.[56] The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles' Customer Service Manual also specifically lists World Passports as "unacceptable documents" for verification of identity.[57] The United States Department of State instructs all U.S. embassies and consulates not to provide any notarial, apostille, or other authentication services in respect of World Service Authority documents.[58] The Department of State's guidelines for documents relating to an application for a World Passport. They warn that such documents could be used for fraudulent or criminal purposes.[58][59] In 1996, an Indiana man was able to obtain a World Passport in a name other than his own legal name, but was convicted after repeated attempts to use it to prove his identity when opening business accounts at various area banks. He was convicted of fraud on a financial institution, and his conviction was upheld on appeal.[60]

As a political statement

Regardless of its acceptance or lack thereof, a traveler may also obtain a World Passport as a moral statement of his or her belief in the inalienable right to travel under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[4] A number of Russian citizens have obtained the World Passport as a form of protest against the "red tape" imposed by the Russian government on their own citizens aiming to travel abroad.[61] In 1977, two mayors of West Bank towns applied for World Passports during a visit by Garry Davis.[62]

Counterfeits and fraudulent issuance

Despite its limited acceptance among the countries of the world, the World Passport is so popular that criminals have even taken to producing fake ones. The Isle of Man's Financial Supervision Commission reports that they have identified counterfeit World Passports.[55] Also, the first cross-jurisdictional fake passport case involved a counterfeit World Passport. In 1979, Canada resolved counterfeit World Passports as well. In February 1981, the local Public Security Bureau identified some Hong Kong criminals who were charging would-be World Passport holders more than ¥18,000 (more than US$10,000 at the official exchange rate at the time) in promising to provide them with World Passports to their home countries of Taiwan and Mainland China.[71]


Old version of World Passport

As mentioned above, Russia does not accept World Passports, but in the 1990s, many company formation agents in Russia sold the World Passport together in a package-deal with the setup of an offshore company (international business company), and falsely claimed that countries of the world accept it as an identity document.[17] In some cases such companies charged up to US$1,000 for the passport alone.[64]

In Malaysia in 1994, a Nigerian man was arrested at the Central Market, Kuala Lumpur by tourist police during an identity check, and found to be in possession of a World Passport. A search of his residence found that he carried a total of five World Passports, as well as a Nigerian passport that had been used by another person to travel to Malaysia and Hong Kong. Authorities suspected he might have been using them to sell the passports to other nationals lacking valid travel documents.[65]

List of notable World Passport holders

This is a list of notable people who have been issued with World Passports. Some may have made applications for World Passports of their own volition, while others were unilaterally issued with World Passports on the initiative of the WSA.

- Garry Davis, WSA founder; holds World Passport No. 1, originally issued in 1954[66][67]
- Jehan Peres, American man charged with hotel bombings in 52 Australian hotels[68]
- Dougy Cassey, American investor; received his World Passport from Garry Davis in the 1970s, and claims to have used it to travel to Iceland, French Polynesia, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Peru[53]
- Shani Davis, world- and Olympic-champion American speedskater[68]
- Youssef Majed al-Molqi, one of the hijackers of the MS *Achille Lauro* in 1985; acquired his World Passport in 1988[30] when he was in jail but never used it for escape[69]
- Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian prime minister; Garry Davis presented him with a World Passport in 1956[41]
- Kenneth Kaunda, American peace activist; unsuccessfully attempted to use a World Passport to travel to Iraq in 2003[38]
- Joel Slater, Iowa man who renounced U.S. citizenship in Australia in 1987 and became stateless[70]
- William Worthy, American journalist; received a World Passport in 1957 while in China[71]
- Yehudi Menuhin, world renown violinist and conductor; was holder of a World Passport since 1954, received honorary World Passport from Garry Davis in 1984 [72]
- Vytautas Landsbergis, first post-Soviet leader of Lithuania, received World Passport from Garry Davis in 1990 [73]
- Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th US president, was the first person to receive an honorary World Passport, and the second person after Garry Davis to be issued one. Garry Davis sent him an honorary World Passport in 1954[74]
- Václav Havel, last president of Czechoslovakia and first president of the Czech Republic, playwright; received a World Passport from Garry Davis in 1990, starting the late's tour of post communist Eastern Europe[75]
- Edward Snowden, NSA whistleblower who leaked details of several top-secret U.S. and British government mass surveillance programs to the press; was issued a World Passport by the WSA when he was stranded in the International Airport.[76][77]
- Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks, was sent an honorary World Passport by Garry Davis while in the Ecuadorian embassy in London in 2012[78]
- Rachinniyot Thongma, Thai economist; founder of the Dissident Party, activist and supporter of the pro-democracy movement. He received a World Passport from Garry Davis during a lecture in Philadelphia in 1956[79]
- Yasiin Bey (Mos Def), musical artist, actor, presented a World Passport upon exiting South Africa in 2016[80][81]

See also

- Camouflage passport

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39. In the United Kingdom, the Criminal Records Bureau of the United Kingdom's Home Office states that registered bodies should not accept the World Passport as an identity document, as it is not a valid travel document issued by a government authority and therefore should not be confused with a genuine passport.[54] The Isle of Man's Financial Supervision Commission, which regulates the isle's banks and company formation agents, states that the World Passport is not an acceptable document to prove either the nationality or identity of the bearer. Specifically, it classifies it as a spurious or fantasy passport, a term which it defines to mean as documents which "have the appearance of a passport, but are issued by organisations with no authority and to which no government recognition has been given".[55]
40. With regard to the United States, the Social Security Administration will also not accept any World Service Authority document (including the World Passport and World Donor Passport) as evidence of identity, age, citizenship, alien status, or marital status for either claims or enumeration purposes.[56] The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles' Customer Service Manual also specifically lists World Passports as "unacceptable documents" for verification of identity.[57] The United States Department of State instructs all U.S. embassies and consulates not to provide any notarial, apostille, or other authentication services in respect of World Service Authority documents.[58] The Department of State's guidelines for documents relating to an application for a World Passport. They warn that such documents could be used for fraudulent or criminal purposes.[58][59] In 1996, an Indiana man was able to obtain a World Passport in a name other than his own legal name, but was convicted after repeated attempts to use it to prove his identity when opening business accounts at various area banks. He was convicted of fraud on a financial institution, and his conviction was upheld on appeal.[60]
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