

CTD MANUAL

Practical guidance to obtaining your
Convention Travel Document



DEFENDDEFENDERS
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

1. BACKGROUND

With 1,5 million refugees, Uganda is the highest refugee-hosting country in the region and the third highest worldwide. Its **“open-door” policy** means most asylum applicants will receive refugee status. Refugees can move freely within Uganda, but without national passports, international travel can be complicated.

Refugees can apply for a **Convention Travel Document**, a ‘CTD’, or refugee passport. In theory, this passport-like document allows for worldwide travel, in accordance with visa regulations. In practice, visas for CTD holders are often denied, even when travelling within the East African Community (EAC). Many refugees do not even apply for CTDs, as they are costly and difficult to obtain.

But you might need a CTD, so we’ve outlined the process for you.

2. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

First, learn and know your legal rights: it helps if you can argue why you are entitled to the CTD and on what basis. Your right to a travel document is in:

- **Uganda’s Refugee Act (2006), Section 31**
- **OUA Convention (1969), Art 6**
- **Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), Art 28**



3. WHAT YOU NEED

Uganda currently only issues CTDs if you have a “valid” reason to travel, so it is only possible to apply if you have a planned trip. Make sure to apply well ahead of time before your planned trip, as obtaining a CTD can be a lengthy process. It is good to have a back-up plan, in case you miss your travel date.

To avoid unnecessary delays, gather all required documents before you apply. These are:

- An **invitation letter** from the organisation or individual that has invited you to come
- A copy of your **refugee ID**
- A copy of your **family attestation**
- A motivation letter, including: an itinerary, dates, accommodation, the purpose of your travel, and why it is important to you or your work

At a later point, you will also need:

- Three **passport photos**
- **123,000 Ugandan Shillings** for fees

→ *Beware of being asked to pay more for an ‘express service’. This is an unofficial cost, and you might be paying a bribe. You are not under any circumstances obliged to pay more than 123,000 UGX.*



4. THE PROCESS

There are two main ways that you can apply for a CTD: through application with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), or through application at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. You may want to first speak to someone at OPM to ask their advice on how to proceed.

Here, we will explain the second way: direct application with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Directorate of Passports. Please note that this is guidance based on best practices but does not guarantee that you will receive a CTD.

STEP 1

Go to the Passport Office. The main Passport Office is situated at the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kampala and accepts applications on Wednesdays from 8am. Go as early as you can.

**Passport Office / Ministry of Internal Affairs,
Plot 75 Jinja Road
(entrance is on Old Portbell Rd)
Kampala**

CTD applications: Wednesdays 8am

STEP 2

Bring all prepared documents and ask to submit your application at the reception.

→ *If you cannot enter the building or submit your application, stay calm and politely state your right to apply for a CTD. If it doesn't work, just return the following week.*

STEP 3

Once your application is submitted, you will probably get an appointment two weeks later to hear whether your application is eligible or not.

- *If denied, make sure to get reasons for this in writing.*
- *If eligible, you need to pay the fees at Centenary Bank. Take your proof of payment back to the Passport Office right away.*

Your application will now be processed for at least one month. Follow up regularly, either by calling or going to the Passport Office.

STEP 4

Once your CTD is ready, you will get a pick-up appointment. These are only on Fridays, so do not go to the Passport Office any other day.

5. ADVICE

Remember: obtaining your CTD may be **lengthy** and **frustrating** at times. Approach each meeting with **patience, confidence, and courage**. Calmly state your **rights**. If you're not allowed to submit your application, ask to go to the Secretary of the High Commissioner to calmly inquire about the delays.

It is always advisable to ask OPM, or other refugees that have successfully obtained their CTD, for help and advice.

For details on all the information mentioned in this CTD guide, check out our report *Open the Doors! Towards Complete Freedom of Movement for Human Rights Defenders in Exile*, available online under defenddefenders.org/reports.

DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) seeks to strengthen the work of human rights defenders throughout the sub-region by reducing their vulnerability to risks of persecution and by enhancing their capacity to effectively defend human rights.

DefendDefenders serves as the secretariat of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, which represents thousands of members consisting of individual HRDs, human rights organisations, and national coalitions that envision a sub-region in which the human rights of every citizen as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are respected and upheld.

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