

## U.S. Embassy Muscat

### Webchat on Visa Scams, March 20, 2012

**Walaa (IRC Director):** Good afternoon, everyone! Thank you for joining us. My name is Walaa and I work in the Public Affairs Section here at the U.S. Embassy as the Information Resource Center Director, and I will be moderating the webchat. I am pleased to introduce our Vice Consul, Christian, who is here to answer any questions you may have on immigrant visas to the U.S.

**Question:** I am an Indian born in Oman and looking for a green card through the lottery. Are there any official websites?

**Christian (Consular):** Hi AV 2, here is the official link: <https://www.dvlottery.state.gov/>

**Question:** I am a holder of an Indian passport and am born here in Muscat. I wanted to know how to apply for the green card lottery and the official website.

**Christian (Consular):** Hi AV 2, the following link provides a list of countries that are ineligible for the Diversity Visa. Unfortunately, India is ineligible.

[http://travel.state.gov/pdf/DV\\_2013\\_instructions.pdf](http://travel.state.gov/pdf/DV_2013_instructions.pdf)

To be clear, people born in India are ineligible as India is a country that sent a total of more than 50,000 immigrants to the United States in the previous five years.

**Question:** But what if I am born in Oman?

**Christian (Consular):** Your eligibility for the Diversity Visa is determined by where you are born. Since you are born in Oman, you are eligible to apply.

**Question:** But I am an Indian citizen, and I got an e-mail telling me that I had won the visa lottery. So what do I do now?

**Christian (Consular):** First, have you registered for the diversity visa lottery? Be suspicious of any e-mail saying you won a visa lottery if you have not registered for it. Also, the program will never ask you to pay money up-front.

**Question:** OK! But just to confirm again, I had registered a few months back on this website: [www.usgreencardlottery.org/](http://www.usgreencardlottery.org/), and it said I was eligible?

**Christian (Consular):** AV 2, that website is not associated with the U.S. Department of State. Typically, most legitimate websites end with ".gov" and will never ask you to pay upfront costs.

**Question:** Yes, that's what I wanted to ask about. What are the procedures for applying? And is [www.usgreencardlottery.org/](http://www.usgreencardlottery.org/) recognized by you?

**Christian (Consular):** No. The following link is the one used by the U.S. Department of State: <https://www.dvlottery.state.gov/>.

**Christian (Consular):** Also, by looking at the website we noticed it mentions you get "free airfare to the USA." This is another fraud indicator as free airfare is not provided under the diversity visa program.

**Question:** OK. When will the next registrations start and for which year would it be?

**Christian (Consular):** AV 2, please follow the instructions provided on the following link: [http://travel.state.gov/pdf/DV\\_2013\\_instructions.pdf](http://travel.state.gov/pdf/DV_2013_instructions.pdf) .

**Christian (Consular):** It is important to know a few things:

1 - The U.S. government will never ask you to make a payment via wire transfer or online. You will be asked to make all payments to your closest U.S. Embassy.

2 - If you get an e-mail saying you have won the diversity visa lottery, please make sure you have actually registered for the program on a "state.gov" website.

3 - If you do win the diversity visa lottery, be aware that the U.S. government will not find you a job in the United States, nor will it pay for your airfare and rent. It is the responsibility of those selected to find their own employment and living accommodations.

As a rule, if something sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

**Question:** I passed my RN examination in 2006 through Madison Healthcare agency for a family migration visa. But in 2007, due to U.S. policy, the agency abruptly stopped telephone and e-mail conversations with us. And since then, I haven't had any contact with them and I don't know the whereabouts of the agency. Kindly let me know how to get my RN certificate for which I paid \$5,000 (for study), and the visa proceedings.

**Christian (Consular):** Margaret, unfortunately, it sounds like you were the victim of a visa scam. It is unlikely that this program was ever legitimate. The U.S. does not have a category of visa called "Family Migration Visa." This leads us to believe that the program was fraudulent.

**Question:** Good afternoon. What about my RN certificate, and how can I find out about the existence of the Madison health care agency?

**Christian (Consular):** Margaret, could you please elaborate on the type of training you took? Was it all online?

**Question:** RN Licensure exam on line. I am really sad about the fact. At least I should get my RN. certificate for which I have studied and worked hard and also paid \$5,000 for.

**Christian (Consular):** Margaret, it sounds like the exam you took might not be recognized in the United States. Before spending money on such programs, please check with U.S. Department of Education Database of Accredited Institutions and Programs at the following link: <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.aspx>

**Question:** Many nurses have taken the same exam through the same agency and migrated to the U.S., up until 2006.

**Christian (Consular):** Any program or e-mail that asks you to send money by a wire transfer is most likely fraudulent. The U.S. government does not accept wire transfers. We frequently see fraudulent visa "offers" that ask for money to be wired to London, which the U.S. government would never do. If you get a job offer, make sure you do online research to verify that the offer is legitimate. If the salary seems too high, you are offered months of vacation time, or are told the salary is tax-free, it is most likely fraudulent.

**Question:** Christian, if I was born in a country whose natives are ineligible to apply, but my spouse was born in a country whose natives are eligible, can I use my spouse's country of birth?

**Christian (Consular):** Laila, if that is the case, then your spouse would be the one to apply.

**Question:** Second question: if I was born in a country whose natives are ineligible, but neither of my parents were born there or resided there at the time of my birth, can I claim nativity in one of my parents' countries of birth if that country's natives qualify for the DV?

**Christian (Consular):** Laila, what matters is where you were born.

**Question:** My brother applied for an immigrant visa through the lottery program and it has been four years now with no response!! How do we know that it isn't fraudulent? Do they send out notices if people are not accepted?

**Christian (Consular):** Dunya, if you have not heard anything back in four years, either your brother did not win or he applied on a fraudulent website. If you applied for the Diversity Visa Lottery and were not selected, you will NOT be notified. You will only be notified if you have won.

**Question:** Okay, does that mean my brother would have to re-apply every year in order to have a better chance of winning?

**Christian (Consular):** Dunya, he must apply each year for the diversity visa.

**Question:** Christian, I have been applying for the DV for almost ten years. Never got selected. I am concerned about the random selection. Do you believe that the lottery is by random selection or is it all wasta?

**Christian (Consular):** Laila, thousands of people apply every year. And from what you told me, it sounds like you are ineligible. This may explain why you have not been selected.

**Question:** Christian, why are natives of certain countries not eligible for the DV program? Please explain in detail?

**Christian (Consular):** Hi Laila, please look at the following link for more information:  
[http://travel.state.gov/pdf/DV\\_2013\\_instructions.pdf](http://travel.state.gov/pdf/DV_2013_instructions.pdf)

**Question:** Can you give some ideas how we I can tell if a job offer is real?

**Christian (Consular):** Shivani, American jobs generally offer one salary and no allowances. This is one way of identifying a fraudulent job offer. Also, the offer would be specific about where you will be working and your responsibilities. Finally, look at the quality of the e-mail. If possible, have a native speaker of English look it over for grammatical errors and/or inconsistencies. Generally, any job offer that asks you to pay money first is suspicious. Also, make sure the job offer you are offered is for one for which you have applied.

**Question:** Christian, how do I report internet fraud or unsolicited e-mails?

**Christian (Consular):** Unfortunately, there is very little we can do here. This is because most of the fraud does not originate in the U.S. If it does originate in the U.S., please contact the local authorities.

**Question:** Thanks, Christian. You were most helpful. Having said that, is there any other way to be selected for the DV?

**Christian (Consular):** No. There other kinds of visas that will allow you to travel to the U.S. if you do not intend to live there permanently. For example, if you intend to study (F1) or work in a specialized field (H1B) or participate in some kind of exchange program (J1) -- you have other options.

**Walaa (IRC Director):** Thanks for logging in today! If you have more questions, please don't hesitate to contact the consular office at [consularmuscat@state.gov](mailto:consularmuscat@state.gov). For your reference, we will keep a transcript of this chat on our embassy website at the following link: <http://oman.usembassy.gov/webchat-transcripts.html> .

**Christian (Consular):** All, thank you very much for your participation! I'm looking forward to our next webchat! I hope this session was useful.