

THE STATUS AND DUTIES OF HONORARY CONSULS

Honorary representation has a long history. Honorary consuls were assigned to render consular services and develop commercial relations at times when the conduct of such work by career consular officers was an exception. Even though the number of career consular officers and missions has grown significantly around the world, the contribution of honorary consular representatives is still important since human mobility and the scope of international relations have also expanded in the era of globalization. The number of honorary consuls has grown in parallel with career consular missions in Turkey in recent years.

The status of honorary consuls is governed by the stipulations of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and Turkish domestic legislation. The purpose of the status conferred upon the honorary consuls is only to ensure the efficient performance of their functions. Some useful information on common issues can be found in this note. Further questions regarding the work and status of honorary consuls can be addressed to the Ministry.

III. TRAFFIC OFFENCES

Honorary consuls do not enjoy immunity from fines associated with traffic offences. Traffic rules should be strictly observed and traffic fines must be paid.

I. SECURITY REQUESTS

The security of honorary consuls in Turkey is provided by mobile units of the police. Additional security measures can be taken according to the requirements of any particular situation.

II. ALLOCATION OF RESERVED PARKING PLACES

A reserved parking place can only be allocated to honorary consuls on the basis of reciprocity and physical availability, as well as favorable traffic conditions in the respective area.

IV. IDENTITY CARDS

ID cards issued to honorary consuls by the Ministry serve only for identification. These ID cards also serve as residence permit for honorary consuls who are not Turkish citizens. In this there is no need to obtain ordinary residence permit.

V. HONORARY CONSULAR PREMISES

The honorary consular premises should not be used in any manner incompatible with the exercise of consular functions. These premises do not enjoy inviolability. Official buildings can be leased by honorary consular officers on the condition to be used exclusively for official consular work.

VI. CC SIGNBOARD

Honorary consuls can apply with their ID card to the relevant traffic division for a CC signboard to be placed next to the license plate of their car. CC signboards can only be obtained for one car. That car should be registered in the province indicated on their ID card. Honorary consuls have no priority in traffic. It is prohibited for them to use misleading flasher and sound systems implying such priority.

VII. TAX EXEMPTION

The fees and charges collected for consular transactions in compliance with the laws and regulations of the sending state are exempted from any tax in Turkey. Honorary consuls do not enjoy exemption from Value Added Tax (VAT) and Special Consumption Tax (SCT).

VIII. FIREARM LICENSES

The “Regulation on Firearms, Knives and Other Instruments” stipulates that Turkish citizens, who reside in Turkey and serve as the honorary consul of another country are entitled to obtain firearms licenses upon the written confirmation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

IX. AIRPORT ENTRANCE

Honorary consuls are not entitled to use VIP lounges in Turkey. On the other hand, they can be granted privileged access to certain areas in the airports or the VIP lounges only if they are required to welcome and pay farewell to high level dignitaries in connection with official visits from the sending state, and with special permission of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon the official request of the Embassy.

X. JUDICIAL IMMUNITY

Honorary consuls have judicial immunity only in respect of acts performed in the exercise of consular functions.

The scope of judicial immunity does not involve certain civil lawsuits referred to here below:

- Civil lawsuits related to contracts signed not in the capacity of the representative of the sending state
- Civil lawsuits filed by third persons for the damages caused by a land vehicle, ship or aircraft.

They are not obliged Members to give evidence concerning matters connected with the exercise of their functions or to produce official correspondence and documents relating thereto. They are also entitled to decline to give evidence as expert witnesses with regard to the law of the sending State. When a criminal suit opened against honorary consulate officer, this officer is obliged to appear before the competent authorities.