

ACTIVITIES OF DIPLOMATIC MISSION

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Annotation: A diplomatic mission or foreign mission is a group of people from a state or organization present in another state to represent the sending state or organization officially in the receiving or host state.[1] In practice, the phrase usually denotes an embassy, which is the main office of a country's diplomatic representatives to another country; it is usually, but not necessarily, based in the receiving state's capital city.[2] Consulates, on the other hand, are smaller diplomatic missions that are normally located in major cities of the receiving state.

Key words: countries mission, representation, senior diplomats, poorer nations, consular service, embassy office.

The basic role of a diplomatic mission is to represent and safeguard the interests of the home country and its citizens in the host country.[16] According to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which establishes the framework of diplomacy among sovereign states:

The functions of a diplomatic mission consist, inter alia, in representing the sending State in the receiving State; protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law; negotiating with the Government of the receiving State; ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State; promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations.

In some cases, one country's mission may process visa applications on behalf of another. For instance, in Singapore, the Danish embassy processes visa applications for all the Nordic countries, even though Sweden, Norway and Finland all operate their own embassies in Singapore. Similarly, British embassies often provide consular services on behalf of Commonwealth countries that do not have diplomatic representation in the host country. Unless you are travelling with a special diplomatic passport (issued only to diplomats, high-ranking government officials or their family members), then diplomatic immunity does not apply to you. If you do have official diplomatic status, then it becomes a more complex legal question and your employer

should be able to provide expert advice. Diplomatic missions have special status under international law. An embassy is considered entirely under the control of the sending nation, and local laws do not apply inside it. For instance, police from the host country may not enter the embassy compound without permission from the sending nation. A consulate does not enjoy this privilege, and local laws do still apply. A few relatively senior diplomats are immune to arrest or prosecution by the host country regardless of the crime, whether for spying or more mundane offenses, and the only option is for the host to expel them. The assassination of Kim Jong-nam in Malaysia is one of the more infamous examples. Some mission staff may have only a weaker "consular immunity"; they cannot be prosecuted for anything done on the job, but can be for other things. Honorary consuls are not entitled to any diplomatic or consular immunity. While the sending nation can waive immunity, it is not required to do so. Diplomats' luggage or things shipped in a "diplomatic bag" are immune from customs inspection, although there have been instances where customs officials simply ignored this restriction. There are a set of rather complex rules covering how far these protections extend. Not all embassy staff have diplomatic privileges but some staff outside the embassy — for example, at a trade mission or an aid agency — may. Diplomatic immunity typically only applies in the country that you are accredited to, and would usually cease to apply if you travel to another country outside your official capacity. There are a number of complications and variations, which will only occasionally matter to travellers.

Some of the smaller or poorer nations have few missions abroad. To a visa for Tajikistan, for example, you may have to go to a major center like Moscow or London. New York is also good for this since almost every country has a mission to the United Nations. The bright side is that in these cases it is often possible to apply by mail, although this means letting go of your passport for several weeks. Some countries also allow applying for their visas online. The reverse can apply as well. If you are in an out-of-the-way place and need consular assistance, your country may not have an embassy there so you might need to contact another mission; for example, most visitors to Bhutan would need to contact their embassy in Delhi. Alternately, your government may have an arrangement with some friendly country by which that country's mission will also provide consular service for citizens of your nation; this is most common for pairs of countries in some international group such as the British Commonwealth, the ex-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States or the European Union. This is one more thing to check when planning a trip that goes far off the beaten path; your own government's foreign affairs department is the best source of information on such arrangements.

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an embassy, which is the main office of a country's diplomatic representatives to another country; it is usually, but not necessarily, based in the receiving state's capital city. Consulates, on the other hand, are smaller diplomatic missions that are normally located in major cities of the receiving state (but can be located in the capital, typically when the sending country has no embassy in the receiving state). As well as being a diplomatic mission to the country in which it is situated, an embassy may also be a nonresident permanent mission to one or more other countries. The term embassy is sometimes used interchangeably with chancery, the physical office or site of a diplomatic mission. Consequently, the terms "embassy residence" and "embassy office" are used to distinguish between the ambassador's residence and the chancery.

Contrary to popular belief, diplomatic missions sometimes do not enjoy full extraterritorial status and are generally not sovereign territory of the represented state. The sending state can give embassies sovereign status but this only happens with a minority of countries.[13] Rather, the premises of an embassy remain under the jurisdiction of the host state while being afforded special privileges (such as immunity from most local laws) by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Diplomats themselves still retain full diplomatic immunity, and (as an adherent to the Vienna Convention) the authorities of the host country may not enter the premises of the mission (which means the head of mission's residence) without permission of the represented country, even to put out a fire. International rules designate an attack on an embassy as an attack on the country it represents.[14] The term 'extraterritoriality' is often applied to diplomatic missions, but normally only in this broader sense.

As the host country's authorities may not enter the representing country's embassy without permission, embassies are sometimes used by refugees escaping from either the host country or a third country. For example, North Korean nationals, who would be arrested and deported from China upon discovery, have sought sanctuary at various third-country embassies in China. Once inside the embassy, diplomatic channels can be used to solve the issue and send the refugees to another country. See the list of people who took refuge in a diplomatic mission for a list of some notable cases.

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