



**The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America**  
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## **Guide to Applying for Portuguese Spanish Citizenship**

Do you have Sephardic Jewish heritage? Are you interested in acquiring Portuguese citizenship? If so, the Sephardic Brotherhood can help you in this process.

Who Qualifies?

The applicable Portuguese Law states the following: "The Portuguese Government may grant nationality to descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews who demonstrate a traditional connection to a Community with Portuguese Sephardic origins, based on proven objective requirements of a connection with Portugal, such as family names, family language, direct or collateral ancestry." These are the conditions under which Portuguese nationality may be granted:

1. Portuguese nationality may be granted to descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews, who after leaving Portugal, due to religious persecution (1496-1821), maintained ties with "organized communities" that were typically Portuguese, such as those that existed in **Salonika and Smyrna** before being decimated by the Shoah (KK Portugal, KK Portugal Velho, KK Lisbon, KK Évora, etc.); or had ties with the **Spanish & Portuguese Synagogues in London, Amsterdam, Curaçau, Suriname, etc.**
2. Portuguese nationality may be granted to applicants whose families once abandoned the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal and Spain) and for centuries have been integrated into Portuguese and Spanish communities, commonly known as "**Sephardim**" (**Turkey, Greece, former Yugoslavia, Morocco, etc.**), rife with marriages between Jews of Portuguese origin and Jews of Spanish origin and **who used the language known as Ladino (a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish languages with local languages)**. Those applicants may obtain the certificate, even if they cannot find "Portuguese" surnames in their known genealogy.
3. Portuguese nationality may be granted to all those descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews who after leaving Portugal, due to religious persecution, travelled far and wide, whether in an organized manner or not, as part of a community or not and whether belonging to a synagogue or not, and who maintain an emotional connection to Portugal, even if they have since, by virtue of circumstances, become part or not of other Jewish Communities, whether Sephardic or Ashkenazi.

If you have proof of connection to a clearly Sephardic relative or ancestor, and would like a certificate certifying your Sephardic heritage from the Sephardic Brotherhood, below is a brief outline of our process. The Sephardic Brotherhood has the ability to act as a certifying institution in the United States to provide documentation attesting to an individual's Jewish and Sephardic heritage for the purposes of Portuguese Citizenship.

**Note – Unlike the Spanish Citizenship process, Portuguese Citizenship does NOT require a language exam/proof of Portuguese Language proficiency OR a requirement to go to Portugal to complete the process and receive a Portuguese Passport**

#### **For Non-Members**

- Fill out the Application for Sephardic Origin Certificate Form
- Write your Letter of Justification: Please write a summary of your genealogical or communal proof, ending with the following line: "I hereby certify that this information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge." This will be inserted into the application.
- Application Fee and Form: There is a \$36 fee to start the application process, which you can pay via credit card on the donate page of our website. Please note that this donation is to the Sephardic Origin Certificate Fund in honor of "application fee"
- Supporting Documentation: Once you submit your application, documentation supporting your letter of justification (birth records, immigration records, etc.) can be emailed to [info@sephardicbrotherhood.com](mailto:info@sephardicbrotherhood.com)
- Processing Fee: Upon verification of your justification letter, the Sephardic Brotherhood will email you if your application is accepted. If it is not, we will do our best to advise you of needed changes.

Summary of Costs for Certificate of Sephardic Origin for non-members of the Sephardic Brotherhood: \$36 to apply for the certificate. \$174 to process the application and review relevant materials. \$150 for final documentation drafting. **Total cost: \$360.**

The total cost above includes a donation to the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America. This certificate will certify your Sephardic heritage, and also provide one of the two necessary "special connections" to Portugal as required by the Portuguese Government. Obtaining a certificate of Sephardic origin is just one part of applying for citizenship in Portugal.

#### **For Sephardic Brotherhood Members**

- Fill out the Application for Sephardic Origin Certificate Form
- Write your Letter of Justification: Please write a summary of your genealogical or communal proof, ending with the following line: "I hereby certify that this information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge." This will be inserted into the application.

- Application Fee and Form: There is a \$36 fee to start the application process, which you can pay via credit card on the donate page of our website. Please note that this donation is to the Sephardic Origin Certificate Fund in honor of “application fee”
- Supporting Documentation: Once you submit your application, documentation backing up your letter of justification (birth records, immigration records, etc.) can be emailed to [info@sephardicbrotherhood.com](mailto:info@sephardicbrotherhood.com)
- Processing Fee: Upon verification of your justification letter, the Sephardic Brotherhood will email you if your application is accepted. If it is not, we will do our best to advise you of needed changes.

Summary of Costs for Certificate of Sephardic Origin for non-members of the Sephardic Brotherhood: \$36 to apply for the certificate. \$64 to process the application for members and review relevant materials. **Total cost: \$100.**

The following information is a summary of the process.

### **Required Documents**

Every document must be separately digitized in its own pdf file, with the original paper copies also presented in Portugal in front of the Notary Public.

**Jewish Community Certificate/Certificate of Sephardic Heritage issued by the Sephardic Brotherhood** – With translation into Portuguese and apostille and/or a certificate issued by the Jewish Community of Lisbon or Jewish Community of Porto. Please note that these certificates are available for Jewish applicants and any non-Jewish applicants who may clearly prove their Sephardic genealogical ancestry. This is the letter provided by the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America, signed by our President and Executive Director/Rabbi, certifying your Sephardic heritage and Jewish communal affiliation.

**US Passport** - all pages digitized (It is best to scan four passport pages on each 8x11 sheet) Birth Certificate with an apostille from the Secretary of State’s office where issued, translated into Portuguese by a translator certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Government

**Birth Certificate** – with official Portuguese translation and apostille

**Marriage Certificate** (if applicable) - with official Portuguese translation and apostille.

**Additional Documents/Proof Connecting the Applicant to Portugal** - applicants should attempt to show as much evidence as possible of a connection to Sephardic Communities that originally derive their lineage from Sepharad (the Iberian Peninsula).

**FBI Criminal Background Check** – with an apostille issued from the Secretary of State’s office in Washington, D.C. or Virginia, and translated into Portuguese by a translator certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Government.

### **Process to Becoming a Portuguese Citizen**

After all relevant documents are prepared electronically, the applicant may submit the documentation to the Oporto (Porto) Jewish Community at [portuguesenationality@comunidade-israelita-porto.org](mailto:portuguesenationality@comunidade-israelita-porto.org) or to the Lisbon Jewish Community at [administrativo@cilisboa.org](mailto:administrativo@cilisboa.org). Applicants should be prepared to send passport and birth information, proof of current residence, a one-time payment of 150 euros and supporting evidence of their connection to Portugal or to a Portuguese-Jewish community. Once the committee has all of the documents, it will let applicants know via email whether they appear meet the committee's qualifications, and then will issue a certificate attesting to the applicants’ Sephardic Heritage. Although not required to submit your application for Portuguese citizenship, it is strongly recommended as proof to the Portuguese Government.

Once applicants have gathered all documents and received the certificate from the Jewish Communities in Portugal, it is strongly recommended, although not required, that they hire a Portuguese citizenship attorney to help coordinate and submit the case to the Portuguese Government. There are thousands of attorneys capable of petitioning for citizenship in Portugal. The Attorney can then submit this documentation to the Portuguese Foreign Ministry on your behalf. You may also contact a Consular Affairs section at your local Portuguese Consulate in the United States to submit your documentation for citizenship.

At this point, the Portuguese Government will consider the application and if approved, applicants will be informed and will need travel to a Portuguese Consulate in the United States to process and receive their new passport. **Applications do not need to travel to Portugal at any time throughout the process and do not need to renounce other nationalities.**