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LBY100634.FE

Libya: Situation of Muslims who have converted to Christianity; treatment by society and the authorities (January 2002 - October 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Little information on the situation of Muslims who have converted to Christianity could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints for this Response.

The only reference to the authorities' treatment of Libyan Muslims who have converted to Christianity found by the Research Directorate was a September 2002 country profile of Libya by the human rights organization International Christian Concern (ICC).

The ICC, citing the Intercessors Network as its source, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) both reported that in August 2002, "14 students from the Nasser University in Tripoli were arrested for converting to Christianity" and "were seen being transferred from one prison to another blindfolded" (ICC Sept. 2002; EFC 16 Aug. 2002), although the EFC noted that its information was based on the testimony of only one Libyan national (ibid.). Neither the arrest nor the prison transfer could corroborated by other sources.

Freedom of opinion is limited in Libya (International Religious Freedom Report 2004 15 Sept. 2004, Sec. II; ICC Sept. 2002), and it is illegal for Christian churches to proselytize (ibid.; International Religious Freedom Report 2004 15 Sept. 2004, Sec. I). According to the International Religious Freedom Report 2004, "generally, this restriction is not observed" (ibid.). However, without providing further information, the ICC reported that "house church leaders have been arrested" (Sept. 2002). This information has not been corroborated.

Libya's Christian community numbers anywhere from 50,000 (Encyclopaedia of the Orient n.d.) to 100,000 adherents (International Religious Freedom Report 2004 15 Sept. 2004, Sec. I), who are "mostly foreigners" (ICC Sept. 2002; International Religious Freedom Report 2004 15 Sept. 2004, Sec. I) and "predominantly African immigrants" (ibid.). The International Religious Freedom Report 2004 noted that "bishops, priests and nuns wear religious dress freely in public and report virtually no discrimination," while also "enjoy[ing] good relations with the Government" (ibid.). The report also indicated that adherents of non-Muslim minority religions said "they do not face harassment by authorities or the Muslim majority on the basis of their religious practices" (ibid., Sec. III). The ICC Website does not list Libya as a country where there is "persecution or severe discrimination against Christians" (n.d.). The ICC also indicated in its September 2002 country profile of Libya that "no extremist groups have been cited for incidences of persecution" of Christians in Libya.

In a profile of Moammar Qadhafi published on 1 August 2005 in APS Review Gas Market Trends, the Libyan president suggested a "lasting solution" for the minority Christians in the Arab world: "Christians should simply convert to Islam."

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted.
in researching this Information Request.

References


Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts made to contact the Ottawa office of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Journal of Libyan Studies [Oxford], as well as a professor of political science at the University of New England in Biddeford (Maine) who specializes in religion in Libya were unsuccessful.

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