

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the [Knowledge and Information Management Unit](#).

13 April 2017

DJI105790.E

Djibouti: Requirements and procedures for an adult woman to travel inside and outside the country, including whether the female's marital status influences the process; whether women require the authorization or support from a male member of their family to travel (2015-April 2017)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Sources indicate that the Republic of Djibouti ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1998 (OECD 27 Nov. 2014, 44; UN Oct. 2011, 1). The CEDAW provides the following:

Article 15

1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.

...

4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile. (UN 18 December 1979)

In its report submitted to the UN under article 18 of CEDAW in 2010, Djibouti's Ministry for the Advancement of Women reported that "[u]nder domestic legal norms, there is no prohibition on the freedom of Djiboutian women to move freely from place to place" (UN 16 Apr. 2010 para 560). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Association for Respect of Human Rights in Djibouti (Association pour le respect des droits de l'homme à Djibouti, ARDHD), a Paris-based association promoting human rights and democracy in Djibouti (ARDHD 30 May 2012), indicated that there were no legislative obstacles preventing a woman from travelling alone, and that there are no requirements for her to have to be accompanied by a man (ARDHD 23 Mar. 2017).

According to a 2015 World Bank report, entitled *Getting to Equal: Women, Business and the Law 2016*, in Djibouti, both married and unmarried women can apply for a passport, apply for an ID card, travel outside of the country, travel outside their home, and choose where to live, the same way as men (World Bank 9 Sept. 2015, 114). In its 2011 *MENA Gender Equality Profile* on Djibouti, UNICEF similarly indicates that "[a] woman does not need the permission of her husband or guardian in order to obtain a passport" (UN Oct. 2011, 2). Similarly, the ARDHD representative indicated that women do not need consent from their father or husband to apply for a passport or to travel (ARDHD 23 Mar. 2017). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative from the Djiboutian Observatory for the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights (Observatoire djiboutien pour la promotion de la démocratie et des droits de l'homme, ODDH), an organization that promotes democracy and human rights in Djibouti (La Voix de Djibouti 15 Apr. 2012), similarly stated that neither the law nor common practice requires women in Djibouti to obtain authorization from their husbands to travel (ODDH 22 Mar. 2017). The same source added that women [translation] "travel freely where they want, when they want, and can obtain a passport by themselves" (ODDH 22 Mar. 2017).

However, the 2011 *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* on Djibouti notes in the section entitled "Discrimination Against Women in Marriage and Family Relations" that, under Article 31 of the Family Code, "the husband is the head of the family whose prerogative the wife must respect" (UN 28 July 2011, para. 36).

In its 2016 *Freedom in the World* report for Djibouti, Freedom House states that "[t]hough the law provides equal treatment for all Djiboutian citizens, ... [w]omen face discrimination under customary practices related to inheritance and other property matters, divorce, and freedom of movement" (Freedom House 2016). In a 2014 document entitled *Women in Public Life. Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*, which is the brochure for the report *Women in Public Life. Gender, Law, and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa* (OECD n.d.), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that in Djibouti "the wife is subject to her husband in all aspects of life and has the duty to obey him; the husband can limit her freedom of movement" (OECD 2014, 28). The OECD also states in the full-length version of the report that women in Djibouti "are not allowed to travel abroad without the permission of an adult male relative" (OECD 27 Nov. 2014, 149).

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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Djibouti – Embassy in Washington, DC.

Internet sites, including: Djibouti – Embassy in Brussels, Embassy in Washington, DC, Embassy in Switzerland, Présidence de la République; Factiva; Freedom House; *La Nation*; United Nations – Refworld; World Bank.

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Date modified: 2016-01-05