



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Ecuador: Procedures for reporting domestic violence to the police stations for women and families; the "help certificate" (*boleta de auxilio*)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Corroborating sources indicate that individuals who want to report incidents of domestic disputes, including domestic violence, can do so at the Police Stations for Women and Families (Comisarías de la Mujer y la Familia) (Ecuador n.d.a; Corporación Mujer a Mujer 12 Feb. 2007). These stations, which offer legal, psychological and social assistance to victims of family violence (Ecuador n.d.b), are located in all of the country's provincial capitals (Corporación Mujer a Mujer 12 Feb. 2007). The police stations for women and families issue [translation] "help certificates" (*boletas de auxilio*), which enable victims to obtain the necessary protection provided by the police authorities (CLADEM 26 Jan. 2007; Corporación Mujer a Mujer 12 Feb. 2007) and have the aggressor arrested if he continues to be violent (ibid). In addition to the help certificates, the Police Stations for Women and Families offer the following protective measures (*medidas de amparo*): ordering a violent spouse to leave the home; preventing the aggressor from approaching the victim at her workplace or where she is staying; preventing the aggressor from threatening the victim; allowing the victim to return to her home once the aggressor has left; awarding the care of minor children to the best qualified person; and helping victims (Ecuador n.d.c).

To file a complaint of domestic violence, the victim must go to one of the Police Stations for Women and Families (Ecuador n.d.a; CLADEM 26 Jan. 2007), where she must show her citizenship card (*cédula de ciudadanía*) (ibid.; Ecuador n.d.b). The victim must be of majority age or, in the case of a minor, must be married or be in a common-law relationship (ibid.). At the police station, the victim must describe to an official the details of what happened and must sign a statement (Ecuador n.d.a). After that, the statement is assigned a reference number and is recorded in the archives (ibid.). The victim's personal information is obtained so that the help certificate can be issued later (ibid.). The statement is then sent to the office of the commissioner; the commissioner and the secretary validate the statement by signing it (ibid.). Next, the victim can pick up the help certificate, which must be signed by the commissioner (ibid.). When the victim asks for additional protection, other than the help certificate, it is the commissioner of the Police Station for Women and Families who decides what type of protection she will receive (Ecuador n.d.c.)

In 12 February 2007 correspondence, a representative of the Woman to Woman Corporation (Corporación Mujer a Mujer), an Ecuadorian non-governmental women's organization that provides legal, psychological and social assistance to women victims of violence (Isis Internacional n.d.), provided the following information. According to the Representative, to obtain a help certificate, a victim of domestic violence can contact a non-governmental organization that provides legal assistance or a lawyer who will take her statement. Then, the victim must go to a Police Station for Women and Families with her citizenship card and signed statement so that the commissioner can issue a help certificate.

According to two sources consulted by the Research Directorate, the help certificate has no expiry date and is recognized nationally (CLADEM 26 Jan. 2007; Ecuador n.d.a). However, in 14 February 2007 correspondence, a representative of the Woman to Woman Corporation stated that, in certain Ecuadorian cities, such as Cuenca, victims must renew their help certificates monthly. This information could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

When a victim loses or damages her help certificate, she simply has to go to the archives section of the police station where she filed her complaint, with the number of her statement, which will be verified in the archives (Ecuador n.d.d). Once the information has been verified, a new help certificate is issued (ibid.). That certificate is then sent to the office of the commissioner, who signs it (ibid.). The victim can then pick up the new certificate (ibid.).

According to the Representative of the Woman to Woman Corporation, the help certificate is effective in urban areas but not in rural areas, because rural areas do not have police stations (12 Feb. 2007). A representative of the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer, CLADEM) stated that the effectiveness of the help certificates

is relative because, in certain cases, police officers will sympathize with the aggressor, particularly when the aggressor is a police officer or member of the military (26 Jan. 2007).

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

Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (CLADEM). 26 January 2007. Correspondence from a representative.

Corporación Mujer a Mujer. 14 February 2007. Correspondence from a representative.

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Ecuador. N.d.a. Gobernación de Manabí. "¿Qué pasos debe seguir para acceder a los servicios de la comisaría?" <<http://www.gobernacionmanabi.gov.ec/servicios.php?serid=11>> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2007]

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Isis Internacional. N.d. "Violencia contra las mujeres en América Latina y el Caribe-Directorio de organizaciones e instituciones: Ecuador." <<http://www.isis.cl/temas/vi/catalog/ecu.htm>> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Centro Ecuatoriano para la Promoción y Acción de la Mujer (CEPAM), the Coordinadora Política de Mujeres Ecuatorianas (CPME) and the Dirección Nacional de Género did not respond to a request for information within the time constraints of this response.

Internet sources, including: Amnesty International (AI), Canadian Crossroads International (CCI), Comisión Andina de Juristas, Derecho Ecuador, *Diario Hoy* [Quito], Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), *El Mercurio* [Cuenca].

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