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.

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Egypt: Whether the government in Egypt has made head covering mandatory for women (2012-May 2013)

Response Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on the government in Egypt making head covering mandatory for women could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. However, the following information may be of interest.

Al-Hayat, a Lebanese newspaper reporting on the Middle East (Factiva n.d.), reports that "as soon as" the Muslim Brotherhood won the presidential election in Egypt, "several women reported that they were harassed by bearded men and veiled women calling on them to wear the hijab ... [a]lthough there is no evidence to corroborate such claims" (29 July 2012). The Miami Herald reports that, since the Muslim Brotherhood came into power, there has been a "new trend...of harassment against women who do not wear the hijab" (5 July 2012). The Miami Herald adds that, according to women, men in the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as radical Salafis ["ultraconservative Sunni Muslims" (The New York Times 19 Aug. 2012)], and some conservative Egyptian women "confront them in public, yelling their calls for them to dress differently" (5 July 2012).

Sources report on the establishment of "morality police" (Ahramonline 13 Jan. 2012; openDemocracy 24 Jan. 2012). Ahramonline, an Egyptian English-language news website (n.d.), reports that the morality police declared its existence on social media in December 2011, and is an anonymous group, named the "Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in Egypt," which does not have official authority to enforce or implement Islamic law (Ahramonline 13 Jan. 2012). According to Ahramonline, "some of the morality enforcers that ... hit the streets are said to be adamant about persuading women to wear the face veil, or Niqab" (ibid.). openDemocracy, an "independent, public interest, not-for-profit" news source (n.d.), reports that, according to "[t]he press," Egyptian men are paid by the morality police to "impose morality on the public, including forcing un-veiled or rather improperly veiled women off the streets" (openDemocracy 24 Jan. 2012). openDemocracy adds that "these attempts were foiled thanks to media and public outrage" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Egypt Independent, an Egyptian English-language newspaper (n.d.), reported that, in October 2012, a primary school teacher cut the hair of two students because they were not wearing hijabs (Egypt Independent 17 Oct. 2012). The newspaper later indicated that the Luxor Misdemeanor Court sentenced the teacher to six months in prison and suspended her for three years (ibid. 6 Nov. 2012).

Al-Masry Al-Youm, a newspaper described by Egypt Independent as its "sister organization" (Egypt Independent n.d.), reports that, according to the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, four students in sixth grade in Bulaq al-Dakrur, Giza Governorate, were beaten by their religion teacher for not wearing hijabs (11 April 2013). Corroborating or further information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The BBC reports that, clerics on television tell men that they can touch girls that are not "properly" covered (4 May 2013). Reuters reports that a preacher appeared on television and said that women "must cover up for their own protection" (9 Jan. 2013).

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


Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the following individuals and organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Arab Lawyers Union, Baheya ya Masr; Egypt – Embassy in Ottawa, National Council for Women; Egyptian Center for Women's Rights; Egyptian Organization for Human Rights; Nazra for Feminist Studies; New Women Foundation; professor of anthropology, Concordia University. McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies and a professor of political science at McGill University could not provide information for this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; ecoi.net; Human Rights Watch; Factiva; Minority Rights Group International; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld; United States – Commission on International Religious Freedom, Congressional Research Service, Department of State; Women Living Under Muslim Laws.

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