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Guinea: Forced and arranged marriages, and possible recourse (2003-2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Forced marriages are still taking place in Guinea (CONAG-DCF 11 May 2005; WiLDAF 17 Mar. 2004; see also Global Fund for Women 24 June 2004). In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, the Director of Operations of the Inter-African Committee (Comité Inter-Africain) in Conakry—who also manages the Coordination Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting Women's and Children's Health (Cellule de coordination sur les pratiques traditionnelles affectant la santé des femmes et des enfants, CPTAFE)—stated that forced and arranged marriages exist in Guinea among most ethnic and religious groups (10 May 2005). Although the Guinean civil code prohibits forced marriage, according to the president of the Guinean National Coalition for Women's Rights and Citizenship (Coalition nationale de Guinée pour les droits et la citoyenneté des femmes, CONAG-DCF) in Conakry, [translation] "the girl bears the weight of tradition and of religion" as well as that of family pressure (11 May 2005). Parents often use [translation] "moral and emotional threats," for example, telling their daughter that she [translation] "will disgrace the family" if she does not marry the man that her parents choose for her (Comité Inter-Africain 10 May 2005). Sometimes other family members, such as uncles and aunts, intervene to arrange the marriage (ibid.).

It is rare that a girl will file a complaint about a forced marriage or that Guinean society will intervene in family matters (ibid.). The president of CONAG-DCF explained that girls can only avoid a forced marriage [translation] "if the parents are understanding" (11 May 2005). However, according to the Director of Operations of the Inter-African Committee, the ministry of social affairs is willing to assist girls who file complaints, based on the strengthening of some women's rights by the former political regime (10 May 2005). However, Women, Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) indicated that the fact that the age at which a woman can legally marry was set at 17 and not 18, as established in the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the failure to adopt several laws on the rights of women, the family and children are negative aspects of the legal framework within which civil and social rights are exercised in Guinea (17 Mar. 2004). The Global Fund for Women considers the fight for women's rights in Guinea to be difficult given that the country's president is in a polygamous marriage (24 June 2004).

No other information on forced and arranged marriages in Guinea or on possible recourse could be found by the Research Directorate within the time constraints.

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

Coalition nationale de Guinée pour les droits et la citoyenneté des femmes (CONAG-DCF), Conakry. 11 May 2005. Correspondence from the president.

Comité Inter-Africain, Conakry. 10 May 2005. Correspondence from the Director of Operations.

Global Fund for Women, San Francisco. 24 June 2004. "Guinée - Partenariats stratégiques avec les hommes pour changer l'existence des femmes." <<http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/archive/africa-report-fr/08-guinea.html>> [Accessed 9 May 2005]

Women, Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF). 17 March 2004. "Situation des droits des femmes en République de Guinée." <<http://www.wildaf-ao.org>> [Accessed 5 May 2005]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Africatime.com, Amnesty International, Famafrigue, Human Rights Watch, Norwegian Council for Africa, Radio France Internationale, UNIFEM, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services - Resource Information Center, United States Department of State, Women Under Muslim Law.

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