



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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27 October 2005

### GIN100700.FE

Guinea: Whether the Guerzé practise polyandry; if so, whether a woman can be forced to remarry should her husband be absent for a prolonged period, even when this first marriage has not been annulled (October 2005)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

During a 25 October 2005 telephone interview, the permanent secretary 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) said that no ethnic group in Guinea practises polyandry.

However, regarding the case of a husband's prolonged absence, the permanent secretary stated the following in correspondence sent to the Research Directorate:

[translation]

In Guinean communities in general, a husband and wife should, as a rule, reside together. That is why, when a married man leaves his wife behind to go to Europe or America and stays away for a long time (for years), the wife's family can ask that she marry another man, especially if the absent husband has not kept in touch with his wife, which is to say that he does not handle her expenses nor write to her. The wife's family can put her under tremendous pressure.

The wife's resistance depends on her level of education and her ability to support herself financially. It is inconceivable for a woman to live alone without a husband because that implies she is engaging in illicit relations, which brings disgrace on the family (25 Oct. 2005b).

In a second telephone interview from Conakry that same day, the permanent secretary of CONAG-DCF said that divorcing the absent husband is not really required (25 Oct. 2005c). He explained that in Guinea, although a number of couples are married officially before civil authorities, in most cases, and especially in rural areas, one of the spouses can simply end the marriage without initiating divorce proceedings (CONAG-DCF 25 Oct. 2005c).

CONAG-DCF is a coalition of eight Guinean non-governmental organizations working in the areas of gender equality, violence against women, citizenship for women, and women's role in government (CONAG-DCF 25 Oct. 2005c; see also Femmeafrique.org n.d.).

The director of operations of the Inter-African Committee (Comité inter-africain, CIAF) in Conakry, who is also the secretary-general of the Coordination Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (Cellule de coordination sur les pratiques traditionnelles affectant la santé des femmes et des enfants, CPTAFE), provided the following explanation:

[translation]

In Guinea, when a man abandons his wife for a long time, the wife's parents ask the husband's family for a divorce before asking the wife to remarry. If the husband's family refuses, the wife's family sets a deadline upon which the marriage is automatically nullified.

Note that the contrary is also possible. The wife's family can force her to wait for her husband if his absence is involuntary (illness, prison, complications of travel, etc.) (27 Oct. 2005).

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). 25 October 2005a. Telephone interview with the permanent secretary.

\_\_\_\_\_. 25 October 2005b. Correspondence from the permanent secretary.

\_\_\_\_\_. 25 October 2005c. Telephone interview with the permanent secretary.

Comité Inter-Africain (CIAF), Conakry. 27 October 2005. Correspondence from the director of operations.

Femmeafrique.org. N.d. "Femmes d'Afrique francophone: La Coalition nationale de Guinée pour les droits et la citoyenneté des femmes CONAG-DCF." <<http://www.famafrrique.org/femafrfranc/conag.html>> [Accessed 24 Oct. 2005]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact the Guinean Human Rights Organization (Organisation guinéenne des droits de l'homme, OGDH) and the Association for Children's and Women's Rights in Guinea (Association pour la défense des droits de l'enfant et de la femme en Guinée, ADDEF-Guinée) were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** AllAfrica, Amnesty International, ECOI.net, Famafrrique, Human Rights Watch, International Federation for Human Rights, Norwegian Council for Africa, Radio France Internationale, United Nations Development Fund for Women, United States Department of State, Women Living Under Muslim Laws.

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