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30 August 2004

ZZZ42895.E

Mexico/Iran: Treatment of individuals in mixed marriages; particularly between an adult male Muslim with Iranian citizenship and an adult female Catholic of Mexican citizenship (August 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information about the treatment of individuals in mixed marriages in Mexico was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In 20 August 2004 correspondence, an assistant professor specializing in religious history in Mexico and the United States at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles expressed the following professional opinion with regard to the treatment of mixed marriages. The professor stated that treatment of a mixed marriage between a Mexican Catholic and an Iranian Muslim would "be as varied as [it] would be in Canada or the USA - assuming there was no conversion from Catholicism on the wife or children's part it would probably not be any more 'problematic' than any other mixed marriage." However, the professor furthered noted that if the Mexican woman were to convert to Islam there would probably be "less sympathy for the relationship." In addition, the professor also stated that treatment of mixed marriage couples such as the one outlined in this Request would "vary regionally (some states like Jalisco for example are more conservative and staunchly Catholic) and from urban to rural settings."

With regard to whether the government of Mexico would not allow a mixed marriage to take place, the professor responded that as far as he knew, mixed marriages are legal in Mexico and he was unaware of any instances of state intervention in prohibiting mixed marriages.

This information was partially corroborated in the *International Religious Freedom Report 2003* (IRFR 2003), which mentioned that in Mexico

[t]he Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions. State and municipal governments generally protect this right, but some local officials infringe on religious freedom, especially in the south.

The Constitution states that everyone is free to profess their chosen religious belief and to practice the ceremonies and acts of worship of their respective belief. Congress may not enact laws that establish or prohibit any religion. The Constitution also provides for the separation of church and state. The 1992 Law on Religious Associations and Public Worship defines the administrative

remedies that protect the right to religious freedom. In August 2001, a provision was added to the Constitution that establishes for the first time a constitutional prohibition against any form of discrimination, including discrimination against persons on the basis of religion (IRFR 2003 18 Dec. 2003).

In addition, the IRFR 2003 stated that all religious associations and groups in Mexico are registered and monitored by a federal government agency known as the Under Secretariat of Religious Affairs (Direccion General de Asociaciones Religiosas) (ibid.). According to the IRFR 2003, the Under Secretariat of Religious Affairs is mandated to support "religious tolerance and investigate cases of religious intolerance" (ibid.). No reports of religious intolerance towards mixed marriages were mentioned in the IRFR 2003 for Mexico.

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

Assistant Professor, University of Southern California, Los Angeles. 20 August 2004. Correspondence.

International Religious Freedom Report 2003. 18 December 2003. "Mexico." United States Department of State. Washington, DC.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24499pf.htm>> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2004]

Additional Sources Consulted

Attempts to contact a professor at the Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia (INAH) in Mexico City were unsuccessful.

Attempts to contact a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee were unsuccessful.

Internet: Amnesty International, *Country Reports 2003*, Human Rights Watch, *La Jornada* [Mexico City], Subsecretaria de Poblacion, Migracion y Asuntos Religiosas.

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