



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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17 October 2005

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Mauritania: Whether Mauritania is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the rights of Mauritanian nationals to settle in Senegal (October 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Corroborating sources indicated that the following 15 countries are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo (France n.d.; Action-visas.com n.d.; Senegal n.d.). According to one source, Mauritania withdrew from ECOWAS in 1999 (ibid.).

During an 11 October 2005 telephone interview, the consular chargé d'affaires at the Embassy of Senegal in Ottawa indicated that even though Mauritania is no longer a member of ECOWAS, its nationals can enter Senegal without a visa (see also TIM Oct. 2005, 383). He explained that under the bilateral agreements between the two countries, Mauritanian and Senegalese nationals can enter either country upon presentation of a single valid piece of identification (Senegal 11 Oct. 2005). He also stated that Mauritanian nationals can stay in Senegal as long as they like, provided the document they used to enter the country has not expired (ibid.).

During a 13 October 2005 telephone interview, the president of the National Organization for Human Rights (Organisation nationale des droits de l'homme, ONDH), an affiliate of the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH), stated that many Mauritanian nationals live in Senegal, particularly in Dakar. The president of the ONDH, a lawyer as well who works to defend the rights of refugees, explained that some Mauritanian nationals live in Senegal as refugees (13 Oct. 2005). To obtain refugee status, he added, a claimant must apply to the National Eligibility Commission (Commission nationale d'éligibilité), which is responsible for Senegal's refugee determination process (ONDH 13 Oct. 2005).

The president of the ONDH also stated that Mauritanians with refugee status have the same rights as Senegalese nationals (ibid.). However, a [translation] "receipt of claim" confers no right to settle in Senegal and simply indicates that the bearer has filed a refugee claim with the National Eligibility Commission (ibid.). A refugee card is the only proof of refugee status, and anyone with such a card can live in Senegal and enjoy the same rights as Senegalese citizens (ibid.).

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

Action-visas.com. N.d. "Visas et services pour vos voyages: Burkina Faso." <<http://www.Action-visas.com/public/?destination=BF&rubrique=visas>> [Accessed 5 Oct. 2005]

France. N.d. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO)." <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/afrique_1063/organisations-regionalesafricaines_404/cedeo_1911.html> [Accessed 27 Sept. 2005]

Organisation nationale des droits de l'homme (ONDH). 13 October 2005. Telephone interview with the president.

Senegal. 29 September 2005. Embassy of Senegal, Ottawa. Telephone interview with the consular chargé d'affaires.

Senegal. N.d. "Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO)." <<http://www.gouv.sn/integration/cedeo.html>> [Accessed 29 Sept. 2005]

Travel Information Manual (TIM). October 2005. "Senegal (SN)." Hoofddorp, The Netherlands: IATA Netherlands Data Publications.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: A researcher at the Centre d'études africaines of the École des hautes études en sciences sociales [Paris] and a research professor in the Department of Public Law at the Université de Cotonou did not provide any information on the subject.

Internet sites, including: Agence de presse sénégalaise, AllAfrica, ECOI.net, Government of Senegal, ECOWAS, Investir en zone franc (IZF.net), *Le Quotidien*, ReliefWeb, *Le Soleil*, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United States Department of State.

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