



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

The Board		6 May 2010
About the Board	SYR103487.E	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Syria: State protection and recourse available to a person who is receiving death threats, in particular a woman not in the context of domestic violence	
Employment		
Legal and Policy		
References	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Publications		
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division	In a 3 May 2010 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a retired United States (US) government intelligence officer, who specializes in Middle Eastern issues, indicated that a woman experiencing death threats in Syria could take the matter to the police. A threat that had a political angle would be referred to intelligence and security officials, who have more authority and power than the police (Intelligence Officer 3 May 2010). They can take action quickly, if they choose to (ibid.). In a 4 May 2010 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Middle East Forum, an independent organization "promoting American interests" through research (Middle East Forum n.d.), said that if the state had reason to be concerned about a case involving death threats -because it related in some way to the state's interests -then the matter would be addressed efficiently.	
Immigration Division		
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions		
Forms		
Statistics		
Research		
Research Program	According to the Intelligence Officer, non-political crimes are handled by the local police (3 May 2010). A woman would commonly go to the police with her husband and/or father, as well as any notable person with whom she was connected (Intelligence Officer 3 May 2010). The Intelligence Officer said that the while the police would not be totally "blasé" about a woman reporting death threats, threats to individual freedom are not perceived to be as high a priority as they are in North America, for example (ibid.).	
National Documentation Packages		
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets		
Responses to Information Requests	The Intelligence Officer said that if the woman is well-connected by virtue of her family or notable individuals, she will be perceived to have more credibility and influence (ibid.). The police would be more likely to pay attention to her case than if she lacked such connections (ibid.). Similarly, the Middle East Forum Representative stated that the police would consider factors such as the family the woman is from, her religious status, or whether or not she had any connections to the ruling elite (4 May 2010).	
Recent Research		
Media Centre		
News		
Information Sheets		
Media Relations		
Proactive Disclosure	The Middle East Forum Representative also stated that a woman "outside the family context" is a "weaker actor, with low standing" (4 May 2010). Similarly, Freedom House reports that, while older women may have influence within their household, in general, women are expected to be submissive and to follow	

"patriarchal customs" (3 Mar. 2010).

The Intelligence Officer stated that police are not known to be particularly expert; they lack funding and training (3 May 2010). According to the Intelligence Officer, police in rural areas are less efficient than the police in Damascus (3 May 2010). In contrast, the Middle East Forum Representative stated that the police force is efficient (4 May 2010). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009* reports that corruption among police officers is a problem in Syria (11 Mar. 2010 Sec. Id).

Sources state that the judiciary is not independent and that the judicial system in Syria is corrupt (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2010; *Syria Today* July 2009; The Fund for Peace n.d.; *The Daily Star* 29 July 2008.)

There is little information available about protection such as shelters or witness protection in Syria, according to both the Intelligence Officer and the Middle East Forum Representative (3 May 2010; 4 May 2010). Both sources indicated they were not aware of protection that could be offered to a woman experiencing death threats (Middle East Forum Representative 3 May 2010; Intelligence Officer 4 May 2010). *Country Reports 2009* states that, in 2009, a women's shelter for victims of domestic violence was opened (US 11 Mar. 2010 Sec. 6). Further information on protection such as shelters could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time frame of this Response.

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

The Daily Star [Beirut]. 29 July 2008. Andrew Tabler. "The U.S. Can Help Tackle Syrian Corruption." <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=5&article_id=94612> [Accessed 3 May 2010]

Freedom House. 3 March 2010. "Syria." *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010*. <<http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=384&key=265&parent=24&report=86>> [Accessed 3 May 2010]

The Fund for Peace. N.d. "Syria." <http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=359&Itemid=521> [Accessed 3 May 2010]

Intelligence Officer, United States (US). 3 May 2010. Telephone interview.

Representative, Middle East Forum (US). 4 May 2010. Telephone interview.

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Syria Today. July 2009. Dalia Haidar. "Just Challenges." <<http://www.syria-today.com/index.php/july-2009/363-focus/1997-just-challenges>> [Accessed 3 May 2010]

United States (US). 11 March 2010. Department of State. "Syria." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136080.htm>> [Accessed 3 May 2010]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources, including: Researchers from Bishops University, Georgetown University, the University of Arizona, and the University of Pittsburg were unable to provide information.

Internet sites, including: Bishops University, Brock University, *The Guardian*, Human Rights Watch, Inter Press News Agency, Movement for Justice and Development in Syria, *Syria Monitor*, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, University of Toronto.

[▲
Top of Page](#)

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