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18 December 2003

SYR42261.E

Syria: Eligibility criteria for obtaining the amnesty from military service issued in October 2002; whether this amnesty can be applied to a person who had previously failed to complete his military service; the procedure for obtaining this amnesty

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

On 31 October 2002, President Bashar al-Assad issued Decree No. 56 for the year 2002, which provided a general amnesty to those who had committed war crimes and those who had evaded or deserted military service prior to the issuance date of the decree (AFP 31 Oct. 2002; SANA 31 Oct 2002; see also AI 2003). To obtain this amnesty, military service evaders and deserters were required to "carry out their military service within the four months following promulgation of the decree" (AFP 31 Oct. 2002).

Additional information on the decree and the amnesty available in October 2002 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

A similar decree, Decree No. 22 for the year 2003, was issued on 2 July 2003 (SANA 2 July 2003; *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 3 July 2003; AP 2 July 2003; AFP 2 July 2003; *ibid.* 15 July 2003; AI Bawaba 3 July 2003). The full text of this decree is attached to 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 to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Agence France Presse (AFP). 15 July 2003. "Head of Rights Group Pardoned in Syria." (Dialog)

_____. 2 July 2003. "Syria Amnesties Deserters." (Dialog)

_____. 31 October 2002. "Syria's Assad Amnesties Draft-Dodgers, Deserters." (Dialog)

Associated Press (AP). 2 July 2003. "Syria's President Grants Criminal Amnesty." (Dialog)

AI Bawaba. 3 July 2003. "Syrian President Amnesties Deserters." (Dialog)

Al-Sharq Al-Awsat [London, in Arabic]. 3 July 2003. Razuq al-Ghawi. "Syrian Reportedly Plans to Separate Government Work from Party Affiliation." (FBIS-NES-2003-0703 7 July 2003/Dialog)

Amnesty International (AI). 2003. "Syria." *Amnesty International Report 2003*.

<<http://web.amnesty.org/report2003/syr-summary-eng>> [Accessed 16 Dec. 2003]

Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) [Damascus, Internet version, in Arabic]. 2 July 2003. "Syrian President

Issues General Amnesty." (FBIS-NES-2003-0702 7 July 2003/Dialog)

_____. 31 October 2002. "Syrian President Grants General Amnesty for Military Service Crimes." (BBC Monitoring/Dialog)

Additional Sources Consulted

Although willing to assist, the Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic, in Ottawa, could not provide the requested information within time constraints without consulting the relevant authorities in Syria.

Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook . 2002. 15th ed.

Europa World Year Book 2002

IRB Databases

A Researcher from the Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies did not respond to a letter requesting information.

WNC/Dialog

Internet sites, including:

Al Bawaba

Amnesty International

AsylumLaw.org

BBC

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002

European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI)

GlobalSecurity.org

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

The Middle East Network Information Center (MENIC)

Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Second periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. 25 August 2000.

Syria Gate

SyriaLive.net

Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Information

Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC)

Syria Online

United Kingdom, Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND)

War Resisters' International

World Factbook 2003

Search engine:

Google

Attachment

Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) [Damascus, Internet version, in Arabic]. 2 July 2003. "Syrian President Issues General Amnesty." (FBIS-NES-2003-0702 7 July 2003/Dialog)

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