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16 July 2004

YEM42812.E

Yemen: Situation for homosexuals in Yemen, including societal attitudes
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Homosexuality is illegal in Yemen, one of the few countries in the world that imposes a potential maximum penalty of death on homosexuals (Reuters 5 July 2004; Wikipedia 1 July 2004; Sodomy Laws 22 Nov. 2003; ILGA 31 July 2000; *Sociolegal Control* 1997; Encyclopedia n.d.; Planet Out n.d.).

Information on whether such sentences have been carried out was not found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, only three Muslim nations (Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan) are known to have carried out the death penalty for engaging in homosexual acts in recent years (1990-2000) (ILGA 31 July 2000; Encyclopedia n.d.).

Information was found that indicated that Yemen has carried out death penalty sentences in recent years (1999-2003), but details about the specific crimes were not always available (AI 2004; *Malay Mail* 9 Aug. 1999).

Aljazeera Online reported in May 2004 that three journalists had been punished by a Yemeni court for writing an article about homosexuality that included interviews with men jailed for homosexuality (15 May 2004). The court ruled that the journalists had "violated Yemeni morals and customs" (Aljazeera Online 15 May 2004).

Information on society's attitudes in Yemen towards homosexuals was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. There were articles suggesting that homosexuality is not tolerated in Muslim societies (AI-Fatiha Foundation n.d.; Encyclopedia n.d.). The Website for the AI-Fatiha Foundation, a Washington, DC-based organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Muslims (n.d.), states that

[t]here is a general consensus amongst the scholars of Islam (both past and present) that homosexuality is a deviation of man's true (heterosexual) nature. Thus the act of homosexuality is sinful and perverted and is viewed with contempt in most Muslim societies and Islamic countries (n.d).

In addition, an article that expressed disapproval of homosexuality was found in an English-language newspaper available in Yemen (*Yemen Times* 23 June 2004).

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.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sources: *Ahbab News*, *Al Bawaba*, Alter Net forums, Amnesty International, Arabic News.com, Eastgarden, Gay and Lesbian Arabic Society (GLAS), Gay Guide.net, Gay Middle East.com, Independent Gay Forum, International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), Islam Republic, Queer Jihad, SABA, Word IQ, *Yemen Daily*, *Yemen Observer*.

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