Lebanon: The prevalence of forced marriages among Christians in Beirut and in smaller towns; societal attitudes toward a woman who refuses such a marriage; the consequences faced by women who refuse such a marriage; the protection available against such consequences (January 2004 - June 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on forced marriages among Christians in Lebanon was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The following information was provided in correspondence to the Research Directorate from a "prominent" professor of political science at the American University of Beirut, who specializes in social science research and methodology, among other things (Prominent Lebanese 2003):

1. Forced marriages are unheard of among Christians in Beirut, Lebanon.
2. Forced marriages among Christians in smaller towns of Lebanon are extremely rare.
3. The societal attitudes in Lebanon do not promote forced marriages. I would even say that societal attitudes are antipathetic towards forced marriages.
4. There are absolutely no consequences [against women who refuse arranged or forced marriages]. By the way, arranged marriages, which continue to exist in Lebanon, require mutual consent and are not usually forced on women.
5. There is no protection because forced marriages are not an issue in Lebanon (12 June 2005).

Similarly, the Chairman of the Australian Arabic Council, Roland Jabbour, was reported by one Australian newspaper as saying that "most forced marriage cases [in Lebanon] involved Muslims, with the husbands usually from rural villages" (Herald Sun 28 Feb. 2005). The Chairman also added that "[s]ome of these families are bound by customs and traditions but the practice doesn't accurately reflect the whole Lebanese community" (ibid.).

According to the Director of the Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, "reliable information" concerning forced marriages among Christians is "not available in Lebanon" (10 June 2005).
Additional information on forced marriages among Christians could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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


Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Lebanese American University. 10 June 2005. Correspondence from the Director.

Professor of Politics, American University of Beirut. 12 June 2005. Correspondence.


Additional Sources Consulted

An Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the California State University did not respond to a letter requesting information.

Associate Professor of Sociology, Oregon State University.

The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LCRVAW) did not respond to a letter requesting information.

A Professor of Sociology at the American University of Beirut did not respond to a letter requesting information.

Unsuccessful attempts to contact The National Commission for Lebanese Women.

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