



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		20 February 2007
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Biographies		
Organization Chart	Lebanon: Age of majority, particularly for females; paternal custody rights over female children	
Employment	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Legal and Policy		
References	According to an official from the Embassy of Lebanon in Ottawa, the age of majority for both males and females is 18 years (12 Jan. 2007). An official from the Embassy of Lebanon in Washington stipulated that 18 years is the age of legal responsibility, eligibility for military service and entitlement to a driver's licence, while 21 years is the age at which Lebanese citizens are entitled to vote (Lebanon 16 Jan. 2007).	
Publications		
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Immigration Appeal Division	With respect to marriage eligibility for females, the Washington embassy official explained that marriage in Lebanon is a religious institution, not a civil one; therefore, the age of marriage eligibility for females depends on the particular religious group to which they belong (ibid.). The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, responding in February 2002 to Lebanon's second periodic report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, corroborates this information (UN 1 Feb. 2002). The Committee's report also indicates that Lebanon's religious groups establish the age of marriage eligibility in accordance with 15 personal status laws (ibid.), laws which deal with family issues and are administered by Lebanon's religious groups (Lebanon 16 Jan. 2007; UN 1 Feb. 2002). The report notes that, in some cases, marriage may be licensed at 14 years for males and 9 years for females (ibid.).	
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Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets	In contrast, the Official from the Lebanese Embassy in Ottawa stated that to marry, females must be 18 years of age and give their consent to the marriage (12 Jan. 2007). If the female is younger than 18 years, the consent of her parents is required (Lebanon 12 Jan. 2007). The Committee on the Rights of the Child indicates that the average age of marriage in Lebanon is 28 years for females and 31 years for males.	
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News	With respect to custody rights, the Ottawa embassy official stated that fathers have custody rights over female children aged seven and older (Lebanon 12 Jan. 2007). If the father is deemed an unsuitable guardian, custody is transferred to a male relative such as a brother (ibid.). This could not be corroborated by the Official from the Lebanese Embassy in Washington, who explained that because Lebanon has 18 religious sects, each with their own laws regarding family issues, he did not feel it appropriate to make a general statement on custody rights (16 Jan. 2007). The Official did state, however, that although children take the surname of their father, this does not always mean that fathers are granted	
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custody of their children in cases of divorce (Lebanon 16 Jan. 2007). The International Family Law Office of Jeremy D. Morley in New York, providing advice on the return of children abducted to or in Lebanon, gives the following information about custody rights on its Web site:

Among Sunni Muslims, the father has physical custody of a daughter over the age of nine and of a boy over the age of seven. For Shia Muslims the father generally has physical custody for boys at age two and for girls at age seven. (n.d.)

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

The International Family Law Office of Jeremy D. Morley. N.d. Jeremy D. Morley. "Lebanon Child Abduction." <<http://www.international-divorce.com/ca-lebanon.htm>> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2007]

Lebanon. 16 January 2007. Embassy of Lebanon, Washington, DC. Telephone interview with a consular official.

_____. 12 January 2007. Embassy of Lebanon, Ottawa. Telephone interview with a consular official.

United Nations (UN). 1 February 2002. Committee on the Rights of the Child. *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Lebanon*. (CRC/C/15/Add.169) (Human Rights Internet) <<http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2002/documentation/tbodies/crc-c-15-add169.htm>> [Accessed 12 Jan. 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Government of Lebanon, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Right to Education, United States (US) Department of State.

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