



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		19 February 2007
About the Board	LBN102321.E	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Lebanon: Protection, services and legal recourse available to women who are victims of domestic violence (2005 - 2006)	
Employment	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Legal and Policy		
References	According to both Amnesty International (AI) and the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, women in Lebanon do not have sufficient protection from domestic violence (AI 23 May 2006; UN 12 July 2005). The United States (US) Department of State's <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005</i> identifies domestic violence against women as a problem in Lebanon (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5).	
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Immigration Appeal Division	With respect to services available to victims of domestic violence, <i>Country Reports 2005</i> states that the Lebanese government does not have any specific mechanisms to give medical aid to women (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women also raised concerns about the lack of support offered to women who are victims of domestic violence and the availability of training for police and employees in religious courts that deal with domestic violence cases (UN 12 July 2005). The Lebanese government provides legal assistance to both female and male victims of violence who are unable to pay for such services (ibid.). According to <i>Country Reports 2005</i> , the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women (LECORVAW), a non-governmental organization, offers counselling and legal services to abused women and promotes awareness of domestic violence (8 Mar. 2006, Section 5). In February 2005, LECORVAW, together with the Information and Communication Technology for Development in the Arab Region, released a CD-ROM that contains legislation and frequently asked questions related to family law (<i>The Daily Star</i> 9 Feb. 2005). The CD-ROM was distributed to social workers and numerous governmental, non-governmental and religious organizations in Lebanon with the purpose of making legal information more accessible to women (ibid.).	
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Proactive Disclosure	In a 5 December 2005 report from the UN's Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), the President of the Central Penal Researchers states that gender-based violence is not acknowledged in the Lebanese penal code. While no law expressly prohibits domestic violence, there is a law forbidding battery that carries a maximum sentence of three years in prison (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). According to the Lebanese Council of Women, a non-governmental umbrella organization consisting of 170 groups across the country (n.d.b), the laws in the penal code that concern all forms of violence against women are outdated (n.d.a). The legal advisor to the Lebanese Women's Network, a coalition of many of the country's women's groups, explains that Law 562 of the Penal Code "permits men	

to kill female members of their family if the women have compromised the family's honor" (*The Daily Star* 22 July 2005). A copy of the Lebanese penal code could not be obtained from among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to the President of the Central Penal Researchers, in order for the police to become involved in a case of domestic violence, women must first report their abuse directly to them (UN 5 Dec. 2005). However, the IRIN reports that women are fearful of taking such action (*ibid.*). *Country Reports 2005* indicates that when women do report domestic violence, their claims of abuse are often ignored by the police (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). In some cases, a woman who is a victim of domestic violence may be required, by order of some religious courts, to return to her home (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that women who are victims of domestic violence are not permitted to initiate divorce proceedings unless they have an eyewitness to their abuse; a doctor's certificate verifying the injuries sustained is not deemed sufficient proof (2006).

According to AI and Freedom House, legal discrimination against women in Lebanon is able to occur under the personal status laws (AI 23 May 2006; Freedom House 2006). HRW explains that personal status laws are based on religion and favour men, who retain legal guardianship over their female relatives (2006). Religious authorities preside over issues of family and personal status (Freedom House 2006). Another issue of concern is what the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women identifies as adherence to the tradition of family privacy, which prevents thorough investigations into matters of domestic violence (UN 12 July 2005). HRW affirms that, in the Middle East and North Africa, "[d]omestic violence is generally considered to be a private matter outside the state's jurisdiction" (2006).

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

Amnesty International (AI). 23 May 2006. "Lebanon." *Amnesty International Report 2006*. <<http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/lbn-summary-eng#9>> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2007]

The Daily Star [Beirut]. 22 July 2005. Jessy Chahine. "Women's Groups Call for Amendment of Penal Code." (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) <<http://www.peacewomen.org/news/Lebanon/July05/PenalCode.htm>> [Accessed 5 Jan. 2007]

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Freedom House. 2006. "Lebanon." *Freedom in the World 2006*. <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6999>> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2007]

Human Rights Watch (HRW). 2006. "Women's Rights in Middle East and North Africa." <<http://hrw.org/women/overview-mena.html>> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2007]

The Lebanese Council of Women. N.d.a. "Achieving Gender Equality and Gender Equity Through the Rule of Law." <http://www.lcw-cfl.org/Gender_Equity.shtml> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2007]

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United Nations (UN). 5 December 2005. Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). "Lebanon: Government, NGOs Cooperate on Issues of Gender Violence." <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=50497&SelectRegion=Middle_East&SelectCountry=LEBANON> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2007]

_____. 12 July 2005. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. "Women's Anti-discrimination Committee Takes up Lebanon's Report, Commends Impressive Steps Taken to Promote Gender Equality." (Press Release) <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/wom1514.doc.htm>> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2007]

United States (US). 8 March 2006. Department of State. "Lebanon." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61693.htm>> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: A professor at the University of California-Irvine and a researcher at Birzeit University did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Human Rights Internet (HRI), The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW), Legislationline, National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Kingdom Country of Origin Information Service, Women's Human Rights net (WHRnet), Women's Human Rights Resources Programme.

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