Lebanon: Formalities of a marriage between a Sunni Palestinian woman and a Shiite Lebanese man; whether the authorization of the woman’s family and parents is required for a permanent or temporary marriage; whether a temporary marriage performed between two parties without a witness or a civil or religious authority is legal and is religiously or morally valid (1998-Mar. 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Several sources indicated that civil marriage is not permitted in Lebanon and that only religious marriages are allowed; however, civil marriages performed outside of Lebanon are recognized there (Country Reports 2004 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2; Country Reports 1999 23 Feb. 2000, Sec. 5; International Religious Freedom Report 2004 15 Sept. 2004, Sec. II; L’Orient-Le Jour 9 June 2004; The Daily Star 22 Jan. 2004). The International Religious Freedom Report 2004 indicated that intermarriage is common in Lebanon (15 Sept. 2004, Sec. II), while the Middle East Quarterly indicated in September 2000 that these marriages were infrequent. In terms of marriages between Lebanese citizens and Palestinians, a survey conducted among Lebanese citizens showed that half of the respondents would not agree to marry a Palestinian (The Middle East Quarterly Sept. 2000).

On 15 March 2005, a representative from the Embassy of Lebanon in Ottawa provided the following information during a telephone interview. A Shiite Lebanese man can marry a Sunni Palestinian woman without any problems in Lebanon, even though the woman is not Lebanese. For this marriage to be recognized, two male witnesses (who are not necessarily related to the couple) and a religious authority (a sheik in this case) must be present. If the parents do not approve of the marriage, the couple can still marry as long as the woman is at least 18 and has already been married and divorced. A woman who is over 18 and who is getting married for the first time must obtain the authorization of a male relative. The representative also said that there are no temporary marriages in Lebanon because all of the marriages are performed by religious authorities before they are registered with the government, which renders the marriage religiously and legally valid.

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.


Additional Sources Consulted

Ten professors of anthropology, sociology or women's studies who are specialists on Lebanon did not provide any information within the time constraints.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), World News Connection (WNC).
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