



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		8 November 2005
About the Board	LBN43573.FE	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Lebanon: Treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses by the authorities and society in general, and protection offered (2005)	
Employment	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Legal and Policy		
References	The following information on the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Lebanon was provided in 4 November 2005 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate by the General Counsel for Jehovah's Witnesses, whose office is in Patterson, NY.	
Publications		
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division	On 27 January 1971, the Lebanon Council of Ministers banned the work of Jehovah's Witnesses and prohibited the dissemination of their literature, prompting an appeal to the Lebanon Supreme Court. In 1997, the ban was upheld by the Lebanon Supreme Court; a second appeal following the 1997 dismissal has still not been resolved.	
Immigration Division		
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions	There are approximately 3,500 Jehovah's Witnesses and over 70 congregations in Lebanon. They "are able to enjoy a degree of freedom of movement and to worship discreetly. Even so, we consistently learn of individual instances of harassment and intimidation by local authorities." For example, the police have prohibited congregations from meeting for worship. In March 1997, following the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the ban, the Lebanese authorities closed three Kingdom Halls (houses of worship).	
Forms		
Statistics		
Research		
Research Program	Since Jehovah's Witnesses are not officially recognized, they face certain problems: "They are usually discriminated against in divorce and custody cases involving a non-Witness marriage mate [. . . and] ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses cannot perform legal marriage ceremonies." Furthermore, civil marriage is not an option for Jehovah's Witnesses.	
National Documentation Packages		
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets		
Responses to Information Requests	In 2000, a Lebanese court convicted two sons (one of whom is a Jehovah's Witness) for following Jehovah's Witnesses' rites when burying their father rather than observing a state-sanctioned Christian burial rite. "Since Jehovah's Witnesses have no legal recognition, they have no constitutional right to freedom of religion," was the court's ruling.	
Recent Research	Information corroborating that provided by the General Counsel for Jehovah's Witnesses could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.	
Media Centre		
News		
Information Sheets		
Media Relations		
Proactive Disclosure		
	This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This	

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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

Office of Public Information of Jehovah's Witnesses. 4 November 2005.
Correspondence from the General Counsel.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Center for Religious Freedom (Freedom House), the Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights Lebanon and the Institute for Human Rights of the Beirut Bar Association were unable to provide the requested information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International, Authorized Site of the Office of Public Information of Jehovah's Witnesses, Center for Religious Freedom, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, European Country of Origin Information Network, Factiva, Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights Lebanon, Human Rights Watch, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), International Christian Concern, *International Religious Freedom Report 2004*, *International Religious Freedom Report 2003*, *L'Orient-Le Jour*, Minority Rights Group International, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, World News Connection.

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