



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Saudi Arabia - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 27 February 2012

Information on homosexuality including legal status; penalties, if illegal; Governmental and societal attitude to and treatment of homosexuals, particularly in the past year. Are there any NGOs available to support homosexuals? Is police protection available to support homosexuals?

A report issued in January 2012 by the *International Trade Union Confederation* notes:

"Homosexuality is punishable by death or flogging. Reporting discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender workers to the authorities could threaten their lives." (International Trade Union Confederation (25 January 2012) *Internationally Recognised Core Labour Standards in Saudi Arabia*)

A report published in May 2011 commenting on events of the previous year by *Amnesty International* states:

"In November, a man was reported to have been sentenced to 500 lashes and five years' imprisonment by a court in Jeddah for homosexuality, among other charges." (Amnesty International (13 May 2011) *Report 2011, Saudi Arabia*)

In March 2011 a document published by the *United Kingdom: Foreign and Commonwealth Office* states:

"Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights are entirely denied in Saudi Arabia. Homosexual acts are illegal and potentially carry the death penalty, although no executions on these grounds were reported in 2010. Beyond the legal restrictions, extensive social stigma exists." (United Kingdom: Foreign and Commonwealth Office (31 March 2011) *Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Saudi Arabia*)

Amnesty International in November 2010 points out that:

"Saudi Arabia has sentenced people convicted of homosexuality and 'sodomy' to a range of penalties including corporal punishment and even the death penalty. The criminalization of homosexuality encourages the dehumanization of lesbians, gay men, bisexual people and transgender people (LGBT) as their very identity is criminalized." (Amnesty International (12 November 2010) *Saudi Arabia: Urgent Action: 235/10 [MDE 23/013/2010]*)

In 2012 *Hands Off Cain* states:

"Saudi Arabia follows a strict interpretation of Islamic law that prescribes the death sentence for murder, apostasy, rape, drug trafficking, highway robbery, sabotage and armed robbery. Saudi Arabia has one of the highest execution rates in the world, both in terms of number of people killed and in relation to its population. Between 1980 and 2002, approximately 1,500 people were put to death in the country. The

record number of beheadings in one year in Saudi Arabia was 191 in 1995. Many of the announced Saudi executions were for murder and rape, but a wide range of non-violent crimes also resulted in decapitation. Among the lesser offences that led to executions were apostasy, witchcraft, sexual practices considered offences (adultery, sodomy, homosexuality) and crimes involving both hard and soft drugs.” (Hands Off Cain (2012) *Saudi Arabia*)

A report issued in March 2010 by the *United Nations General Assembly* notes that:

“Homosexuality is deemed as a criminal social evil that is highly stigmatized...society highly discourages homosexuality.” (United Nations General Assembly (17 March 2010) *UNGASS Country Progress Report 2010*, p.9)

Commenting on an issue regarding prisons, a report published in April 2011 reviewing events of 2010 by the *United States Department of State* notes:

“...stigma and penalties associated with homosexual activities” (United States Department of State (8 April 2011) *2010 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia*, Section 1c Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment)

A report issued in April 2011 by the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom/USCIRF* notes:

“USCIRF's review of Saudi textbooks posted on the Saudi Ministry of Education's Web site found that books in use during the 2010-2011 school year continue to teach hatred toward other religions and, in some cases, promote violence. For example, some high school texts justified violence against apostates and homosexuals...” (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (28 April 2011) *USCIRF Annual Report 2011 - Countries of Particular Concern: Saudi Arabia*)

In February 2012 *The Economist* notes that:

“Countries with fierce laws, such as Saudi Arabia, also have flourishing gay scenes at all levels of society.” (The Economist (4 February 2012) *Straight but narrow; Islam and homosexuality*)

Research carried out by the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* in August 2011 states:

“According to some media sources, Saudi society considers homosexuality “extremely shameful”...“deeply offensive”... “repugnant[.]”...” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (11 August 2011) *Saudi Arabia: situation of homosexuals, including laws, their treatment by society and government authorities, and the organizations available to assist them*)

This report also notes that:

“Many sources report that Saudi Arabia does not have a penal code... Sexual relations between same-sex partners are punishable under Shari'ah law...” (ibid)

It is stated in this report additionally that:

“According to...the CDHR, there are no homosexual rights defence groups in Saudi Arabia (5 Apr. 2011).” (ibid)

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted

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European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
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Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission
International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans And Intersex Association
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library
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