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1. Overview

In a interview with the Research Directorate, a research fellow specialized in Yemen, and affiliated with the French National Centre for Scientific Research (Centre national de la recherche scientifique, CNRS), an interdisciplinary French public institution (CNRS 4 Dec. 2015) that employs over 11,100 researchers (ibid. July 2015), stated that [translation] "[t]he Bohras are part of an Ismaili minority in Yemen, that has been established for centuries" (research fellow 4 Dec. 2015). Sources indicate that Ismailis are a minority Shi'ite-Muslim sect in Yemen (Reuters 29 Jul. 2015; National Yemen [2015]). An article published on Scroll.in, an Indian independent news website covering political and cultural affairs (Citizen Media Network n.d.), specifies that "the Bohras trace their roots to 12th century Yemen, when the sect was created from the Tayyebi thread of Shia Muslims" (Scroll.in 9 Apr. 2015). In contrast, according to National Yemen, an English Yemeni newspaper (ABYZ News Links n.d.), quoting an elderly man living in Haraz [Haaraz], "Bohra sect (or al- mkarma as Yemenis call them in slang language) appeared in Egypt during the Fatima era, but when the Fatima era ended they migrated from Egypt onto the rest of the Middle East and Asia until they settled in south India" (11 Feb.2014).

According to Scroll.in, there are 10,000 Bohras in Yemen (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints.

An article published by the Strategic Culture Foundation (SCF), a forum of research and analysis on Eurasian and global affairs (SCF n.d.), reports that "[the] Ismailis in Yemen are mostly members of the Dawoodi [Daudi, Da ud] (Davidian) and Sulaimani [Sulaymani] (Solomonian) sects of Mustali [Musta'li] Ismailism that moved away from the larger Nizari Ismailis " (Strategic Culture Foundation 31 Mar. 2015). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the author of a book and articles on the Bohra community noted the presence of Dawoodi Bohras and Sulaimany Bohras among the Bohra community of Yemen (author 10 Dec. 2015). Minority Rights Group International (MRG) reports that Suleymanis and Daudis emerged from a "succession dispute" among Ismaili Mustalis in the 16th century (MRG n.d.). According to the same source, most Ismaili Mustalis in Yemen are Suleymanis (ibid.). The author noted that "the[se] two Ismaili Bohra branches have a common heritage and religion but have lived apart since their split about 500 years ago" (author 10 Dec. 2015). Similarly, the Encyclopedia Britannica indicates that "[th]e followers of Daud and Sulyman" within the Bohra community "don't have significant dogmatic differences" (2015).

The author explained that Bohra and Nazi Ismailis "believe in ... different lines of leaders (Imams)" (author 10 Dec. 2015). The Huffington Post specifies that the leader of the Mustali Ismailis, called da'i almutlaq, belongs to a sub-hierarchy of Imams, as Bohras believe "their current Imam has been hidden from the view of his adherents since the 12th century" (24 Mar. 2014).

Sources indicate that the current leader of the Dawoodi Bohras is Mufaddal Saifuddin (author 10 Dec. 2015; Huffington Post 24 Mar. 2014). The author noted that Mufaddal Saifuddin lives in India, as do most Dawoodi Bohras (10 Dec. 2015). The same source also indicated that the Sulaymanis have their current religious "centre" in Najran, Saudi Arabia, which was originally part of Yemen (ibid.).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a social development consultant who worked for over a decade in Yemen and who regularly publishes articles on Yemen, indicated the presence of Bohras in Manhaka, in the Haraz region (9 Dec. 2015). According to the research fellow, Yemeni Bohras are [translation] "concentrated in the Haraz region," with a few Bohras living in Sanaa, the capital (4 Dec. 2015). The author specified that Dawoodi Bohras mainly live in the Haraz mountains, with many others in Sanaa, Hudaydah and Aden (10 Dec. 2015). An article published in 2012 on India Real Time, a general news website, reported that some "3,000 to 4,000 Yemeni Bohras [lived] in Haraz, according to local leaders "(24 sept. 2012). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The author provided the following information on the Bohras in Yemen:

There are no particular facial or ethnic featured by which they can be distinguished from other Yemenis. However, the men often wear a white cap with a gold thread rim and women often wear a coloured and patterned all-covering dress, both of which can be distinguishing. It must be emphasised that not all Bohra ... wear clothes that are traditional Yemeni dresses. (10 Dec. 2015)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints.

2. Treatment of the Bohras

2.1 Treatment of the Bohras by Society

The author stated that "[g]enerally, the Bohras are treated like any other Yemeni" by the Yemeni society (10 Dec. 2015). However, according to the research fellow, the Bohras are not always

considered as "pure" Yemenis due to their ties with India and Pakistan (4 Dec. 2015). He added that they are considered as [translation] "not representative of the Yemeni culture and society" (research fellow 4 Dec. 2015). Similarly, the Social Development Consultant stated that "Bohras are perceived as slightly different" by society (9 Dec. 2015).

The author stated that

[t]here is a lot of ignorance about [the] religion [of the Bohras], which leads to misconceived notions of what the Bohras might be doing [for example] in their mosques and mausoleums, etc. This is not significant enough to cause mistreatment. (10 Dec. 2015)

The Social Development Consultant noted that Bohras "are generally more comfortable financially than the average 'poor' Yemenis," which creates some envy within Yemeni society (Social Development Consultant 9 Dec. 2015). According to the same source, the Bohras have not however been "discriminated against" (ibid.). Similarly, the research fellow noted that [translation] "villages in the Haraz region [are] better off than others" and that "despite their status, Bohras do not face systematic discrimination" (4 Dec. 2015).

2.2 Treatment of the Bohras by the Authorities

A 2014 article in National Yemen, reports that the "Bohra is a peaceful [...] sect that does not intervene in political affairs" (30 Mar. 2014). According to the research fellow, [translation] "in recent years, the Bohras have not taken a political stance as a whole group that would justify a systematic discrimination against them by the State" (4 Dec. 2015). Similarly, the author indicated that

[t]he Bohras have not taken any position in the [current] civil war. For the last 2 or 3 centuries, it has been a deliberate policy to refrain from political agitation of any kind, particularly a violent one. So whilst they have views supporting one side or the other, they don't come out as a group in support of any faction. At a personal level, however, the Bohras in Yemen are vehemently opposed to the Saudi led bombardment of Yemen, which has caused huge suffering. They see it as a foreign invasion, though they are not opposed to the government that the Saudis are purportedly helping. (author 10 Dec. 2015)

The author provided the following information on the treatment by the police:

Bohras are perceived and treated like any other Yemeni citizen by the authorities, including the police. They are not discriminated against. However, there is always a feeling of being "the other" as Bohras are not considered mainstream.

...

The Police can and have been approached by Bohras for the usual reasons, including being victims of tribal violence. The police follow the normal course of action, without consideration that the Bohras follow a different religious tradition or have different practices. (ibid.)

Further information on the treatment of the Bohras by the police could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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