The Research Directorate and Country of Origin Information

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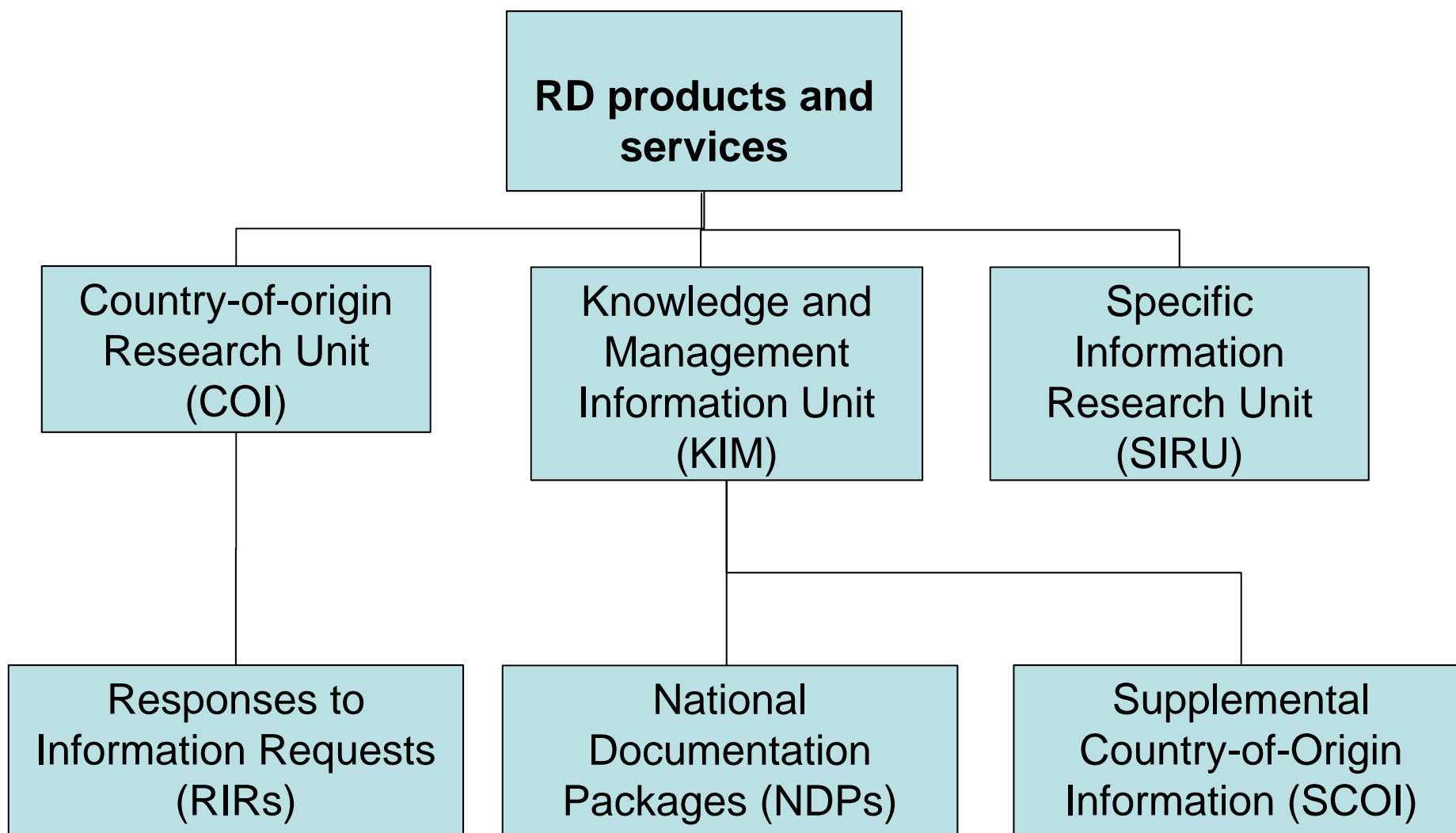
Legal basis

- Subsections 170(g) and (h) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* provides:

  - **The Refugee Protection Division**, in any proceeding before it,

  - **(g) is not bound by any legal or technical rules of evidence;**

  - **(h) may receive and base a decision on evidence that is adduced in the proceedings and considered credible or trustworthy in the circumstances;**

Research Directorate Mandate

- To meet the information requirements of the Refugee Protection Division and the Refugee Appeal Division

- To provide current and reliable country-of-origin information (COI), including claimant-specific information, to support fair refugee determination

- To ensure the consistent dissemination of research to all IRB offices across Canada

RD products and services

Country-of-origin Research Unit (COI)

Knowledge and Management Information Unit (KIM)

Specific Information Research Unit (SIRU)

Responses to Information Requests (RIRs)

National Documentation Packages (NDPs)

Supplemental Country-of-Origin Information (SCOI)

Country of Origin Information (COI) Unit

- Provides country of origin information.

- Uses a variety of publicly available sources selected using Research Directorate methodology.

- Does not provide information about individual refugee claimants.

- Product quality assurance through Editing and Research Analysis.

- Fact-finding missions

What are Responses to Information Requests (RIRs)?

- Focused research reports that answer specific COI questions

- Produced:
    - for specific hearing, or
    - for inclusion in National Documentation Packages

- Based on publicly available sources

RIRs do not …

- draw conclusions from the information provided by sources

- provide analysis by the Research Directorate

- assign weight to the sources being used

ERI105095.E
02 March 2015

Eritrea: The Medhane Alem movement in Eritrea, including religious affiliation and history; treatment of members by authorities (2003-February 2015)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

The US Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 indicates that the government's record on religious freedom during 2013 was "poor" (28 July 2014, 1). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor of comparative religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem similarly indicated that the situation with regard to religious freedom in Eritrea is "awful" (26 Feb. 2015). According to the International Religious Freedom Report for 2004, the government enacted a decree in May 2002 by which all religious bodies had to "register or cease all religious activities"; as a result, the government closed down all religious facilities not belonging to the four sanctioned religions (US 15 Sept. 2004). Similarly, International Christian Response (ICR), an international organization that "provides spiritual and material assistance for persons who are persecuted as a result of their Christian beliefs" (ICR n.d.), said that all religious bodies in Eritrea except the four who registered in May 2002 were illegal (ibid. 5 May 2014). The International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 indicates that the four religious groups officially registered with the government are the Eritrean Orthodox Church, Sunni Islam, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea; churches belonging to other religious groups remained closed during the time of the reporting period (ibid. 28 July 2014, 6).

2. Medhane Alem Movement

Sources indicate that the Medhane Alem Orthodox Church is a renewal movement within the Eritrean Tewahedo Orthodox Church [Eritrean Orthodox Church] (Oriental Orthodox Church 1 Jan. 2013; BBC 27 Sept. 2007; Professor 26 Feb. 2015). The movement reportedly emerged in the 1970s (WEA 24 May 2006). According to Amnesty International (AI) in 2005, the Medhane Alem movement, which means "'Saviour of the World'," is a bible study group of the Eritrean Orthodox Church "centered on the Medhane Alem church in Asmara" (Dec. 2005, 5).

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References

Amnesty International (AI). 7 December 2005. Eritrea: Religious Persecution. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4396b22c4.html> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2015]

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). 27 September 2007. Tanya Datta. "Eritrean Christians Tell of Torture." <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7015033.stm> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2015]

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Professor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. 26 February 2015. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The following were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response: Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church — Debre Medhanit Medhane Alem.

Attempts to contact the following were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Diocese of Eritrean Orthodox Church in North America; Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church of St. Mary in Chicago; Ethiopian Orthodox Church — Medhane Alem Parish in York, Ontario; Medhane Alem Eritrean Orthodox Church in Washington, DC; Medhane Alem Evangelical Church in Seattle; Norwegian Church Aid; Saint Mary Eritrean Orthhodox Church in Bay Area, California.

Internet sites, including: Africa Review; Aid to the Church in Need; AllAfrica; Asmarino; Bloomberg; Christian Science Monitor; Droit.Afrique.com; ecoi.net; Eritrea — Embassy in Washington, DC; Evangelical Alliance Foundation; Factiva; Freedom House; Harvard University — Pluralism Project; Jeune Afrique; Release Eritrea; Reporters sans frontières; The Tablet; Telegraph; United Nations — High Commisioner for Refugees, RefWorld; United States — Commission on International Religious Freedom; World Watch Monitor.

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RIR Methodology and Standards

- Evaluating every source using specific criteria
- Compare, corroborate, contrast
- Standard presentation of information
- Quality check process

How RIRs are Produced

- Research Officers (ROs) are responsible for researching and writing RIRs on specific COI subjects

- ROs work on several information requests at a time

- ROs typically work on an RIR between 3 to 15 days

- RIRs undergo an extensive review and analysis, are edited, and proofread.

Research Methodology

- Produce a report that compares, contrasts and corroborates information using multiple sources

- Use publicly available information

- Identify sources for all information (reference list provided)

- Assign no "weight" to any source or report (member responsibility)

- The Research Directorate does not offer its own opinion on country conditions: all such opinions belong to the author(s) of the report

- COI research is necessarily "equivocal"

COI Research Methodology

Researching a variety of publicly available sources
to represent multiple points of view

- International, national and regional human rights organizations

- Newspapers and media

- Academic publications

- Independent research institutes

- Governments

- Oral sources willing to provide public domain information and/or be cited in a public document

Research Challenges

- Sources available only in foreign language
- Obtaining information from governments whose resources are scarce
- Lack of:
    - International presence (NGOs and media) and
    - Local presence (civil society and media)
- Finding information on local events/situations
- Finding evidence of legislation being enacted and enforced

COI Research Methodology

Sources are assessed for their reliability and selected based on the following criteria:

- Currency

- Objectivity

- Transparency

- Reputation

- Mandate/mission of the source

- Qualifications and background of the author

- Information gathering and reporting methodology

- Quality of the writing and presentation

- Source funding

Oral sources

- Scholars, government officials, human rights defenders, NGO representatives, legal experts, etc.

- Critical contribution to RD's research products, especially on:

  - Implementation of legislation

  - Local incidents or issues that were not reported in the public domain

  - Procedures concerning identity documents

  - Analysis of complex situations

  - Political parties and organizations' internal structure and functioning

  - Efficiency of state protection, recourse options and alternatives

Oral Source Information

- Interview or correspondence

- Disclaimer

- Follow-up and clarification

- Clarity of information

- Contrast and corroboration

- Credibility issues

Research Challenges – Oral Sources

Country of Origin:

•Different time zones

•Country conditions

•Communication infrastructure unreliable

•Cultural and linguistic barriers

•Availability of qualified oral sources

The Source:

•Providing information could endanger the claimant or source

•Information is publicly available – source's name may be cited

•Information perceived as sensitive

•No financial compensation given to oral sources

•Time constraints

Presenting oral sources in RIRs

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor of comparative religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem indicated that …

- Objective presentation
- No weight assigned to the source
- Generally not identified by their name

Relying on oral sources
for decision-making

- Members are responsible for weighing all evidence before them, including information provided by oral sources

- The Research Directorate works independently and **does not** provide advice to members

- Members can instruct the Research Directorate to disclose further information on oral sources (e.g. name, résumé, professional contact information, etc.)

Knowledge Information Management Unit (KIM)

- Produce and publish National Documentation Packages

- Answer member queries in regional offices

- Build and maintain internal and external research databases

- Acquire and maintain research holdings and acquisitions (paper and electronic formats)

National Documentation Packages

- Exist on Intranet and IRB website in both official languages for 160+ countries and are updated annually

- Support quality and consistency by creating a uniform evidentiary base when claims are reviewed

- Contain comprehensive, current, publicly available country of origin information while respecting copyright

- Documents are selected using RD methodology and evaluation criteria

- **A selection of documents on the following topics:**

  - General information and maps
  - Hatiouman rights
  - Identificn documents and citizenship
  - Political activities and organizations
  - Gender, domestic violence and children
  - Sexual minorities
  - Criminality and corruption
  - Military service
  - Judiciary, legal and penal systems
  - Police and Security Forces
  - Media freedoms
  - Religion
  - Nationality and ethnicity
  - Freedom of movement
  - Labour, employment and unions

- **NDP documents include:**

  - Reports (RIRs) produced by the RD

  - Documents from third-party sources

NDPs …

- Serve as the IRB's standard disclosure of country information in all RPD proceedings.

- Are comprehensive according to decision maker information needs.

- Include publicly available documents only.

- Minimal reliance on copyright-protected materials.

- Address principle claim types.

NDPs are not…

- meant to be exhaustive.

- meant to be specific to an individual's claim.

- meant to contain information about the latest headlines.

- **N.B.** members can disclose additional information on a supplemental basis depending on the particulars of a claim

Country China
Language English

Get Package for Selected Country   Print Preview Selected Files   Print Preview List of Documents

National Documentation Package - 31 October 2014
List of Documents

[+] ☐ **China**

[+] ☐ 1. **General Information and Maps**

[+] ☐ 2. **Human Rights**

[+] ☐ 3. **Identification Documents and Citizenship**

[+] ☐ 4. **Political Activities and Organizations**

[+] ☐ 5. **Gender, Domestic Violence and Children**

[+] ☐ 6. **Sexual Minorities**

[+] ☐ 7. **Criminality and Corruption**

8. **Military Service - (No items in this section)**

[+] ☐ 9. **Judiciary, Legal and Penal Systems**

[+] ☐ 10. **Police and Security Forces**

[+] ☐ 11. **Media Freedoms**

[+] ☐ 12. **Religion**

[+] ☐ 13. **Nationality, Ethnicity and Race**

[+] ☐ 14. **Exit/Entry and Freedom of Movement**

[+] ☐ 15. **Labour, Employment and Unions**

16. **Other - (No items in this section)**

The following changes have been made to the previous package dated 14 March 2014:

[+]   **Updated**

[+]   **Removed**

[+]   **Added**

National Documentation Package   **31 October 2014**

China

List of Documents

For the purposes of disclosure to claimants and counsel, please use the List of Documents posted on the IRB website. This version is for internal use only, as it may contain electronic versions of documents, some of which are available to the public only in hard-copy format. Some of these documents were not available in English when this National Documentation Package (NDP) was published.

1. General Information and Maps

1.1.
Title: China. Central Intelligence Agency.
Source: United States
Date of Document: July 2011
URL: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/txu-pclmaps-oclc-785900408-chi
                    na_pol-2011.jpg
Accessed Date: 20 October 2014
Keywords: map; transport infrastructure

1.2.
Title: China. Education.
Source: National Geographic
URL: http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/mapping/outline-map/?map=China&a
                    r_a=1
Accessed Date: 29 October 2014
Keywords: map

1.3.
Title: Fujian Map
Source: ChinaMaps.org
URL: http://www.chinamaps.org/china/provincemaps/fujian-map.html
Accessed Date: 17 October 2013
Keywords: map

1.4.
Title: Guangdong Map
Source: ChinaMaps.org
URL: http://www.chinamaps.org/china/provincemaps/guangdong-map.html
Accessed Date: 20 October 2014
Keywords: map

1.5.
Title: Chine. L'Encyclopédie en ligne.
Source: Larousse
URL: http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/flashfixe/Chine/1306040
Accessed Date: 8 November 2012
Keywords: map

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Thank you