

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: FJI35636
Country: Fiji
Date: 6 November 2009

Keywords: Fiji – Women – Family violence – Mixed relationships

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Questions

- 1. Please advise whether there are incidents of domestic or family violence where an Indian-Fijian Muslim female in a relationship with an Australian Christian would be in danger from her family.**
- 2. Please provide information as to whether the authorities, including the Police, are willing and able to provide assistance to women in these circumstances.**
- 3. Is there recourse to the Courts?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please advise whether there are incidents of domestic or family violence where an Indian-Fijian Muslim female in a relationship with an Australian Christian would be in danger from her family.**

No information was found amongst the sources consulted on whether an Indian-Fijian Muslim female in a relationship with an Australian Christian would be in danger from her family, especially her father and brothers if they lived in Fiji. Sources, however, report that domestic violence is a significant problem in Fiji:

A report dated March 2006 by the Asian Development Bank quotes a study by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) which "found that 80.2% of those surveyed nationally reported having seen someone beaten in the home." The report continues:

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), a nongovernment counseling and advocacy center for women victims of violence, conducted a comprehensive study, based on survey data, police records, and crime statistics, on the incidence and prevalence of domestic violence in the Fiji Islands. The report (Fiji Women's Crisis Center n.d.) made recommendations for action by the Government and civil society. The study found that 80.2% of those surveyed nationally reported having seen someone beaten in the home. It shows that Fiji Islands women

have little recourse against abuse, partly because most lack property or economic bargaining power, but also because of societal attitudes that men have the right to violently punish their wives or partners, and parents their children (Asian Development Bank 2006, *Country Gender Assessment – Republic of the Fiji Islands*, March, p.50 <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Country-Gender-Assessments/cga-fij.pdf> – Accessed 4 November 2009 – Attachment 1).

According to a 2006 UN report by Shamima Ali, Coordinator of FWCC, reports from Fiji “showed that violence between spouses, by parents against children and between other family members, was widely tolerated and condoned.” The report continues:

Most countries of the Pacific, if not all, accept violent punishment, mockery, ridicule, public humiliation and severe verbal abuse of boys and girls as valid forms of discipline. Even in countries where corporal punishment is illegal, such as Marshall Islands and Fiji, violent punishment of children is accepted both at home and at schools. A study of parental practices in Fiji found that in punishing their children, hitting, smacking and hitting with a stick or other object was almost as frequently employed as verbal scolding.

Violence is not only directed at children, but in many countries of the Pacific violence is seen an acceptable means of conflict resolution within the family, particularly when used against women and girls. For example, reports from Samoa and Fiji showed that violence between spouses, by parents against children and between other family members, was widely tolerated and condoned (Ali, Shamima 2006, *Violence against the girl child in the Pacific Islands region*, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in collaboration with UNICEF Expert Group Meeting Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre Florence, Italy, 25-28 September 2006, EGM/DVGC/2006/EP.14, 25-28 September, pp.7-8 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/elim-disc-viol-girlchild/ExpertPapers/EP.14%20%20Ali.pdf> – Accessed 4 November 2009 – Attachment 2).

According to the US Department of State, “domestic abuse” was a “significant problem” in Fiji during 2008. According to Amnesty International, the level of violence against women in Fiji during 2008 “remained high”. An article dated 9 June 2009 by *Radio New Zealand* reports that the FWCC says two out of three women report that they have been the victim of domestic violence in Fiji, however, the FWCC fears that the level of domestic violence in Fiji is higher than reported. An article dated 11 August 2009 in *Radio New Zealand International* reports that Peni Moore, Creative Director of Women’s Action for Change “says family violence has been growing as men Indo-Fijian and Fijian come under economic, social or racial pressure” (US Department of State 2009, *2008 Human Rights Reports: Fiji*, 25 February, Section 5 ‘Women’ – Attachment 3; Amnesty International 2009, *Report 2009 – Fiji*, 28 May – Attachment 4; ‘Fiji’s Women’s Crisis Centre fears domestic violence reports are far higher’ 2009, *Radio New Zealand*, 9 June <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=47054> – Accessed 18 August 2009 – Attachment 5; and ‘Details sought on Fiji’s new Domestic Violence Decree’ 2009, *Radio New Zealand International*, 11 August <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=48380> – Accessed 4 November 2009 – Attachment 6).

- 2. Please provide information as to whether the authorities, including the Police, are willing and able to provide assistance to women in these circumstances.**
- 3. Is there recourse to the Courts?**

No further information than that contained in *Research Response FJI35148* dated 21 August 2009 was found amongst the sources consulted (RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response FJI35148*, 21 August – Attachment 7).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Government Information & Reports

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

United Nations (UN)

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd>

Women Watch <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>

Non-Government Organisations

Fiji's Womens Crisis Centre <http://www.fijiwomen.com/>

International News & Politics

Fiji Times <http://www.fijitimes.com/>

Radio New Zealand International <http://www.rnzi.com/>

Scoop <http://www.scoop.co.nz/>

Search Engines

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Google Books <http://books.google.com/books>

Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com.au/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Asian Development Bank 2006, *Country Gender Assessment – Republic of the Fiji Islands*, March <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Country-Gender-Assessments/cga-fij.pdf> – Accessed 4 November 2009.
2. Ali, Shamima 2006, *Violence against the girl child in the Pacific Islands region*, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in collaboration with UNICEF Expert Group Meeting Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre Florence, Italy, 25-28 September 2006, EGM/DVGC/2006/EP.14, 25-28 September <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/elim-disc-viol-girlchild/ExpertPapers/EP.14%20%20Ali.pdf> – Accessed 4 November 2009.
3. US Department of State 2009, *2008 Human Rights Reports: Fiji*, 25 February.
4. Amnesty International 2009, *Report 2009 – Fiji*, 28 May.

5. 'Fiji's Women's Crisis Centre fears domestic violence reports are far higher' 2009, *Radio New Zealand*, 9 June <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=47054> – Accessed 18 August 2009.
6. 'Details sought on Fiji's new Domestic Violence Decree' 2009, *Radio New Zealand International*, 11 August <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=48380> – Accessed 4 November 2009.
7. RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response FJI35148*, 21 August.