

Turkey

Response to Information Request Number:	TUR99002.ZHN
Date:	27 October 1998
Subject:	Turkey: Information On Conversion From Islam To Christianity
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	Turkey / Islam / Muslim / Christianity / Religious Practice / Conversion / Apostasy / Proselytization

Query:

Information on the treatment of Muslims who convert to Christianity in Turkey.

Response:

Sources consulted by the RIC did not reflect widespread abuse of those who converted from Islam to Christianity in Turkey. A representative of the American Kurdish Information Network stated that one who converts could feel a sense of alienation from communities which harbor disdain for Christians (AKIN 26 October 1998). A research associate with Human Rights Watch in Washington, DC stated that there are no laws against conversion in Turkey and that the government generally respects the guarantee of freedom of religion established in its Constitution. He added that communities could resent or be suspicious of those who convert, and that the converted could experience some verbal harassment (HRW 26 October 1998). The Executive Director of the Institute of Turkish Studies also confirmed that there are no laws prohibiting conversion in Turkey and that other than prejudice on a local level, there is no state-wide abuse targeting Christians or those who have converted from Islam (Institute of Turkish Studies 27 October 1998).

The US Department of State Country Report on Turkey states that although there are no laws prohibiting proselytizing, evangelical Christians and Islamists could be harassed or questioned about such activities. Sometimes those involved have been brought up on charges of disturbing the peace, but these cases are usually dismissed (*Country Reports 1997 1998*, 1344).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC 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.

References:

American Kurdish Information Network (AKIN). Washington, DC. 26 October 1998. Telephone Interview with Representative.

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997. 1998. United States Department of State. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

Panico, Christopher. Research Associate, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki (HRW). Washington, DC. 26 October 1998. Telephone Interview.

Sayari, Sabri. Executive Director, Institute of Turkish Studies, Georgetown