



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Lebanon

Lebanon – LBN39789 – Lebanese Army
Penalty for Desertion – External Advice

13 January 2012

- 1. What is the penalty for desertion from the Lebanese military?**
- 2. Is there anything to suggest that 1 year imprisonment is disproportionate or other than the norm?**
- 3. Is there anything to suggest that the law for desertion is applied disproportionately or discriminately in some cases, for example based on religion or political views?**

Dr Rodger Shanahan was approached for information on these questions. Dr Shanahan is a former army officer and a non-resident Fellow at the Lowy Institute, and has served as a UN military Observer in South Lebanon and Syria and as the Military Liaison Officer to the Australian Embassy Beirut. He has MAs in International Relations and Middle East Studies from the ANU and a PhD in Arab and Islamic Studies from the University of Sydney.¹

The Tribunal contacted Dr Shanahan on 9 January 2012 in relation to these questions.² On 13 January 2012, Dr Shanahan responded with the following advice:

The LAF is perhaps the most important and likely the most representative national institution in the Republic. Like all Lebanese institutions it suffers from sectarian issues, but these are most acutely felt at the senior military officer levels. Certain positions are 'reserved' for officers of a particular sectarian background, while individual connections, as in any organisation can aid advancement.

I am not familiar with the Lebanese military code, however the LAF operates in accordance with its general code. For soldiers and JNCOs/SNCOs the general sectarian issues that influence officer appointments do not really impact. The major concerns would involve LAF units being deployed against sectarian political militias such as Hizbullah, however senior LAF leadership is aware of this and try to avoid this situation.

A soldier who went AWOL would be expected to face the normal disciplinary action that would be applied to any soldier in the LAF. His sect would not play a part in the punishment nor would his political affiliation (which, while not known would possibly be guessed) - a Sunni for example would be more likely to support March 14 bloc than any other grouping. In my opinion, low level enlisted personnel who went AWOL from the LAF would be treated for their charge only, regardless of their sect/political affiliation.³

¹ 'Dr Rodger Shanahan' 2012, Lowy Institute for International Policy website, 13 January

<http://www.lowyinstitute.org/StaffBio.asp?pid=925> – Accessed 13 January 2012 <Attachment>

² RRT Country Advice Service 2012, Email to Dr Rodger Shanahan 'Lebanon Questions', Sydney (RRT ref: LBN39789), 9 January – <Attachment>.

³ Shanahan, Rodger 2012, Email to RRT Country Advice 'RE: Lebanon Questions', Sydney (RRT ref: LBN39789), 13 January – <Attachment >.

References

'Dr Rodger Shanahan' 2012, Lowy Institute for International Policy website, 13 January
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RRT Country Advice Service 2012, Email to Dr Rodger Shanahan 'Lebanon Questions', Sydney (RRT ref: LBN39789), 9 January

Shanahan, Rodger 2012, Email to RRT Country Advice 'RE: Lebanon Questions', Sydney (RRT ref: LBN39789), 13 January