



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Georgia - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 1 September 2015

Information on culture~traditions of the Svaneti/Svanetia region including acceptability of leaving one's husband

In January 2011 a compilation of COI research issued by the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* includes noting that Svaneti is:

“...a remote highland region in the northwest of Georgia...” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (26 January 2011) *Georgia: Blood feuds, including definitions, statistics, state protection, mediation and relocation (2002 - 2011)*).

A report published in October 2014 by *National Geographic* points out that:

“The Svans who still live in Upper Svaneti—home to some of the highest and most isolated villages in the Caucasus—hold fast to their traditions of singing, mourning, celebrating, and fiercely defending family honor” (National Geographic (October 2014) *Svanetia*).

In March 2015 *News.com Australia* states:

“Svaneti in the Caucasus mountain region of Georgia is home to the Svan people, an indigenous group living in the remote northwest of the country who have created their own unwritten language and whose unique cultures and traditions have been preserved thanks to their geographical isolation” (News.com Australia (25 March 2015) *Svan people of Svaneti, Georgia live by ancient tribal traditions in medieval villages*).

This article also states:

“Tribal traditions are still a way of life for the Svans” (ibid).

This document also notes that:

“The Svan people live a simple subsistence existence as farmers growing their own produce...” (ibid).

An article issued in March 2015 by *BBC Travel* includes commenting on Svaneti and blood feuds stating:

“The tribal elder’s role is to mediate feuds to promote payment (cows or cash) instead of spilling more blood” (BBC Travel (16 March 2015) *Europe’s fierce, fabled villages*).

The *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* in June 2015 released a compilation of COI which includes noting that:

“According to National Geographic, in Svaneti, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, blood feuds returned, but, since 2004, have “virtually disappeared”
...Similarly...the...Georgian Democracy Initiative...indicated that blood feuds are an

ancient tradition that continued until the end of the 20th century, but that there have been no new cases reported in "recent years"..." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (3 June 2015) *Georgia: Blood feuds, including prevalence, state protection, mediation and relocation (June 2012-May 2015)*).

In June 2015 the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* produced a compilation of COI which included noting that:

"...a National Programme Officer at UN Women in Georgia indicated that "patriarchal norms and deeply-entrenched stereotypes in the Georgian society tend to condone violence against women"...EurasiaNet...reports on a study conducted in 2013 in Tbilisi, Samegrelo-Zemo, Svaneti, and Kakheti regions...which found that 34.6 percent of respondents justify physical violence against a wife if "she does not pay attention to their children, argues with her husband... Sources indicate that many people in Georgia view domestic violence as a family affair or private matter, rather than an issue that requires outside intervention...However, the UN National Programme Officer, citing the UN Women's 2013 study *Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Tbilisi, Kakheti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti*, indicated that views towards domestic violence in Georgia are changing..."Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (9 June 2015) *Georgia: Domestic violence, including legislation, state protection and support services available to victims (June 2012-May 2015)*

No further information on these issues could be found among sources available to the RDC.

References

BBC Travel (16 March 2015) *Europe's fierce, fabled villages*

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20150209-europes-fierce-fabled-villages>

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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (9 June 2015) *Georgia: Domestic violence, including legislation, state protection and support services available to victims (June 2012-May 2015)*

<http://www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455931&pls=1>

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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (3 June 2015) *Georgia: Blood feuds, including prevalence, state protection, mediation and relocation (June 2012-May 2015)*

<http://www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455923&pls=1>

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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (26 January 2011) *Georgia: Blood feuds, including definitions, statistics, state protection, mediation and relocation (2002 – 2011)*

<http://www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=453306&pls=1>

Accessed Tuesday 1 September 2015

National Geographic (October 2014) *Svanetia*

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/10/svanetia/larmer-text>

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News.com Australia (25 March 2015) *Svan people of Svaneti, Georgia live by ancient tribal traditions in medieval villages*

<http://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-ideas/svan-people-of-svaneti-georgia-live-by-ancient-tribal-traditions-in-medieval-villages/story-e6frfger-1227278123795>

Accessed Tuesday 1 September 2015

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Amnesty International
BBC News
Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
Regional Surveys of the World
Reuters
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State
UNHCR Refworld