

give women the opportunity to reorganize their lives, improve their skills if necessary, and build a solid employment record in order to satisfy Canada Immigration of their ability to become economically self-sufficient.

## REFUGEE DETERMINATION

### 12. The Refugee Definition

The United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as any person who:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...

The purpose of the Convention, which has been adopted into Canadian law, is to protect a person who fears persecution for one of the reasons enumerated in the definition, by offering her or him asylum.

While there is no absolute definition of the meaning of "persecution" within the refugee definition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has offered guidance on this point. It states that, at a minimum, persecution means "a threat to life or freedom" or other "serious violations of human rights".<sup>9</sup> It states further that forms of discrimination leading to "consequences of a substantially prejudicial nature" can constitute persecution<sup>10</sup> and that a series of less serious measures can, on cumulative grounds, also constitute persecution.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status (Geneva, January 1988) paragraph 51.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. paragraph 54.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. paragraphs 53, 55.