




World Day of Migrants & Refugees

Pope Francis urges freedom in his message for this year's World Day of Migrants & Refugees which is being observed on September 24th. This year's theme is "Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay." Click [here](#) to read Pope Francis' full message.



The Archdiocese of Toronto together with the Melkite Catholic Community invites you to a special Mass on the occasion of the 109th

World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Sunday, September 24, 2023
12:00 PM


at the Cathedral of the Transfiguration
10350 Victoria Square Blvd, Markham

Celebrant:
Monsignor Makarios Wehbi

Homilist:
Bishop John Boissonneau

SHORT PROGRAM TO FOLLOW

*"You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."
LEVITICUS 19:34*

 Archdiocese of Toronto
www.archtoronto.org/refugee

The Archdiocese of Toronto will mark this event with a special Mass that will take place at the Cathedral of the Transfiguration, located at 10350 Victoria Square Blvd., in Markham. Mass will begin at 12:00PM and will be celebrated by Msgr. Makarios Wehbi. The homilist will be His Excellency, Bishop John Boissonneau, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

All are welcome to attend.

Public Program Update

We would like to provide an update to all those who registered for the General Public Program, in the hope of sponsoring their family for resettlement to Canada. Unfortunately, due to our limited allocation from Immigration Canada we are only able to help a small fraction of those who registered.

Following the registration, a random draw was conducted by our office, in which all registrants had an equal chance of being selected and to move on with their application through ORAT. Those selected were invited by ORAT to attend the virtual Introduction to Resettlement information session. For those not contacted by ORAT, we encourage them to contact other Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) within their area and inquire if they are able to sponsor through their organization. Click [here](#) to find other SAHs across Canada.

Response to Displaced Ukrainians



It is heartbreaking to see the ongoing suffering of the Ukrainian people as war in that country continues. To date, tens of thousands have been killed, hundreds of thousands have been wounded, and millions displaced.

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Afghani Refugee Crisis Response

The US withdrawal and subsequent collapse of Afghanistan’s government compounded the already large refugee crisis facing Afghans. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are currently 2.7MM Afghani refugees. The Archdiocese of Toronto, through its Office for Refugees (ORAT), has come to the assistance of Afghani refugees, forced to flee their homeland because of the Taliban. In 2022, our office sponsored 86 Afghani nationals, of which 66 were tied to a special program developed by Immigration Canada to assist Afghani refugees who fell within one of several eligibility criteria, including:

1. Persecuted Religious Minority
2. Human Rights Defender
3. Women Leaders
4. Journalists



Our office took full advantage of this program, entitled Operation Afghan Safety (OAS). ORAT developed a close working relationship with a Protestant community, whose Afghani pastor, a Muslim convert to Christianity, was deeply concerned for the suffering of his people.

Many of the 66 Afghani refugees that we sponsored through the OAS program and through this collaboration were Muslim converts to Christianity, who would have faced certain death for their conversion at the hands of the Taliban.

Our work also included sponsoring those from other persecuted religious communities, human rights defenders, women leaders and journalists. Already, 54 of the Afghani refugees that we sponsored through the OAS program have arrived in Canada.

ORAT is continuing its assistance to Afghani refugees this year through the OAS program.

Eritrea Country Report

Eritrea, located in the Horn of Africa, has been a significant source country for refugees over the years. Various factors have contributed to the outflow of refugees from Eritrea, including political repression, human rights abuses, mandatory national service, economic challenges, and limited civil liberties.

Geo-Political History: “After independence from Italian colonial control in 1941 and 10 years of British administrative control, the UN established Eritrea as an autonomous region within the Ethiopian federation in 1952. Ethiopia’s full annexation of Eritrea as a province 10 years later sparked a violent 30-year struggle for independence that ended in 1991 with Eritrean rebels defeating government forces. Eritreans overwhelmingly approved independence in a 1993 referendum. Under the leadership of President Isaias Afwerki, the government maintains strict control over media, civil society, freedom of expression and continues to enforce a mandatory conscription into national service.



Religious Affiliation: Reliable population data is difficult to gather. The US has estimated that Eritrea has a total population at 6.1 million, while the UN estimates a population of approximately 3.5 million. There is also no reliable data on religious affiliation. In 2016, the Pew Foundation estimated the population to be 63 percent Christian and 37 percent Muslim.

Human Rights: Eritrea has faced widespread criticism for its human rights record. Reports from international organizations and human rights groups document arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, and restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly, and religion. The indefinite and mandatory national service, often extended beyond the official 18 months, has led many Eritreans to flee the country.

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A New Country, and A New Baby

Written by Meagan Christie, published in Nov 2022

With many of our volunteers away in summer, we were scrambling to get ready before the first family of the year arrived. Our volunteers kicked into high gear and got everything ready just in time! In early August, we were excited to welcome an Eritrean family of six - two parents and four young boys.

At this point all of that work feels worth it. It's wonderful having this new family in our community and seeing their pleasure at being here. Everyone is enjoying building a relationship with them. The two parents and their gang of lively boys are a joy to get to know. The family of six soon became a family of seven (and yes, another boy). Mom and Dad were so happy and proud that their newest son was born in Canada. The family is settling in very well.



Dad is working part time and taking English classes at the Multicultural Centre. We are very grateful to writer/educator Eleanor Millard for offering English lessons to mom at home with the new baby. The kids are enjoying school and daycare. The oldest ones are playing on soccer teams. The City of Whitehorse donated passes to the Constituent Group Committee and the family is taking advantage of them. We take responsibility for helping them get established for the first year and supporting them financially for six months. The money we use to sponsor comes from donations and fundraisers. The generosity of our community in donating clothing, furniture and household items helps us reduce our costs in settling a new family. Big thanks to this settlement committee and other volunteers for all the work they are doing. We are very fortunate to have two Eritrean volunteers on our committee who speak Tigrinya and are sharing their beautiful culture. Thanks to all the other volunteers helping with tutoring, driving, kids' activities... It's a big community effort and it's rewarding to see everyone coming together.

EDUCATION CORNER

Eritrea Country Report

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Refugee Outflow: According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were an estimated over 580,000 Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. Sudan and Ethiopia host most of the Eritrean refugees. Many have made the perilous journey from North Africa across the Mediterranean Sea seeking to arrive to Europe. Sadly many perished making that journey. "More than 1,200 people have died in the Mediterranean Sea in 2022, adding to the horrifying tally of almost 25,000 deaths since 2014." (Human Rights Watch, n.d.)

ORAT's Involvement: ORAT has worked closely with the Eritrean community in Toronto and elsewhere to assist family members in need of refugee resettlement. To date, we have sponsored over 1,400 Eritrean refugees., with almost 500 having already arrived in Canada.

Q & A

Excerpt from RSTP's May, 2023 Bulletin



Q: *What is the maximum amount that can be issued for the Transportation Loan?*

A: The maximum loan amount that can be issued per family is \$15,000 CAD.

Q: *Can repayment of the Transportation Loan be deferred?*

A: Yes, under special circumstances, IRCC may grant a deferral of loan payments for up to two years, a variation of payments or an extension of the repayment period.

To request a deferral, refugees must contact IRCC's Collection Services at 1-800-667-7301 or by email at IRCC.FINCollections-RecouvrementsFIN.IRCC@cic.gc.ca

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Response to Displaced Ukrainians

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The Catholic community in the Archdiocese of Toronto has not stood idly by. In 2022, the Archdiocese made an appeal to the Catholic community. Over \$1.6MM was raised through the generosity of many parishioners.

\$850K was directed to provide humanitarian aid overseas through the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA). The remainder was directed to ORAT with the hope that it would be able to sponsor Ukrainian refugees for resettlement to Canada. The Canadian Government's decision not to designate Ukrainians displaced by war as refugees, prevented ORAT from doing so. Instead, it has been working with the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Toronto & Eastern Canada to aid Ukrainians that have arrived in Canada under the federal government's Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program. The CUAET program provides Ukrainians with an extended visitor visa to Canada. To date, over 1MM Ukrainians have applied to the program, with 800k approved for travel to Canada, and 200k having already arrived. Most of those that have arrived settled in the GTA where they face an acute shortage of affordable rental accommodations. With limited financial support there is a need for Canadians to consider hosting a Ukrainian family.

We have invited pastors across the Archdiocese to make parishioners aware of the dire situation facing Ukrainians that have arrived through the CUAET program. Parishioners were invited to consider hosting a Ukrainian family. For those interested in doing so, they were asked to contact ORAT, where the office would provide information about the hosting program, a program that is being facilitated by COSTI, a federally funded organization. To date, over 110 families have raised their hands to host a Ukrainian family. If you can, please consider hosting a Ukrainian family. For further information please click [here](#) to register.



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Q & A

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Q: *What expenses does the Transportation Loan issued to sponsored refugees cover?*

A: Refugees being sponsored and resettled to Canada under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program, the Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) program, the Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) program and the Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) program may receive a Transportation Loan that is intended to assist them with covering the cost of their travel to Canada.

The Transportation Loan is issued by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) via their [Immigration Loans Program \(ILP\)](#).

The Transportation Loan may cover the cost of the following pre-arrival services provided by the IOM to refugees sponsored and resettled to Canada under the PSR, BVOR, JAS and GAR programs:

- Transportation costs from the refugee's place of residence in the country of asylum to a city from which the refugee may board their flight to Canada (the cost of overnight accommodation and meals before departure are also covered).
- The cost of travel to Canada by the most direct route at the most economical rate available.
- The cost of any taxes or tolls.
- The cost of any operational escorts provided by the IOM; and,
- In-land transportation costs which may include the cost of overnight accommodation, meals, and ground transportation.

Information about the types of expenses that are not covered by the Transportation Loan can be found [here](#).

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Sudan Conflict: Canada's Immigration Measures to Support Refugees and Families

Excerpt from RSTP's May, 2023 Bulletin

The Government of Canada has announced new immigration measures to support Sudanese nationals, including temporary residents from Sudan who are currently in Canada and may be unable to return home due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in the country.



The new measures will include:

- Sudanese nationals are able to apply for an extension of their status in Canada and move between temporary streams, allowing them to continue studying, working or visiting family free of charge.
- Prioritizing the processing of completed temporary and permanent residence applications already in the system from people still in Sudan, including visitor visa applications, so they can travel once it's safe to do so.
- A temporary measure that will allow eligible family members of Canadian citizens and permanent residents that are outside of Sudan or left Sudan on or after April 15, 2023, to apply for a fee-exempt temporary residence document to travel to Canada.



EDUCATION CORNER

Q & A

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Q: *When preparing an application package, can copies of documents that are not in English or French be translated overseas?*

A: Yes, documents can be translated overseas. IRCC's requirements for translations are detailed below:

You must submit the following for any document that is not in English or French unless otherwise stated on your document checklist:

- The English or French translation.
- An affidavit from the person who completed the translation.
- A certified copy of the original document.

Translations must not be done by the sponsors or the applicants themselves, or any of the applicant's family members.

An affidavit is a document on which the translator has sworn, in the presence of a person authorized to administer oaths in the country where the translator is living, that the contents of their translation are a true translation and representation of the contents of the original document. In Canada, the affidavit must be sworn in the presence of either a notary public, a commissioner of oaths or a commissioner of taking affidavits.

To translate a document outside Canada, consult the local authorities.

Translators who are certified in Canada do not need to supply an affidavit. Further information about these requirements can be found in [the IMM 5413 Guide for SAHs](#), [the IMM 2200 Guide for Groups of Five](#) and [the IMM 2201 Guide for Community Sponsors](#).

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