



Easter Wishes



Wishing you and your family a joy-filled Easter.

Let us give thanks to Him who has conquered death and who invites us to share in His resurrection. Christ is Risen! Indeed He is truly Risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!!

Thank you, Cardinal Collins!

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to Cardinal Collins for his enduring support and kindness that he has shown to ORAT over the years.



Since 2009, ORAT has worked under the leadership of Cardinal Collins to resettle thousands of refugees to Canada. Please join us in praying for His Eminence, that he enjoys many more years of fruitful service to the Lord and His Church. May we, together with him, continue to grow in our love of and service to our Lord.

Welcome Archbishop Francis Leo!



On March 25, 2023, the Most Reverend Francis Leo was installed as Archbishop of Toronto. This event marks a new chapter for the Catholic Church in Toronto. Please join us in praying for Archbishop Leo as he begins his work as the chief shepherd of this Archdiocese. To view the livestream of the Mass of Installation, click [here](#).

CG Partner Organizations Wanted

Over the years, ORAT has developed a close collaboration with several Christian churches (i.e., Eastern Rite Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant), whose communities are deeply affected by the global refugee crisis, assisting their members to sponsor relatives in need of refugee resettlement.

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Refugee Committees Needed

Over the years, ORAT has conducted several overseas mission trips where we select refugees who are living in desperate situations and who are unlikely to be resettled to a safe country. Selected refugees are matched with parishes or other communities that have organized themselves to welcome and journey with a refugee family, helping them to begin a new life in Canada.

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2023 World Watch List

Christians continue to be the most persecuted religious community in the world. Since 1993, The Opens Doors organization has been compiling a list of the countries where Christians face the most persecution. In the last 30 years, persecution has grown dramatically. Now over 360 million Christians face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith in Jesus. Click [here](#) for the Top 50 countries where Christians face significant persecution.

CG Partner Organizations Wanted

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ORAT is looking to expand the list of church communities to partner with. If you or someone you know are a member of Christian Church who would benefit from this type of partnership, we would ask that you bring this to the attention of the pastor and ask that they contact our office for further information about this program.

Please contact Luciano Moro, ORAT's Resettlement Educator & CG Animator for additional information about this program. Luciano can be reached by email at orateducator@archtoronto.org or by phone at (437) 290-9333.

Refugee Committees Needed

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We are currently looking for church groups or other organizations who do not have an active refugee committee but who may be interested in forming one. If you are interested in establishing a refugee committee within your parish or organization, please contact Luciano Moro, ORAT's Resettlement Educator & CG Animator to find out more information about this rewarding ministry. Luciano can be contacted by email at orateducator@archtoronto.org or by phone at (437) 290-9333.

Please consider helping our brothers and sisters in Christ to escape persecution and establish a new life in Canada.

General Public Program Update

The online registration for the General Public program, which took place from March 17, 2023 to March 23, 2023, is now closed.

A total of 940 applications were received, representing 2,992 refugees. The following table provides the registration statistics based on the refugee's Country of Origin/Citizenship.

Given the high demand for this program, and the limited allocation provided to us by Immigration Canada, we are unable to help all those who applied to this program.

We have conducted a random draw of registrants in which all cosponsors had an equal chance of being selected to move on with their application with ORAT. Those selected were invited by ORAT to attend the virtual Introduction to Resettlement information session.

For those not contacted by ORAT, we encourage you to contact other Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) within your area and inquire if you are able to sponsor through their organization. Click [here](#) for the list of SAHs.

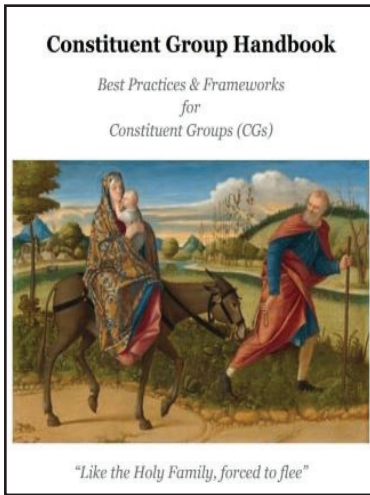
Public Registration Table

Country of Origin	# of Cases	# of Refugees
Afghanistan	211	771
Eritrea	388	913
Ethiopia	24	51
Iraq	20	44
Israel	1	5
Pakistan	1	5
Palestine	17	54
Somalia	7	49
Sudan	6	6
Syria	230	966
Yemen	6	28
Other	29	100
Grand Total	940	2992

Updated CG Handbook

To help current and future sponsors, we have updated the Constituent Group (CG) Handbook. In a special way, this resource assists CG's who are making use of donated funds and who are sponsoring refugees that ORAT has named through its overseas missions (i.e., Project Hope cases). At the same time, we believe that it is a helpful resource for sponsors who have named their own refugees.

The handbook provides CGs with a framework, principles, best practices and over-arching information on various aspects of refugee sponsorship.



It provides CGs with an approach that helps the refugee achieve the best possible outcome and helps to ensure for the long-term sustainability of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program. The best practices have been gathered from CGs throughout the

Archdioceses and from our own experience, having seen what has worked and what has not worked. Please click [here](#) to view the full document.

It is our hope that this document will be a help for you and assist you in the work of refugee resettlement.

Changes to ORAT's Info Sessions

Over the past few years as ORAT responded to the pandemic, we moved from in-person information sessions to live virtual sessions. This change was a tremendous help to cosponsors and CGs who no longer had to travel to these sessions.

We are now moving to a pre-recorded format where users can access sessions on demand. Users are able to access each recorded session by clicking on the link located in the description of each Information Session. These descriptions are located in the Information Session tab on our website

(www.orat.ca).

It is important to note that ORAT still requires cosponsors and CGs to attend the live virtual Introduction to Resettlement information sessions, which marks the 1st step in sponsoring a case through ORAT.

At present we have the following on-demand sessions available on our website:

1. IRCC Processing Times
2. Budgeting & Finance
3. Pre-Arrival Training
4. Welcome Orientation
5. About Hosting a Ukrainian Family

Staffing Changes

We would like to announce the appointment of Simolen Tala-Jumbam to the role of Team Lead in Outreach. Simolen joined ORAT in 2017 in the role of Administrative Assistant. In 2018 she was promoted to the Case Processing Coordinator position.



In her current role, Simolen will be responsible, along with her colleagues in Outreach, to disburse funds to sponsored refugees, provide guidance and counsel to Constituent Groups (CGs) as they settle their sponsored refugees, and provide oversight of post-arrival support to newcomers by CGs and Cosponsors provided.

The Outreach team will also assist the Resettlement Educator & CG Animator to match refugees selected through our overseas missions with CGs. Please join us in congratulating Simolen on her new role.

Salome's Refugee Story

My name is Salome. I am a Syrian newcomer, who was resettled to Canada with the generosity of the Catholic community in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

What caused me to leave Syria? In March 2011, I participated in peaceful demonstrations requesting political reforms and the end of the emergency law. The government of Syria used force to stop the demonstrations and I was one of many who stood up for stopping the violations and supporting human rights of our people. To do that I worked with many non-profit organizations which support women, youth, and trained them to document human rights violations, advocate for the detainees, and support the women who were harshly stigmatized and whose life and security was jeopardized, just because they peacefully stood for what they believed to be right.

The government dealt with this situation by conducting mass arrests, and many of the people I knew died in prison because of torture. My work colleagues disappeared and were never seen again. In September 2013, the security intelligence of Syria entered our house forcibly and threatened me, then started to investigate my family. To keep my family safe and for my own safety I had to flee the country for fear of the constant threats of arrest from the security agencies.

In November 2013, I was smuggled out of Syria to Lebanon, as I was subject to arrest, if I crossed the borders normally. I stayed there for 2 days then left for Turkey and went back to Lebanon again in 2014. My family members stayed in Syria as they were not threatened after I left the country. My parents are getting older, and they did not want to leave their home and farmlands. My story is of one family out of many others, whose families were split just to keep every one of its members protected during the civil war in Syria which commenced in 2011.

Living in Lebanon as a refugee was another harsh step in my refuge journey, being a country that doesn't want Syrian refugees and offers no right to work, study, or receive health services. Syrian refugees cannot open a bank account in Lebanon and have no civil rights.

There is no accountability for hate speech against refugees on the part of, politicians and media, so refugees are blamed for the ills of society. Many Syrian refugees were forcibly deported back to Syria, where they were reported tortured and killed in the government prisons. A similar situation happened to me in 2018, when for no reason the Lebanese authorities stopped my yearly residency renewable, and I was subject to deportation to Syria. Living without rights or civil protections and being subject to instant return to Syria was my greatest fear.

Despite the daily struggles as a young female refugee, I continued to work for non-profit civil society groups, activities which were quietly tolerated by Lebanon. It was during this time that a friend, who is a Human Rights defender with family and social ties in North America introduced me to my eventual Canadian sponsor, who helped form a refugee committee group in their Catholic church. I was introduced to the Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT), who assisted me to apply through their private sponsorship of refugees' program agreement for resettlement to Canada.



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Salome's Refugee Story

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I shared my sad stories, cried, and prayed together. Although we had no hope, I was grateful that at least some people, unknown to me were able to listen to our refugee plight and condition in Lebanon. Their regular communication presence and prayers gave me hope and a renewed faith, which kept me alive.

The application process was complicated and long but was my only hope out of the miserable condition in Lebanon. I completed different immigration forms and were submitted. I waited for the application process through Immigration Canada. It was emotional, when I attended my Immigration interview and waited anxiously for a decision from the Canadian embassy. It was hard long days; the process took 2 years and 4 months.

All that time, I was in danger of deportation back to Syria; and Lebanon was and still is in a very bad situation politically and economically (no electricity, no water, no open roads for a long time because of the skirmishes between the political parties). Covid 19 in early 2020 made the situation worse. Then there was a massive explosion in the port which destroyed Beirut and killed around 200 people. So, for me waiting was like torture. I am grateful that members of our sponsor group in the archdiocese of Toronto kept regular communication with me via social media to encourage me not to give.



When I finally arrived in Canada at the start of 2023, I felt safe, lucky surrounded by loving people. I am sad sometimes, because many others still left behind hope to find a safe place and calm life for them and their families. My sponsors worked hard and prepared everything for me, with donations of items from well-wishers, who wanted me to feel safe and at home again. It is wonderful to know that people care. Each day, they show me new things and while orienting me to my new community in Canadian. I cannot describe to you the feeling of being treated as a human being, with rights and freedoms in my new home, Canada.

What are my hopes and dreams, now that am safe in Canada? I am slowly settling in our new community. I have a wonderful group of people in the parish that sponsored me. I wish to build a normal life and find sufficient work and a career. I hope to use my education and career skills to help others who seek a better future. My sister lives outside Syria and is married to a professional. I will encourage her to come to Canada in the hope we can be re-united.

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