



Habemus Papam!

Since our last newsletter, the Catholic Church was blessed with a new pope.

In a historic moment for the Church, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, an American from Chicago, stepped onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica as Pope Leo XIV, becoming the first U.S.-born pope in history.



At 69 years old, Pope Leo brings decades of service, including time as a missionary in Peru and leader of the Augustinian Province in Chicago. He chose the name Leo, a name not used by a pope since Pope Leo XIII, who served in the late 1800s.

As the crowd in St. Peter's Square erupted in cheers, an emotional Pope Leo hesitated, then offered his first words in Italian, recalling Pope Francis's final Easter blessing and expressing a powerful message of hope, unity, and peace.

"God loves everyone. Evil will not prevail. We are all in God's hands."

He urged the world to walk forward united and without fear, and he thanked Pope Francis and the cardinals who elected him. Citing St. Augustine, he reminded the crowd:

"For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian."

Let us remember our new Holy Father in our prayers, entrusting him and his papacy to our Heavenly Father.

2025 Allocation Update

At the Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT), we remain steadfast in our mission to welcome refugees and help them build new lives in Canada. We are deeply grateful for your unwavering support as we navigate the latest developments in our work.

This year, we are pleased to report that we have fully utilized our annual quota allocated by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for 2025. However, we encountered a significant challenge when IRCC provided us with

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Arrival & Orientation Booklet

Source: RSTP Bulletin

The Office of the Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT) is delighted to share the launch of the Arrival & Orientation Booklet by the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) for sponsors in the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. This virtual, interactive booklet equips sponsors with essential resources to support newcomers during their initial days and months in Canada.

The booklet opens with an introduction

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Sudanese Refugee Program Update

We are incredibly grateful for the tremendous response to the Sudanese Refugees' Program. Registration has now concluded, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who expressed interest and registered for the program.

In June, ORAT received allocations for the Sudanese Program; however, these allocations were significantly lower than anticipated, which has been a disappointment for us all. To ensure fairness in the selection process, ORAT conducted a random draw (lottery) to determine the cosponsors who will proceed with sponsoring through this program. The draw has been completed, and successful applicants have been contacted to move forward with the next steps in the sponsorship process.

Once again, thank you to everyone who registered and showed their support for this important initiative. For those still seeking sponsorship opportunities, we encourage you to explore other Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) in your area. A comprehensive list of SAHs is available at [Sponsorship agreement holders: Find a sponsorship agreement holder - Canada.ca](#)

We remain committed to supporting refugees and appreciate your continued dedication to this cause.

Arrival & Orientation Booklet

Source: RSTP Bulletin

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highlighting the importance of arrival and orientation, offering clickable links to key resources that help newcomers acclimate to life in Canada. It details the mandatory supports PSR sponsors must provide, alongside insights on cultural adjustment and the Social Determinants of Health for newcomers.

Perfect for both novice and seasoned sponsors, this comprehensive guide is a must-have reference. Dive into the Arrival & Orientation Booklet today and empower sponsored newcomers to thrive in their new home!

To download the booklet please click [here](#).

When 'Accompanying' Family Members Are Not Processed Together

Provided that all family members are listed as "accompanying" on the sponsorship application, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) typically processes all members together even when they reside in different countries. This is called concurrent processing. However, in some cases IRCC reclassifies family members as "non-accompanying," when a family member(s) resides in a country where they are unable to leave their country due to strict exit restrictions (e.g., Eritrea) or when they reside in a country that Canada does not have diplomat relations with (e.g., Iran).

For example, in an Eritrean family of five, where two family members reside in Israel and the remaining three reside in Eritrea, the three members residing in Eritrea will not be processed concurrently unless they leave the country.

If the principal applicant informs IRCC during their interview that a family member(s) is still in Eritrea, those individuals are typically reclassified as non-accompanying. These family members may later be eligible for processing under the One-Year Window (OYW) provision.

One Year Window (OYW) Process

For Cases where a Family Member Resides in a Country with Strict Exit Restrictions or without Diplomatic Relations with Canada

The One-Year Window (OYW) provision allows the Principal Applicant (PA) to sponsor eligible family members for resettlement in Canada within one year of the PA's arrival in Canada. Below is the streamlined process for family members:

- ***Application Submission:*** The PA must submit a OYW application for the family member(s) within one year of arriving in Canada. The family member(s) does not need to leave their country to initiate the application.
- ***Biometric Instructions:*** Upon initial approval, IRCC issues biometric instructions, typically with a 30 days deadline. When biometrics cannot be completed in the country, the family member is required to travel to a third country with a Visa Application Centre (VAC).

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One Year Window (OYW) Process

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- **Extension Requests:** If the family member cannot travel to another country, they can request an extension to the biometric deadline from IRCC.
- **Application Closure:** Failure to complete biometrics may lead to the application being closed.
- **Reopening an Application:** If the family member later leaves the country, they can request to reopen the application. Success is more likely if:
 - They previously informed IRCC of delays and efforts to obtain biometrics.
 - The request to reopen is submitted promptly after closure.

For Other Cases Not Processed Concurrently

For cases where family members are reclassified as non-accompanying and excluded from concurrent processing, the One-Year Window (OYW) provision remains applicable. These family members are not required to leave their country of origin if immigration processing, including biometrics, is feasible from within that country. This applies during the initial sponsorship application or later through the OYW process, provided the application is submitted within one year of the PA's arrival in Canada.



Tips When Depositing Large Resettlement Cheques

When newcomers or cosponsors deposit resettlement cheques of \$10,000 CAD or more, banks may impose holds that are longer than the standard five business days. Extended holds typically occur due to:

- **Verification:** Banks confirm the cheque's legitimacy to prevent fraud or illegal activity.
- **New Accounts:** Accounts opened within the last 90 days often face stricter scrutiny.

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2025 Allocation Update

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a reduced allocation in late March—36% below our 2024 allocation. This limitation has significantly curtailed our ability to sponsor refugees.

Now that we have completed our allocation, we are able to access additional spaces from the IRCC's Reserve Pool, a resource available to Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) like ORAT. This pool allows us to access spaces returned by other SAHs unable to use their full allocations, providing a lifeline to accommodate additional families and individuals fleeing persecution. We are working tirelessly to leverage this resource and maximize our impact.

Our dedicated team is actively processing applications for submission in 2026, continuing our vital work to assist refugees.

Advocacy in Action

Please know that we are actively engaged in advocacy efforts with IRCC to address this shortfall and explore solutions to support more refugees.

Stay Informed

We invite you to stay connected by visiting www.orat.ca for the latest updates, resources, and ways to get involved. Your support is the cornerstone of our efforts to offer hope and a fresh start to those in crisis.

Please keep us in your prayers as we work diligently to give hope to refugees in this Jubilee Year of Hope.

Tips When Depositing Large Resettlement Cheques

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High-value cheques are common in cases involving:

- Large newcomer families.
- Families with adult dependents (children age 18 or older).
- The return of Sponsorship Funds to cosponsors for withdrawn/rejected cases or when **no** One-Year Window (OYW) application is submitted.

To help avoid delays, here are two key tips:

- Deposit In-Person: Visit a bank branch rather than using an ATM or mobile app, as in-person deposits reduce the likelihood of extended holds for cheques over \$10,000.
- Use Recent Cheques: Ensure cheques are less than six months old to avoid rejection or delays due to stale-dated cheques.

EDUCATION CORNER

Country Report: The United Arab Emirates (UAE)



The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates located in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering Saudi Arabia to the south and west, and Oman to the southeast. It

lies along the strategic coastlines of the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, placing it at a crossroads between the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia.

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Refugee Journey & God's Intervention

My name is Jackson. I am from the southern parts of Iran, from a city called Ahvaz. The story of my faith began in 2010 when I embraced Christianity



through friends in the neighbourhood. I was born and raised in a Muslim family, but I never believed in Islam or any other faith for that matter. Therefore, in my early teens, I grew apart from supernatural-based beliefs. In my late teens, I was a full-on passionate and disturbed neo-atheist. To make a long story short, through my part-time job, I got to know an underground church in the neighbourhood, which was affiliated with the Assemblies of God. I had a two-hour meeting with the pastor of the church, Pastor Faramarz, and he spoke for two hours while I just listened. The way the message of the Gospel touched my heart that day was unbelievable; a process was started, a process that is still ongoing to this day. God intervened! But it's been a bumpy road, to say the least.

I was forced to leave the country due to threats I faced for my activity and connection with the Christian community in my hometown. The country next to Iran, Turkey, was a refuge for Christian converts and dissidents from Iran at the time.

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Country Report: The United Arab Emirates (UAE)

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The country's geographical position has made it a central hub for trade, travel, and diplomacy in the region.

The UAE's Geo-history: Historically, the UAE's strategic location along ancient trade routes connecting the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia made it a hub for maritime commerce and cultural exchange. The region has been inhabited for thousands of years, with archaeological evidence of settlements dating back to the Bronze Age (such as those at Umm Al-Nar and Hili). Over time, it came under the influence of various empires, including the Persian, Portuguese, and British. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the area was known as the "Trucial States" due to maritime agreements with Britain. After gaining independence from the British in 1971, the UAE was formed as a federation of seven emirates.

The UAE faces a range of contemporary challenges that are deeply rooted in its historical trajectory. One of the primary challenges is managing demographic shifts and social cohesion. Historically, the UAE was home to tightly knit tribal communities. Today, over 85% of its population consists of expatriates, creating a unique but delicate demographic balance. This raises questions about labour rights, national identity, and social integration. Additionally, the UAE's regional and foreign policy—shaped by historical competition for influence in the Gulf—now must navigate shifting alliances, instability in neighboring countries, and global scrutiny on human rights issues. These challenges, though modern in nature, are best understood within the broader historical context of the UAE's rapid transformation from a traditional society to a global economic and political player in just a few decades.

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Refugee Journey & God's Intervention

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It was easy to get to, so I escaped and sought refugee asylum in Turkey through United Nations (UNHCR).

Unexpectedly, from 2014 to 2024, I was stuck in that country as a refugee, and life for a refugee in a country like Turkey is unnecessarily hard. You face discrimination of many sorts, from government authorities to everyday people.



However, after a while, like many others, God blessed my life. By pulling my resources and abilities together, I managed to make a humble living and avoid brutal black-market jobs. This, in itself, was a true blessing. Again, God intervened! There were moments when I was walking on the sidewalk, going about my day in the city I used to live in, and God would just speak to me, reminding me that He is blessing me beyond measure.

However, the situation got worse in Turkey for Christian refugees, and Turkish Authorities started deporting people by force, rounding up refugees and putting them in camps for an uncertain amount of time. It was as if I was reliving the hard days of persecution in Iran, but this time it was worse. I was stuck there; it was like an open-air prison. I could not leave the city premises, and any small mistake could put me in a deportation camp. It was as if an axe was hanging above my head!

The fear was crippling, the fear that any day or hour, something like this can happen, just took sleep away from my eyes, and I went to dark places – a different story for another day. But again, God intervened!

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Country Report: The United Arab Emirates (UAE)

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Religious Affiliation & Impact on Religious Minorities: The UAE is an officially Islamic country, with Islam—specifically Sunni Islam—playing a central role in its legal and cultural foundations. Sharia (Islamic law) influences many aspects of personal status law, such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. However, the UAE is also known for its relative religious tolerance compared to many other countries in the region, especially given its diverse expatriate population. Religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and others, make up a significant portion of the UAE's population due to its large migrant workforce. While conversion from Islam is not legally recognized and proselytizing to Muslims is prohibited, non-Muslims are allowed to worship freely in designated spaces, such as churches, temples, and gurdwaras. The government has even allocated land and occasionally supported the construction of these facilities. Nonetheless, religious expression is carefully regulated, and criticism of Islam or promoting other faiths in public can lead to legal penalties. Thus, while the UAE maintains a predominantly Islamic identity, it has carved out a model of regulated pluralism that allows religious minorities to practice their faiths within defined boundaries.

Challenges for Refugees in the UAE: Refugees in the UAE face considerable challenges due to the absence of a formal asylum framework. The UAE is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which means that individuals fleeing conflict or persecution cannot apply for asylum or receive legal refugee status under international law.

As a result, most refugees from these countries live in the UAE on temporary or special visas, often lacking clear legal protection, permanent residency options, or access to a pathway for citizenship. Their presence is tolerated on humanitarian grounds but not legally codified, leaving them in a vulnerable and uncertain position.

They face specific obstacles, including limited access to employment, healthcare, and education unless they can secure sponsorship or private funding. Afghan evacuees who were temporarily relocated to the UAE in 2021, for example, found themselves housed in transit facilities for months or years, with no clarity about long-term resettlement or legal rights. Similarly, while many Syrians and Iraqis have established lives in cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi, they often remain without permanent residency status and are at risk of deportation if their visas lapse. These populations must navigate a highly controlled immigration environment where legal stability is closely tied to employment or sponsorship, creating ongoing stress, social exclusion, and an inability to plan for the future. Despite the UAE's significant contributions to humanitarian aid abroad, refugees within its borders continue to live in a legal gray area without the protections that recognized refugee status would afford.

ORAT's Support: ORAT continues its heartfelt commitment to supporting refugees seeking asylum. To date, ORAT has sponsored 153 applications, representing 406 individuals who sought refuge in the UAE. Of these, 41 refugees were either rejected or withdrawn due to various circumstances. Encouragingly, 262 refugees have successfully arrived in Canada, while 103 remain at different stages of the immigration process, with our team working diligently to guide them forward.

These courageous individuals hail primarily from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Eritrea, regions marked by conflict and hardship. Through ORAT's efforts, we have facilitated their resettlement, providing legal recognition, stability, and the chance to rebuild their lives within Canada's strong refugee protection framework. Our mission remains to offer hope and a new beginning to those in need.

Refugee Journey & God's Intervention

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He intervened so that today I may live and talk about what He has done for me all these years. In my humble opinion and experience, God directly intervenes and saves people; it can be through a sign, a word of encouragement, a job to sustain you or literal act of saving someone, which is how I got here to Canada with you.

He intervened through your community — through your prayers, your compassion, and your practical help. I am especially grateful to ORAT and my sponsoring church, who have become my spiritual family here in Canada. They stayed in contact with me throughout the waiting period and encouraged me to prepare for a new beginning, rather than grow idle or discouraged.

Thanks to that support and preparation, I was able to hit the ground running. Within my first two months in Canada, I obtained both my car and motorcycle licenses. Because I had studied English in advance, I also secured full — time employment early on. I often tell other refugee friends still waiting abroad: learn the language and prepare yourself — it makes all the difference.

Today, I'm giving back by helping my sponsoring church assist others who are still stuck in difficult situations. It's the least I can do to express my gratitude for the freedom and opportunity I've found in this new home, Canada.

God bless you all for welcoming me into your midst.

Supporting ORAT

Our work is supported by the generosity of the Archdiocese of Toronto, ShareLife, various collaborating organizations and the faithful. If you would like to donate to support the work of this office, please click the donate button.

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