



## Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!



The team at the Office for Refugees extends our warmest wishes to you and your family for a Blessed and Holy Christmas and a joyful New Year. We also express our gratitude to the numerous volunteers who have generously devoted their time, talent, and resources to alleviating the plight of refugees. May the Lord bless them abundantly for their kindness!

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us rejoice! Open your hearts to receive the grace of this day, for Christ himself is born for us. Jesus is the radiant “day” that has dawned on the horizon of humanity—a day of mercy where God, our Father, reveals his great tenderness to the entire world. It is a day of light, dispelling the darkness of fear and anxiety, a day of peace fostering encounter, dialogue, and reconciliation. Above all, it is a day of joy, radiating from all those who have encountered Christ.

## Thank you to our Refugee Committees

Resettling refugees is a collective effort that goes beyond the dedicated work of ORAT alone. Numerous groups and parishes actively engage in forming refugee committees, generously donating their time, talent, and treasure to assist ORAT in the resettlement of refugees that we have selected during one of our overseas Project Hope missions. We express our heartfelt gratitude for the steadfast dedication and unwavering support of these groups in facilitating the resettlement of refugees.

## 2024 Filing Fee

ORAT will be implementing a filing fee adjustment, raising it to \$575 for each refugee sponsorship application submitted to Immigration Canada.

It is important to highlight that the filing fee has remained unchanged since 2018. The recent agreement signed by SAHs with Immigration Canada introduces an adjustment, allowing SAHs to increase the filing fee from \$250 to \$525 per submitted refugee sponsorship application. This modification reflects the evolving landscape and the need to address the rising administrative expenses associated with refugee sponsorship.

We appreciate your understanding and continued support as we navigate these necessary adjustments to sustain our commitment to refugee sponsorship.



## Table of Contents

Christmas & New Year Greeting.....	Page 1
2024 Filing Fee.....	Page 1
Thanks to our Refugee Committees.....	Page 1
IRCC 2024 Allocation.....	Page 2
Syria - Country Report.....	Page 2
Columbia, Haiti & Venezuela.....	Page 3
IRCC Program for Yazidis.....	Page 3
Exit Permits in Ethiopia.....	Page 4
Burundi Refugee Story.....	Page 4
PR Pathway for Ukrainians.....	Page 5
ORAT Information Sessions.....	Page 5
New ORAT Team Member.....	Page 7

# Thank You



*Flight Into Egypt*

The Archdiocese of Toronto's Office for Refugees (ORAT) thanks the parishes & groups who completed the settlement of a refugee family in 2023

Corpus Christi, Toronto  
Holy Cross, Victoria  
Holy Family, Bolton  
Merciful Redeemer, Mississauga  
Our Lady of Lourdes, Toronto  
St. Andrews, Etobicoke  
St. Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria  
St. Benedict, Halifax  
St. Catherine of Siena, Mississauga  
St. Isaac Jogues, Pickering  
St. Ignatius Loyola, Mississauga  
St. James, Toronto  
St. Justin Martyr, Unionville  
St. Martin of Tours, Mississauga  
St. Paschal Baylon, Thornhill  
Yorkminster Park Baptist, Toronto  
Yukon Cares, Whitehorse

For those interested in responding to the Lord's who said:

"I was a stranger and you welcomed Me",  
please contact us at:  
[orateducator@archtoronto.org](mailto:orateducator@archtoronto.org) or 437-290-9333

## Immigration Canada 2024 Allocation

Immigration Canada is anticipated to announce its 2024 allocation to Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) by the end of February 2024. Once this announcement is made, SAHs will be permitted to submit cases to Immigration Canada.



Despite the official confirmation still pending, ORAT is taking proactive measures to ready cases for submission promptly upon receiving approval.

As part of our preparatory efforts, ORAT is conducting information sessions and establishing deadlines for paperwork submission. This meticulous planning ensures a state of preparedness to submit cases as soon as the allocation is confirmed. We are committed to keeping our stakeholders informed and will announce the receipt of our allocation promptly on our website ([www.orat.ca](http://www.orat.ca)). Your continued support is invaluable as we navigate this process.

Thank you for your understanding and collaboration.



### SYRIA - Country Report

Nestled along the Mediterranean Sea in the heart of the Middle East, Syria grapples with the enduring aftermath of a civil war that erupted in 2011, compelling millions of Syrians to flee their homeland in search of safety and stability.

Geo-history: The historical tapestry of Syria unraveled after the Great War (1914-1918) when Ottoman forces withdrew, marking the end of centuries-long occupation. Subsequently, French forces assumed control, establishing a new colonial government. In 1946, Syria gained autonomy, yet the nation remained ensnared in political instability, corruption, and military coups.

The Arab Spring, a wave of pro-democracy uprisings, swept through the Middle East, inspiring hope for a better life. While leaders in other regions relinquished power,

*Continued on page 3*

## Columbia, Haiti & Venezuela Program

Source: IRCC Website



Immigration Canada has recently announced a new humanitarian pathway for Columbian, Haitian, and Venezuelan nationals who have family in Canada. For further details about this program please click [here](#).

## Yazidi and Daesh Survivor Program

Source: IRCC Website

Canada acknowledges the hardships faced by Yazidis and other Daesh survivors and has welcomed over 1,400, providing them a fresh start. A new temporary public policy, effective from December 1, 2023, allows family reunification for resettled Yazidis and Daesh survivors. The policy, lasting until December 31, 2026, or until 400 applications are received. The Program supports up to 400 principal applicants and their eligible family members. To qualify, the principal applicant must be an Iraqi national residing in Iraq, intending to live outside Quebec. Additional family members require a statutory declaration from a Canadian permanent resident linked to past Yazidi or Daesh survivor policies. Approved applicants receive one-year income support and 12 months of mental health coverage.

*A New  
Temporary  
Public  
Policy*

For more details on eligibility and application procedures, visit the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website.

The temporary public policy came into effect on December 1, 2023. Click [here](#) to find out more about eligibility and how to apply.

## EDUCATION CORNER

### SYRIA - Country Report

Continued from page 2



the Syrian government, under President Bashar al-Assad, resisted, sparking a brutal crackdown on dissent and triggering a protracted civil war.

**Religious Affiliation:** The majority (87%) of Syria's population adheres to Islam. Christians, constituting 10% of the pre-war populace, encompass various denominations such as Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, and Catholic. Regrettably, the Christian minority has endured widespread discrimination and persecution, exacerbated during the civil war with the destruction of properties, religious sites, forced conversions, and loss of lives.

**Refugee Outflow:** ORAT has played a pivotal role in sponsoring over 900 Syrian families (2,313 individuals) and successfully welcomed and settled more than 600 Syrian families (1,444 individuals). Despite concerted efforts by Western governments and organizations like ORAT, a staggering 5.4 million displaced Syrians persist worldwide.

The Syrian narrative is one of resilience, marked by historical complexities and contemporary challenges. ORAT remains committed to providing support and fostering a sense of hope for those affected by the Syrian conflict.

## Exit Permits in Ethiopia

Source: RSTP Bulletin November 17, 2023

### ***Are Exit Permits Being Issued in Ethiopia?***

Yes, exit permits are being issued in Ethiopia. All individuals being resettled must have an exit interview with the Ethiopian government to receive an exit permit. The exit interview takes place in Addis Ababa and is scheduled based on the availability of appointments and the capacity of the Ethiopian government.

### ***Process to Obtain Exit Permit in Ethiopia***

To receive an appointment for an exit interview, individuals must be registered with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Ethiopian government. The registration of new asylum seekers with the Ethiopian government has been on hold since the beginning of the conflict in the Tigray region, but efforts are underway to restart the process. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides support and assistance with the exit permit process, including advising on the requirements, the overall process and the interview. However, the IOM does not have control over the exit permit process, including when interviews are scheduled.

### ***Where are the Exit Interviews Held?***

The exit interview takes place in Addis Ababa. Individuals who are outside of Addis Ababa require a travel permit issued by the Ethiopian government to travel for the interview. The IOM assists with the travel permit application, while the timeliness and decision to issue the permit is the responsibility of the Ethiopian government. The decision to issue an exit permit following the exit interview is solely the responsibility of the Ethiopian government and is dependent on their capacity; the process is not under the control of UNHCR, the IOM or the Government of Canada.

### ***Is There a Potential Durable Solution for Refugees in Ethiopia if They are Married to an Ethiopian National?***

Yes, a potential durable solution (local integration) exists in Ethiopia for refugees and asylum seekers that are married to an Ethiopian male husband, as Ethiopian law allows for the naturalization of the foreign spouse.

## Burundi Refugee Story



In 2022, a resilient woman from Burundi embarked on a heart-wrenching journey to Sudbury, a city in Canada nestled thousands of miles away from the tumultuous events in her homeland. Burundi, a country in central Africa, shares borders with

Uganda and Rwanda. However, the tale she carries transcends geographical boundaries, encapsulating the universal struggle for survival, resilience, and the pursuit of hope.

The history of Burundi is a narrative steeped in pain and tragedy, paralleling the haunting chronicles articulated in Romeo Dallaire's seminal work, "Shake Hands with the Devil." While the world was focused on the civil war and genocide in neighboring Rwanda, a parallel narrative unfolded in Burundi. Extremist elements within the majority Hutu population orchestrated a campaign of terror against the minority Tutsi population, alongside any moderate Hutus who dared to oppose them. The systematic nature of kidnappings and killings was executed with meticulous precision, largely escaping the global spotlight.

The crescendo of violence reached its zenith in 2015 when the President, defying calls to step down, sought an illegal third term in office. Protests erupted, primarily led by the young university-age population, triggering brutal reprisals from both the police and militia. Amelie, recounting her experiences, vividly describes the horror: "I resided



in the suburb of Musaga and actively participated in demonstrations against the President's audacious power grab. Witnessing a fellow protester being ruthlessly shot, I felt an overwhelming fear that spurred my flight to my birth village.

*Continued on page 5*

## PR Pathway for Ukrainians

Source: IRCC Website



Amid Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, Canada is committed to aiding those escaping violence. The Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), providing temporary refuge since March 2022, has supported over 185,000 Ukrainians; overseas applications closed on July 15, 2023.

A new permanent residence pathway is now open, offering Ukrainian nationals in Canada with temporary status the opportunity to build their lives alongside family. The application period extends until October 22, 2024. Details and application instructions are available [online](#).

## ORAT Information Sessions



The Office for Refugees (ORAT) is committed to providing informative sessions to educate various stakeholders, including members of the public, cosponsors, Constituent Groups, and newcomers, about the various aspects of refugee resettlement. Below is a list of available information sessions, each accompanied by a brief description of the content covered. Clicking on the title of each session will lead you to the corresponding PowerPoint presentation. Please note that, except for the Introduction to Resettlement, all other information sessions are pre-recorded and available on demand by clicking on the provided links.

### **[1. Introduction to Resettlement](#)**

#### *Live Virtual Session*

This session marks the first step in initiating a refugee sponsorship application through ORAT. Potential cosponsors will learn about refugee resettlement and various immigration options available to refugees. Attendance at this live virtual session is mandatory for all cosponsors. Failure to attend will result in the inability to submit a case through ORAT.

*Continued on page 6*

## Burundi Refugee Story

*Continued from page 4*



There, the looming threat of the Imbonerakure militia, known for terrorizing young people, compelled me to seek refuge in the convent of St. Michel with my aunt, a nun. Fearing the relentless pursuit of the militia and police, I fled once more, making the arduous journey to Uganda. The odyssey involved traversing treacherous terrain by bus and foot, navigating forests, trails, and, at times, encountering fellow refugees on a similar quest for safety."Amelie's journey, spanning 16 challenging days, brought her to the relative safety of Uganda.

The harsh realities of life in refugee camps became her new normal—communal showers, limited food rations, and the perpetual struggle for essentials like water and firewood. Tragically, the specter of malnutrition haunted the camp, claiming the lives of innocent children. "Many children died from malnutrition – I saw their bellies swell and their hair turn red – and then they died. There was no support for their mothers – they had to keep on living and care for their remaining children."



For seven long years, Amelie existed in a state of limbo, trapped in a daily routine devoid of hope. The monotony of camp life, coupled with the ever-present specter of danger, cast a shadow over her aspirations for a better life. The turning point emerged during the challenging era of the Covid-19 pandemic. The news of her relocation to Canada, delivered through an email from dedicated volunteers, became a lifeline, a beacon of hope that touched her heart profoundly.

*Continued on page 6*

## ORAT Information Sessions

*Continued from page 5*

### **2. IRCC Processing Time**

*Pre-recorded Session*

CGs and cosponsors with cases in process with Immigration Canada are strongly encouraged to attend this session. Participants learn how to follow up on their case; how to check the case status online and updating the Canadian Visa Office on any changes to the applicant's file.

Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded session.

### **3. Budgeting and Finance**

*Pre-recorded Session*

This session offers a detailed review of IRCC's financial support requirements, including adjustments to the level of financial support for sponsored newcomers. It is tailored for CGs sponsoring Project Hope cases and is beneficial for cosponsors to understand their financial budget responsibilities.

Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded Budgeting and Finance session, and [here](#) to access ORAT's RAP Calculator and Budget Workbook.

### **4. Pre-Arrival Training**

*Pre-recorded Session*

Intended for cosponsors and CGs preparing to welcome their sponsored refugee family, this session provides a comprehensive review of the responsibilities and tasks that cosponsors will need to fulfill for their refugee(s).

Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded session.

### **5. Welcome Orientation**

*Pre-recorded Session*

This mandatory orientation is for all sponsored refugees arriving in Canada through ORAT. It covers legal status, government-issued documents, settlement services, financial and non-financial supports, newcomer rights, and responsibilities. Sponsors are encouraged to arrange for an interpreter if needed.

Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded session.



## Burundi Refugee Story

*Continued from page 5*



The culmination of this journey unfolded dramatically upon her arrival in Sudbury. Awaiting her at the airport were volunteers, not merely holding a Canadian

flag but embracing her with tears of joy and warmth. Their genuine hospitality and support marked the beginning of Amelie's transformative experience in Canada.

Now nestled in Sudbury, supported by Project Hope



and the Office for Refugees, Amelie is not just a survivor but a woman with a vision for the future. Grateful for the unwavering assistance provided by Sudbury volunteers, Project Hope, and the Office for Refugees, Amelie acknowledges the people of Canada for extending a welcoming hand to refugees. Her gratitude echoes through her newfound opportunities—studying English, training as a Personal Support Worker, and engaging in night-time work cleaning buildings. Amidst the challenges of integration, she finds solace in the prospect of a brighter future.

Amelie's story transcends the boundaries of time and place, becoming a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, the power of compassion, and the promise of hope in the face of adversity.

## New ORAT Team Member

Written by Mays Rawoof



I am Mays Rawoof, and I am excited to introduce myself as a new member of the ORAT Team, having joined in September 2023. Embarking on this journey fills me with enthusiasm as I look forward to learning and making meaningful contributions in this new chapter of my life.

Bringing with me a background in administration from my previous workplace, I also draw upon a diverse skill set honed through active involvement with St. Joseph Syriac Catholic Parish. In various capacities within the parish, I have gained valuable experience that I am eager to leverage in my role at ORAT.

As an immigrant who has personally faced the challenges of war, I intimately understand the profound impact of suffering. It is my aspiration to apply these humble experiences to benefit the ORAT team. I am genuinely enthusiastic about contributing to the commendable efforts of the team, particularly in assisting families as they navigate challenging situations and work towards reuniting with their loved ones.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of ORAT's mission, and I am committed to contributing my best to support the organization's noble cause.

## ORAT Website

Please Visit ORAT's Website to find details about our mandate, goals, and policies, as well as to obtain immigration forms and infossession materials

<https://www.orat.ca/>



## ORAT's Benefactor



# Archdiocese of Toronto

# ShareLife

## Fellow Collaborators

