



Happy Canada Day!

On this Canada Day, let us give thanks to Almighty God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, for the great blessing of Canada — our beloved homeland. We praise Him for the many graces bestowed upon this nation and its people.

We are especially grateful to the Lord for the freedom that we enjoy; a freedom that Canada offers to so many who have fled persecution, violence, and oppression. We remember in a particular way our brothers and sisters in Christ who have endured much persecution for their faith in their homelands and who long for the safety and freedom, that Canada has to offer.

Let us entrust our nation to the Lord, asking for the powerful intercession of Saint Joseph, Patron of Canada. May Christ reign in the hearts of all Canadians and have dominion over this land from sea to shining sea.

May God bless Canada abundantly on this her 157th birthday!

Happy Canada Day!



Addressing Gaps in Case Funding

As outlined in ORAT’s March and May newsletters, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) implemented a substantial increase to the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) rates used to calculate the minimum financial support required for privately sponsored refugees. In response, ORAT has been reviewing all in-process cases and requesting additional funds where necessary to ensure sponsorships remain adequately funded and compliant with IRCC requirements.

At the same time, significant reductions to Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) admissions targets under the federal Immigration Levels Plan have further complicated the situation. Combined with an already considerable backlog of applications, these reductions have increased average processing time to more than six years. As a result, refugee families will wait far longer for a final decision and arrival in Canada than was originally anticipated when their sponsorship funds were first collected.

While ORAT is currently requesting additional contributions to address the recent RAP rate

Continues on page 2

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Happy Canada Day!.....Page | 1 |
| Addressing Gaps in Case Funding.....Page | 1 |
| Fund Disbursement: What to ExpectPage | 2 |
| Border Measures for Ebola Outbreak.....Page | 3 |
| Egypt Country Report.....Page | 3 |
| Egypt - IRCC Message.....Page | 4 |
| South Africa - IRCC Message.....Page | 4 |
| A Journey of Courage and ResiliencePage | 5 |
| Bonnie Lake Cottage Program.....Page | 8 |

Addressing Gaps in Case Funding

Continued from page 1



increase and to provide a reasonable buffer against future cost increases, it is important that sponsors and constituent groups understand that these amounts are based on current projections. Given the lengthy processing times now being experienced, there is a possibility that further increases to RAP rates, or other government-mandated settlement costs may occur before a refugee arrives in Canada. Should this happen, ORAT may need to revisit individual cases and request additional funds to ensure that sufficient financial support is available at the time of arrival.

We recognize that these requests place an added burden on sponsors and constituent groups, many of whom have already demonstrated remarkable generosity and commitment to refugee sponsorship. Unfortunately, these adjustments are driven by factors beyond ORAT's control. As a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, ORAT has a legal obligation to ensure that every sponsored refugee arrives with adequate financial support for their first year in Canada. We are grateful for the continued understanding, patience, and partnership of our sponsors as we work together to fulfill this responsibility and help refugee families successfully establish their new lives in Canada.

Fund Disbursement: What to Expect

Funds deposited by a cosponsor at the time of submission are disbursed in quarterly installments upon arrival of the refugee in Canada.

Upon receipt of the Notification of Arrival (NAT) from IRCC, we process the first cheque and mail it to the cosponsor's address. This cheque is timed to arrive during the newcomer's first week in Canada. The second, third and fourth cheques are then issued every three months.

Why is the first cheque larger?

The first cheque includes both regular financial support (Resettlement Assistance Program – RAP) and start-up costs to help the newcomer family establish their life in Canada. As a result, it is usually the largest payment. The remaining three cheques are typically smaller.

IMPORTANT GUIDANCE: Banking tips

We recommend that the first cheque be deposited with the help of a bank teller, rather than through an ATM or mobile banking app. Since this is often the newcomer's first transaction, automated systems may place a hold on the funds. Depositing the cheque in person allows you to request that a hold not be applied.

Similarly, any cheque of \$10,000 or more should always be deposited with a bank teller to reduce the likelihood of delays.

A few extra minutes at the bank can save a great deal of frustration later.

What to do if a hold is placed on the funds

Please work with the bank manager at the branch to resolve the issue. If they insist that our office be involved, then please provide us with the following information:

- The name of the bank;
- The bank manager name & contact information;
- The amount being held;
- The reason given for the hold; and
- Any other information provided by the bank.

Our office will work with you to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

Following the above guidance will help ensure that families have access to the support they need as they begin their new life in Canada.

Temporary Border Measures for Ebola Outbreak

Source: RSTP Newsletter issued June 4, 2026

The [Government of Canada has introduced temporary border measures](#) to help prevent Ebola from entering and spreading in Canada. These measures took effect on May 27, 2026, at 11:59 pm EDT and will remain in place for 90 days.

The measures include:

- A temporary suspension of immigration documents for people currently in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, and South Sudan. These countries have been identified as having a high or very high risk of Ebola.
- A temporary pause on final decisions for permanent resident and temporary resident visas, and electronic travel authorization (eTA) applications for people located in these countries.

What if the refugee I sponsored is affected by these measures?

Sponsored refugees currently in the DRC, Uganda, or South Sudan will not be able to travel to Canada while these measures are in place. The final processing of sponsorship applications for refugees in these countries will also be paused for 90 days.

Refugees in these countries who were scheduled to travel to Canada during this period will be notified by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that their travel has been cancelled. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is working closely with the IOM to support affected refugees until their travel can be rescheduled.



EDUCATION CORNER

Egypt Country Report

Egypt is located in northeastern Africa and serves as a bridge between Africa and the Middle East. It shares land borders with Libya to the west, Sudan to the south, and Israel and the Gaza Strip to the northeast. The country also borders the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea to the east. Through the Suez Canal, Egypt occupies one of the world's most strategically important transportation corridors, connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa.



The majority of Egypt's population resides along the Nile River and its fertile delta, while much of the country's landmass consists of desert. Major urban centres include Cairo, the capital and largest city; Alexandria, a major Mediterranean port; and Giza, home to some of the world's most recognizable historical landmarks. Egypt's geographic position has historically made it a center of trade, migration, and cultural exchange, contributing to its role as a destination for displaced populations from across the region.

Egypt's Geo-history: Egypt is one of the world's oldest civilizations, with a history stretching back thousands of years. Ancient Egypt was renowned for its achievements in governance, architecture, agriculture, and trade. Throughout its history, Egypt has been influenced by numerous empires and civilizations, including Greek, Roman, Arab, Ottoman, and British rule.

Modern Egypt emerged as an independent state in the twentieth century and has since become one of the most influential countries in the Arab world. Due to its geographic location and political significance, Egypt has often been affected by regional conflicts and migration movements. Over the past several

Continues on page 4

Continues on page 4

Egypt Country Report

Continued from page 3



decades, the country has hosted individuals displaced by conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Yemen, Somalia, and other neighbouring states.

Today, Egypt continues to serve as both a destination and transit country for refugees and asylum seekers seeking safety and stability.

Religious Affiliation & Impact on Religious Minorities: Egypt's constitution establishes Islam as the state religion, with the vast majority of the population identifying as Sunni Muslim. The largest religious minority is the Coptic Orthodox Christian community, which has been an integral part of Egyptian society for nearly two millennia.

While religious minorities are generally permitted to practice their faith, they continue to face challenges related to equal treatment and religious freedom. In recent years, the Egyptian government has taken some positive steps, including promoting interfaith dialogue and improving the legalization of churches.

However, a more critical assessment comes from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. In its 2024 Annual Report, USCIRF recommended designating Egypt as a 'Special Watch List' country due to systematic and ongoing violations of religious freedom. The report highlights the repression of non-Muslim religious life, particularly affecting Coptic Christians, Jews, Baha'is, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Qur'anists.

Continues on page 5

Egypt - IRCC Message

In Egypt, IRCC continues to monitor a rapidly evolving and increasingly challenging protection environment for refugees. Since late 2025, there has been a marked increase in detentions and deportations. Enforcement activities have included roundups in migrant-populated neighborhoods, checks on public transportation, and door-to-door verifications by local authorities.

IRCC Cairo continues to prioritize and advance applications for clients in detention and works closely with partners, including UNHCR and IOM, to support safe and timely processing. This includes expediting medical examinations, facilitating biometrics collection, and securing exit permits where possible. In 2025, these efforts contributed to preventing refoulement, with applicants successfully traveling to Canada in most cases.

Where an IRCC client is detained or facing deportation, they, their sponsor, or a family member on their behalf should contact the Canadian High Commission in Cairo as soon as possible using the mission's designated email channel.

South Africa - IRCC Message

South Africa continues to experience periodic increases in anti-refugee and anti-migrant sentiments. This has at times, resulted in xenophobic violence. IRCC continues to monitor country conditions closely, including the broader protection environment for refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa. Currently, we do not foresee any impacts to refugee processing in the country. As with all refugee resettlement cases, officers at the Pretoria mission assess whether someone has a durable solution on a case-by-case basis. Officers consider the applicant's individual circumstances as well as current country conditions. In assessing whether local integration may be a viable durable solution, officers consider a range of factors, including legal status, access to rights and services, ability to remain safely in the country of asylum, and whether they can participate broadly in society.



Egypt Country Report

Continued from page 4

For refugees and asylum seekers, religious identity can significantly influence access to community support and social integration in Egypt.

Displacement & Humanitarian Conditions: Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. While refugee registration and status determination have traditionally been carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Egypt has increasingly developed its own domestic asylum framework.



Egypt hosts one of the largest refugee and asylum-seeker populations in the Middle East and North Africa. The country has experienced a significant increase in arrivals since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in 2023. Refugees and asylum seekers currently residing in Egypt originate primarily from Sudan, Syria, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Somalia.

Unlike some countries that maintain refugee camps, Egypt follows an urban refugee model. Most refugees live within Egyptian communities, particularly in Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, and other urban centres. While this approach allows for greater interaction with local communities, it also presents challenges related to housing affordability, access to employment, healthcare, and education.

Many refugees rely on humanitarian assistance provided by UNHCR and partner organizations. At the same time, economic pressures, inflation, and growing humanitarian needs continue to place strain on both refugee households and host communities. Despite these challenges, Egypt remains a key country of asylum for individuals fleeing conflict and persecution throughout the region.

Continues on page 6

A Journey of Courage & Resilience

My name is Fatima (not her real name). I am a Pakistani Christian woman. I am writing to share the circumstances that forced my family and I to flee Pakistan and the hardships we endured while waiting for safety. A few months after the death of my father, my younger brother, told me and my husband that he was in love with a Muslim woman from our neighborhood who wished to accept Christianity and marry him. We immediately understood that this situation could place our entire family in danger.

My husband and I tried to persuade him to reconsider because we knew the consequences could be severe. However, he was determined to marry her. At that time, my mother was ill, and we could not burden her with the full situation of my brother's affair. In the end, we felt compelled to help them quietly in the hope of protecting their lives and preventing greater harm to our family.



Her conversion to Christianity and her marriage to my brother were carried out in secret by a pastor, and my husband and I signed their marriage certificate as witnesses. When my mother learned what had happened, she became deeply afraid. She sold her house, and she and my brother moved into a rented house. At that time, my husband, our daughter and I were already living with my in-laws. From then on, our family lived under constant fear.

In Pakistan, interfaith marriage is especially dangerous when the woman is Muslim. The conversion of a Muslim to Christianity can result in severe threats, social retaliation, and accusations against those who assist or witness the marriage. This placed not only the couple, but also our wider family, at serious risk.

Continues on page 6

Egypt Country Report

Continued from page 5

Recent Developments: According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the protection environment for refugees in Egypt has become increasingly challenging. Since late 2025, authorities have reportedly increased enforcement measures affecting migrants and displaced populations, including detentions, deportations, identity checks on public transportation, and verification activities in neighbourhoods with significant refugee populations.

In response, IRCC's office in Cairo continues to prioritize applications involving detained individuals or those facing imminent deportation. Working in coordination with partners such as UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), efforts have focused on expediting medical examinations, facilitating biometrics collection, and obtaining necessary exit permits to support timely departures to Canada.

IRCC has reported that these interventions helped prevent instances of refoulement during 2025, with most affected applicants successfully completing their travel to Canada. Sponsors and applicants are encouraged to promptly notify the Canadian High Commission in Cairo if an applicant is detained or facing deportation so that available support measures can be explored as early as possible.

These developments highlight the importance of continued monitoring and timely processing of refugee resettlement applications for vulnerable individuals residing in Egypt.

ORAT's Support: ORAT has had the privilege of assisting numerous sponsorship applications for individuals residing in Egypt and seeking resettlement opportunities in Canada. Many of these applicants originate from countries experiencing conflict, persecution, and prolonged displacement, including Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, and Somalia.

As a major country of asylum in the region, Egypt continues to play an important role in providing temporary protection to displaced populations

Continues on page 7

A Journey of Courage & Resilience

Continued from page 5

On the advice of our aunt, my brother went through a false conversion to Islam and entered into a Muslim marriage with his wife so that we could leave Pakistan safely. The cleric who solemnized their Muslim marriage warned that if they returned to Christianity, we believed that discovery would put all of our lives in immediate danger.



As the danger grew, she had to leave her home and come to stay with us. My brother brought her and my mother to our in-law's house, and from there we all moved to another house owned by my father-in-law. We stayed hidden there for several weeks while Fatima's family and the police searched for her. Throughout that time, we lived in constant fear of being found.

With the help of our aunt and after taking every possible precaution, all of us fled Pakistan to Thailand. Immediately after arriving in Thailand in 2013, we applied for protection and resettlement through UNHCR. Few months later, our visas expired and from that point forward, we had to live without legal status while waiting for our case to be processed, which left us vulnerable to arrest, detention, and deportation.

Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to refugee rights. As a result, UNHCR clients are treated as illegal immigrants and face detention or deportation. We lived for years under this uncertainty. If deported to Pakistan, we knew we would face arrest for accusations of kidnapping, religious conversion, and blasphemy. Our safety was in grave danger.

My brother and his wife wanted to renounce their false Muslim conversion, so in Thailand they were married again according to Roman Catholic doctrine. My husband and I again signed their marriage certificate as witnesses. In Pakistan, her family attacked my in-laws' house, but fortunately we were no longer there because we had already left the country. They threatened and harassed my in-laws to find out about our whereabouts and filed

Continues on page 7

Continued from page 6

Egypt Country Report

Continued from page 6

while durable solutions are pursued. Through ORAT's ongoing commitment to refugee sponsorship, vulnerable individuals and families are provided with guidance, advocacy, and support throughout the resettlement process.

ORAT remains actively engaged with sponsors, applicants, and partners to help ensure that refugees residing in Egypt have access to pathways toward safety, stability, and permanent protection through Canada's refugee resettlement programs.

Since 2018, ORAT has assisted with 69 sponsorship applications representing 124 individuals residing in Egypt. To date, 24 applications have resulted in successful resettlement, allowing 48 individuals to begin new lives in Canada. A further 44 applications, representing 74 individuals, are currently being processed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. ORAT remains committed to supporting sponsors and applicants throughout every stage of the resettlement journey.



blasphemy and kidnapping cases against us.

After some years, my brother and his family, along with my mother, were resettled to a safe country. My family however, remained in Thailand for more than 12 years. During this time, my husband and I, despite being educated and experienced in teaching and information technology, were not allowed to work legally. It was extremely difficult to meet our basic needs, provide stable education for our daughter, or access medical care. We lived quietly in a small, rented room and did our best to endure with dignity and hope.

Amid these years of hardship, when the Office for Refugees (ORAT) team came to Thailand and listened to our situation, they helped us with sponsorship to Canada. Their support gave our family a path toward safety and stability when we had almost lost hope. They guided us through each stage of the process with compassion and care.



When we arrived in Canada, we were welcomed with kindness and dignity by the ORAT team, and the St. Leonard's Catholic Church committee members. After many years of insecurity, their support helped us begin rebuilding our lives in safety. Their care made it possible for us to move forward with hope.

Coming to Canada gave our family the chance to live without fear. Our daughter was finally able to attend school regularly, make friends, and begin to feel secure. We have peace of mind for the first time in many years, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work, improve our skills, and contribute positively to our new community.

Continues on page 8

Bonnie Lake Cottage Program

We are delighted to announce the return of the Bonnie Lake Cottage Program! This special initiative offers eligible newcomer families a wonderful opportunity to enjoy quality time together in nature at the beautiful Bonnie Lake Resort (1047 Bonnie Lake Camp Rd, Unit #233, Bracebridge, ON).

Made possible through the generosity of a kind parishioner, the program provides a fully equipped, two-bedroom cottage that comfortably accommodates up to seven guests. The cottage includes many comforts of home — such as bedding, basic kitchen supplies, and recreational amenities including kayaks and paddle boats.

Availability: June 15th to October 31st

Family Composition: One family unit per booking. It is designed for 2 parents and up to 5 children under 18 years of age. Please do not bring friends and other relatives. The purpose of the program is to provide quality family time for your immediate family.

Length of Stay: Up to one week per booking

How to Book: Please contact the Outreach team at ORAT by email at oratoutreach@archtoronto.org to reserve the cottage for your sponsored newcomer.

Important Information – Tick Awareness

Ticks are more common in Ontario this year, but the risk can be managed with proper precautions. The Bonnie Lake Cottage team strongly recommends using insect repellent containing 20–30% DEET during your stay. DEET is highly effective in preventing ticks from attaching to the body.

Before your visit, please click [here](#) review information about ticks and Lyme disease.



A Journey of Courage & Resilience

Continued from page 6



Even now, we remember those who remain behind. There are many people in Thailand living in dangerous and desperate circumstances, just as we once did, and many Christians in Pakistan continue to face persecution with nowhere to turn for safety. Our story is only one among many. We pray that others who are suffering will also find protection, freedom, and the chance to live again.



My family and I are deeply thankful to ORAT and St. Leonard's Church for helping to save our lives and for giving us the chance to begin again in safety and dignity. For families like ours, sponsorship is more than assistance; it is the difference between fear and security, between despair and hope, and between merely surviving and truly living again. Because of this support, we now have the opportunity to rebuild our lives, contribute to our community, and give our daughter a future free from fear. We will always remain grateful to those who choose to stand with refugee families and make new beginnings possible.



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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