



IRCC Case Backlog & Processing Delays

Canada’s immigration system has faced significant backlogs across various visa categories, including the Private Sponsorship of Refugee’s (PSR) program. These backlogs are primarily attributed to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and compounded by the introduction of new public policy programs (i.e., Operation Afghan Safety, Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel), increased demand for immigration to Canada, and policy and procedural changes.

While Canada has historically been recognized for its leadership in refugee resettlement, the surge in applications and the necessity to uphold rigorous screening processes have resulted in delays in processing times. Moreover, the pandemic introduced additional challenges such as travel restrictions, reduced staffing levels, and the need to adapt procedures to comply with public health protocols.

We were recently informed that the backlog for Privately Sponsored Refugees stands at over 100,000 persons. This backlog significantly impacts processing times for individuals seeking refuge in Canada, leading to extended waiting periods before their cases are processed and decisions are rendered. Based on the current backlog and the current landing targets (i.e., planned arrivals) that Immigration Canada has set, the average processing time is estimated to be between 3-4 years, far exceeding Immigration Canada’s target of 12 months.



Continues on page 2

Information Session Updates



ORAT has recently developed a new Information Session entitled *Preparing for Month 13*. Preparing for the end of the sponsorship year is critical for all newcomer(s). This presentation is intended to guide sponsors how and when to prepare newcomer(s) for the end of their sponsorship period. Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded session, and [here](#) to access the PowerPoint presentation.

We have also updated the following two information sessions to ensure that they are keeping with in Immigration Canada’s updated Post Arrival Guidelines.

Pre-Arrival Training: This information session prepares cosponsors and CGs to welcome and journey with their sponsored refugee family. The session provides an excellent review of the responsibilities and tasks that sponsors will need to do to support their sponsored refugee(s). Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded session and [here](#) to access the PowerPoint presentation.

Continues on page 2

Table of Contents

IRCC Backlog & Delays.....	Page	1
Information Session Updates.....	Page	1
Turkey - Country of Asylum Report.....	Page	2
Refugee Committees Wanted.....	Page	3
Our Journey: Seemab Younas.....	Page	4
Tax Toolkit for Newcomers.....	Page	5
New ORAT Team Member.....	Page	6

IRCC Case Backlog & Processing Delays

Continued from page 1

Given these challenges, we ask for the following:

1. That Constituent Groups (CGs) and Cosponsors engage with their MP's office to advocate for reducing the backlog and processing times for the private sponsorship of refugees program. Such advocacy efforts can play a crucial role in bringing attention to the issue and pressing for necessary reforms to expedite the resettlement process and alleviate the burden on refugees awaiting decisions.

2. For Cosponsors, CGs and Principal Applicants (PAs) to take advantage of the ORAT's IRCC Processing Time Information Session where they will learn

- a. how to follow up on their case.
- b. how to check on the status of their case online.
- c. how to update the Canadian Visa Office on any changes to the file.

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

3. For Cosponsors, CGs and PAs to continue to exercise patience.

Please be assured that ORAT routinely reviews its case load and provides to IRCC a list of cases that have surpassed the 4-year processing time threshold.

Information Sessions Updates

Continued from page 1



Welcome Orientation: This is a mandatory session for all sponsored refugees who have arrived in Canada through ORAT. At this session, newcomers are provided with information about their legal status in Canada, a list of government documents they should obtain, government programs they may have access to, financial and non-financial support from sponsors they can expect to receive, as well as newcomer rights and responsibilities. If the newcomer requires translation, the sponsor is requested to arrange for an interpreter to be present when viewing this session. Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded session and [here](#) to access the PowerPoint presentation.

EDUCATION CORNER

Turkey - Country of Asylum Report

Turkey, officially known as the Republic of Turkey, is a transcontinental country bordered by eight countries, Greece and Bulgaria to the northwest, Georgia to the northeast, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran to the east, and Iraq and Syria to the south.



Turkey also boasts coastlines along the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Black Seas.

Turkey has played a significant role in the refugee crisis, particularly stemming from conflicts in neighboring countries like Syria and Iraq. As a key transit country and host to millions of refugees, Turkey has been at the forefront of providing humanitarian aid and assistance to those fleeing conflict and persecution. The country's geographic location straddling Europe and Asia has made it a critical point in the journey of many refugees seeking safety and asylum.

Turkey's current challenges in historical context:

Turkey's current challenges are deeply rooted in its historical context, shaped by centuries of geopolitical complexities, cultural diversity, and evolving identities. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I marked a tumultuous period, as the newly formed Republic of Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk sought to modernize and secularize the country. While Atatürk's reforms laid the foundation for a secular state, they also sparked tensions between traditionalists and modernists, setting the stage for ongoing debates over the role of religion and state in Turkish society.

Additionally, Turkey's strategic location has made it a focal point for regional conflicts and power struggles. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to the emergence of new nation-states in the Middle East, redrawing borders and sparking ethnic and nationalist movements. Turkey's Kurdish minority, for example, has long sought greater autonomy or independence,

Continues on page 3

Turkey - Country of Asylum Report

Continued from page 2

leading to decades of conflict and political unrest. Moreover, Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts, such as the Syrian civil war, has further complicated its domestic challenges, fueling tensions with neighboring countries and exacerbating issues of security and refugee influx.

Furthermore, the rise of authoritarianism in recent years has posed significant challenges to Turkey's democratic institutions and civil liberties. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government has faced criticism for its crackdown on dissent, erosion of press freedom, and concentration of power in the executive branch. These developments have strained Turkey's relations with Western allies and raised concerns about the country's commitment to democratic principles and human rights. Overall, Turkey's current challenges are deeply intertwined with its historical legacy, reflecting the complexities of navigating a diverse society in a volatile region undergoing rapid transformation.

Religious affiliation & impact on religious minorities:

Turkey, with its predominantly Islamic population, has been a significant host to millions of refugees, including religious minorities fleeing persecution in neighboring countries. Among these refugees are individuals from religious minority groups such as Christians, Yazidis, and various sects of Islam, who have sought asylum from conflicts and religious persecution in the Middle East. Turkey's secular constitution theoretically guarantees freedom of religion, yet refugees often face challenges in practicing their faith openly due to social and cultural factors. Additionally, while Turkey has provided vital assistance and refuge to these minority groups, they may still face discrimination and marginalization within Turkish society, further complicating their integration and access to religious resources.

Despite the challenges, Turkey has made efforts to accommodate the religious needs of refugee minorities, including providing spaces for worship and assistance through humanitarian organizations. However, the sheer scale of the refugee influx and ongoing conflicts in the region present ongoing challenges for both refugees and the Turkish government in ensuring the protection and well-being of religious minorities.

Continues on page 5



Throughout the years, ORAT has embarked on numerous overseas mission trips, during which we identify refugees enduring dire circumstances and facing limited prospects for resettlement in safe countries. These selected refugees are then thoughtfully matched with parishes and like-minded communities that have dedicated themselves to the noble mission of welcoming and supporting refugee families in their journey to start anew in Canada.

We are currently on the lookout for church groups and organizations that do not currently have an active refugee committee but may be eager to establish one. If you or your organization holds an interest in forming a refugee committee within your parish or group, we invite you to get in touch with Luciano Moro, ORAT's Resettlement Educator & CG Animator. Luciano can provide you with further insights and information regarding this deeply rewarding ministry.

You can reach out to Luciano via email at: orateducator@archtoronto.org or by phone at (437) 290-9333.

In embracing this cause, you have the opportunity to extend a compassionate hand to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, offering them the chance to escape persecution and build a new life here in Canada. Your involvement can make an enduring impact.



Our Journey: Seemab Younas



In January 2014, my family and I fled Pakistan due to religious persecution inflicted by Muslim extremists. My father, who runs an organization for the welfare of the Christian community, and I, who work alongside him, became targets for our efforts to support impoverished Christians. Despite numerous threats and attempts to coerce our conversion, the situation escalated in October 2013 when our home was attacked, and our lives were threatened.

Thankfully, by the grace of God, we managed to seek refuge with relatives in another city. As the situation continued to deteriorate, our parish priest advised us to flee the country for our safety. With the assistance of our parish priest, we escaped to Thailand in January 2014, joining my three brothers, one sister, mother, and father in search of sanctuary.

Upon our arrival in Thailand, a friend of my father provided initial assistance, allowing us to stay with them temporarily. Following that brief stay, a church in Thailand assisted us with shelter. However, our undocumented status in Thailand posed significant challenges, including limited access to employment and essential services. Despite the hardships, we persevered, finding work in Indian restaurants and hotels, albeit under exploitative conditions.

In 2015, I married my fiancé, who had joined us in Thailand, further solidifying our resolve to build a better future for our family. However, our struggles persisted until 2016 when we were introduced to Father Michael Kelly, a Jesuit priest known for his assistance to refugees in Thailand. Despite his inability to offer financial aid, Father Michael connected us with the Office of Refugees (ORAT) organization, opening a path towards sponsorship in Canada.



In 2019, a team from ORAT visited us in Thailand, interviewed us and collected key information about our refugee claim. There we met with Deacon Rudy and other staff members. All the staff were loving and caring. They visited our house too and took our story and gave us hope.



ORAT diligently processed our application, and over the following two years offered support and guidance throughout the arduous journey. In 2020, our sponsorship was approved by Immigration Canada, and on February 9, 2022, we landed in Canada. Throughout the process, the compassionate team at ORAT, both in Thailand and Canada, provided invaluable assistance, offering hope and reassurance during our darkest moments.

We are eternally grateful to God for guiding us to ORAT and to our sponsor church, St. Martin of Tours Parish, especially Father Gijo, whose unwavering support granted us the opportunity to settle in Canada, where we are able to live in freedom. Our journey has been marked by adversity, but through faith and perseverance, we have found refuge and a new beginning in our adopted homeland.

Turkey - Country of Asylum Report

Continued from page 3

Addressing these challenges requires not only continued support from the international community but also a commitment to upholding the principles of religious freedom and tolerance within Turkey's diverse society.

Challenges for Turkey as a host country:

Turkey has faced a significant influx of refugees, particularly from neighboring conflict-ridden countries like Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The Syrian civil war, in particular, has led to one of the largest refugee crises in recent history, with millions of Syrians fleeing violence, persecution, and destruction. Turkey has borne a heavy burden as a major transit and destination country for Syrian refugees, hosting over 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees as of early 2022, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Additionally, Turkey has also welcomed refugees from other countries, including Iraq and Afghanistan, further increasing the strain on its resources and infrastructure.

The influx of refugees has presented numerous challenges for Turkey, ranging from social and economic pressures to security concerns and political tensions. The sheer scale of the refugee population has placed immense pressure on housing, healthcare, education, and employment services, often stretching them to their limits. Moreover, the rapid influx of refugees has strained relations between host communities and refugees, leading to instances of social friction and xenophobia. Additionally, concerns over security and the potential for terrorist infiltration have prompted Turkey to implement stricter border controls and security measures, further complicating the situation for refugees seeking safety and asylum. Despite these challenges, Turkey has continued to provide vital humanitarian assistance and support to refugees, working closely with international organizations and the global community to address the needs of displaced populations and find durable solutions to the refugee crisis.



Get to know the Canada Revenue Agency's Newcomer Toolkit

The **Canada Revenue Agency** has asked us to share with you a host of their tax related resources available to newcomers. The toolkit includes links to live webinars and video tutorials about tax credits and benefits. Newcomers learning about the Canadian tax system for the first time might benefit from the Online Tax Learning Tool, a self-directed study resource that includes quizzes and supports a variety of learning styles.

- Click [here](#) for a list of *Free Tax Clinics* and eligibility criteria.
- Click [here](#) to learn about *CRA Outreach Officers*, what they do and who they serve.
- Click [here](#) for the *CRA Guide to Taxes and Housing Benefits*.
- [Download this pdf](#) for *multi-language CRA resources* available.

The CRA frequently updates their resources and adds new products and tools available to newcomers. Please check back often and follow the CRA on social media for updates.

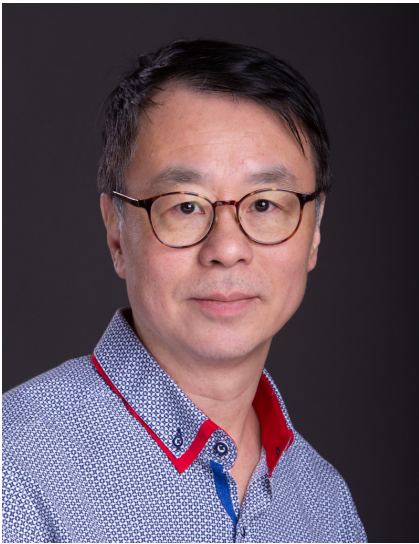
Click [here](#) to access CRA Webinars and Videos.

Click [here](#) to access Online Tax Learning Tools.

To read full article click [here](#).

New ORAT Team Member

Written by Leo Wang



Hi everyone! I'm Leo Wong, and I'm thrilled to join the ORAT team. With over a decade of experience as a developer and database administrator, I have refined my skills in designing, developing, and optimizing database systems. I primarily utilize Microsoft technologies to create solutions that meet client needs. Throughout my career, which includes significant roles at Scotiabank and TD Bank, I have focused on leading projects that improve operational efficiencies and system capabilities.

I take great pride in my work on comprehensive programs and systems that support complex operations, with a consistent focus on problem-solving and process improvement. I am eager to use my technical skills and experience to support ORAT's mission to aid the refugee community. I look forward to making meaningful contributions to ORAT. Let's work together to create lasting, positive change!



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

SL ShareLife

Fellow Collaborators

