



Easter Wishes

Christ is Risen, Alleluia! Truly, He is Risen, Alleluia!



Wishing you and your family a blessed and joyful Easter. Let us praise the Lord, who has triumphed over death and calls us to share in His glorious resurrection.

Syria’s Constitution: Christian Impact

Source: *Open Doors*

Syria’s Interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa has unveiled a new constitutional declaration, promising “a new history for Syria” rooted in justice, three months after his Islamist group ousted Bashar al-Assad. However, the document released days after the mass killings of Alawite minorities in Latakia and Tartous has sparked concerns over its concentration of presidential power, prioritization of Islamic law, and lack of clear protections for ethnic and religious minorities. As Syria navigates this transitional phase, critics question whether the Constitution signals true democracy or a new form of authoritarianism.

Click [here](#) to read the full article.

World Day of Migrants & Refugees

Pope Francis has chosen “Migrants, Missionaries of Hope” as the theme for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, scheduled for October 4-5, 2025, coinciding with the Jubilee of Migrants and the Missionary World. Announced on Monday March 3, 2025, by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, this shift from the traditional late September date highlights the resilience of migrants and refugees, who embody hope and inspire faith in the communities that welcome them. Established in 1914, the day invites Catholics to pray for those uprooted by conflict, persecution, and hardship.

Click [here](#) to read the Vatican’s post.



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2025 Public Program Cancelled

Recent announcements from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) about significant reductions across various immigration programs have also affected the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP). IRCC has highlighted a persistent issue: demand for private sponsorship consistently exceeds available quotas, leading to an increasing application backlog and extended processing times.

Consequently, allocation spots for Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), including ORAT, have been significantly reduced for 2025. This has left us with no choice but to make the difficult decision to cancel our 2025 General Public Program, which was intended to help members of the public sponsor refugee relatives in need of resettlement to Canada.

We are currently handling a substantial number of completed sponsorship applications for 2025, along with additional files in various stages of review, submitted by our established Constituent Group Partner Organizations (CGPOs).

Our focus remains on supporting these long-standing partners as we navigate the evolving landscape of government immigration policy.

We genuinely appreciate your understanding during this challenging period. For those still seeking sponsorship options, we encourage you to reach out to other Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) in your area. A list of SAHs can be found here: [Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program – Sponsorship Agreement Holders - Canada.ca](#)



Jubilee Year: Aid Christian Refugees

The important work of resettling refugees at ORAT is made possible thanks to the many dedicated parish volunteers who form refugee committees known as Constituent Groups (CGs). These volunteers are the hands and feet of ORAT within their community, and for their service, we are deeply grateful.

While most refugees are referred to ORAT by their families or relatives—who then take on the responsibility of supporting their settlement—there are some refugee families, sponsored through our Project Hope program, who arrive in Canada without any relatives or friends to assist them. It is in these situations that our CGs play a vital role, stepping in to offer the support these newcomers so urgently need.

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CG Handbook & Sponsor Resource Toolbox Updated

We've updated the [Sponsor Resource Toolbox](#) and [CG Handbook](#), essential resources for Constituent Groups (CGs) and cosponsors, to ensure all links are current and include new materials for newcomers. These interchangeable documents support settlement efforts of both CGs and cosponsors.

Key updates to the Sponsor Resource Toolbox include:

Fraud (Pg 13): Links and resources related to cybersecurity and online safety were added.

PR Card Updates (Pg 18):

- A link for updating mailing addresses with IRCC for PR card delivery has been added.
- Guidance on correcting errors in Confirmation of Permanent Residence (COPR) or landing documents.

Dental Care (Pg. 23): We added details on the Canadian Dental Care Plan for permanent residents and IFHP-covered dental services.

We encourage CGs and cosponsors to review these resources and share feedback to help us improve them further. Thank you for supporting newcomers in their settlement journey!

Jubilee Year: Aid Christian Refugees

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We are currently seeking new CGs to help resettle these vulnerable refugee families. In this Jubilee Year of Hope, forming or joining a CG can be a powerful way for your parish to respond to the call of Pope Francis, who, in the Bull of Indiction for the Jubilee Year, encouraged Christians to be beacons of hope and welcome for the stranger. It is also a meaningful way to answer Cardinal Leo's invitation for parishes to be signs of hope that reach out to those in need—especially refugees and migrants.

The families currently awaiting your help are Pakistani Christian refugee families, which we sponsored during our Mission Trip to Thailand. These families fled persecution and violence in their homeland, where Sharia law is strictly enforced. Christians and other religious minorities are often falsely accused of blasphemy—an offense punishable by imprisonment or even death. Many of the families we are working to sponsor have endured these false accusations and faced severe persecution.

With your help, we can bring these families to



Canada—offering them not just safety, but also the freedom to live and practice their Christian faith without fear. This is more than a resettlement effort; it's an act of solidarity with our persecuted brothers and sisters, and a powerful witness of Christian compassion in action.

If your parish feels called to respond to this invitation from Pope Francis, Cardinal Leo, and ultimately Christ Himself—who reminds us, “I was a stranger, and you welcomed Me”—we invite you to contact us at orateducator@archtoronto.org or by calling us at 437.290.9333 to learn more about how your parish can participate in this mission.

Suite of On-Demand Webinars



The Office for Refugees (ORAT) is pleased to share our 2025 on-demand webinar series, designed to support stakeholders, including Cosponsors, Constituent Groups (CGs), and newcomers. These regularly updated webinars cover essential topics such as post-arrival support, financial requirements, and preparing for Month 13. We encourage you and your CGs to explore these pre-recorded sessions, available via the links below, and access corresponding PowerPoint presentations by clicking each session title.

1. [IRCC Processing Time](#)

CGs and cosponsors whose cases are in process (submitted) with Immigration Canada are asked to view this session. Participants learn how to follow up on their refugee sponsorship case; how to check on the status of their case online, and how to update the Canadian Visa Office on any changes to the applicant's file.

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

2. [Budgeting and Finance](#)

This information session provides a detailed review of IRCC's financial support requirements and any adjustments that can be made to the level of financial support to be provided to sponsored newcomers. This information session is designed for groups sponsoring Project Hope cases. It is also helpful for cosponsors to understand their financial budget responsibilities. Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded session. And [here](#) to access ORAT's RAP Calculator and Budget Workbook.

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Country Report: Sudan

Sudan is located in northeastern Africa. It is bordered by Egypt to the north, the Red Sea to the northeast, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, South Sudan to the south, the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west, and Libya to the northwest. Sudan is the third-largest country in Africa and has a diverse landscape that includes deserts, mountains, and fertile plains. The Nile River, one of the world's longest rivers, flows through Sudan from south to north, providing vital water resources for the country. Its strategic location connects North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa and gives it access to important trade routes along the Red Sea coast.



Geo-history: The geo-history of Sudan is deeply connected to its location in northeastern Africa along the Nile River. Ancient Sudan was home to several powerful civilizations, including the Kingdom of Kush, which ruled parts of Egypt and Sudan for centuries. The area was known for its rich natural resources, especially gold, and its strategic location along trade routes linking Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

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Public Policy for Sudanese Refugees

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has launched a temporary public policy, effective April 30, 2025, to support Sudanese refugees fleeing the ongoing crisis. Through this initiative, Groups of Five (G5) and Community Sponsors (CS) can sponsor up to 160 Sudanese refugees without the need for a formal refugee status document. Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), such as ORAT, are also eligible to participate, with a limited number of additional spots allocated to them beyond those available to G5 and CS sponsors. In response, ORAT invited cosponsors in the Greater Toronto Area to submit Expressions of Interest by April 8, 2025. The registration period is now closed, and we are currently awaiting confirmation from IRCC regarding the number of spots assigned to ORAT. Further updates and next steps will be shared as soon as this information becomes available.

Thanking Our Volunteers

During Volunteer Appreciation Week, we joyfully honour Sr. Juvenia for her years of devoted volunteer service and Sr. Keran for her enthusiastic contribution as a new volunteer. We also extend heartfelt gratitude to all volunteers who have faithfully supported our team in helping refugees, radiating Christ's love through their unwavering commitment.

Your generous gift of time and talent flows like "rivers of living water" (John 7:38), bringing hope and healing to those we serve. Your impact is truly profound, and we are blessed by your presence.



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Country Report: Sudan

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Sudan's geography, with the Nile running through it, allowed early civilizations to develop agriculture, trade, and cultural exchange.

Throughout history, Sudan's location made it a meeting point for African, Arab, and Mediterranean cultures. It was later influenced by the spread of Islam in the 7th century and became part of several Islamic kingdoms. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Sudan was colonized by the British and Egyptians, forming the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Sudan gained independence in 1956, but its diverse geography and mix of cultures, religions, and ethnic groups have contributed to both its rich heritage and ongoing conflicts, including the split with South Sudan in 2011.

Religious Affiliation: The majority of the population in Sudan is Muslim, with Islam being the dominant religion, especially in the northern and central regions of the country. Most Sudanese Muslims follow Sunni Islam, and



Islamic traditions and laws play a significant role in the country's culture and government. There are also small Christian and traditional African religious communities, mainly in the southern regions and among certain ethnic groups.

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3. [Pre-Arrival Training](#)

This session is intended for cosponsors and CGs preparing to welcome and journey with their sponsored refugee family. The webinar session provides an excellent 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.

4. [Welcome Orientation](#)

This is a mandatory orientation session for all sponsored refugees who have arrived in Canada through ORAT. In this session, newcomers are oriented about their legal status in Canada, government issued documents that they need to obtain, and government settlement services that they can access, plus financial and non-financial supports their sponsors are expected to provide them, including newcomer rights and responsibilities, etc. 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.

5. [Preparing for Month 13](#)

Preparing for the end of the sponsorship year (Month 13) is critical for all newcomer(s). This presentation is intended to guide sponsors to begin preparing newcomer(s) for the end of their sponsorship period before the end of month 12. Sponsors need to meet with the newcomer(s) before the sponsorship period concludes and to prepare the newcomer(s) for the transition to the post-sponsorship period. Please click [here](#) to view the pre-recorded session



Country Report: Sudan

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However, after the secession of South Sudan in 2011, where many Christians and followers of traditional African religions lived, Sudan became even more religiously homogenous with Islam as the main faith practiced by most of its citizens.

Refugee Outflow: Sudan has been a major country of origin for refugee outflows for several decades, largely due to its long history of civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and political instability. The First and Second Sudanese Civil Wars, which lasted for several decades until 2005, forced millions of Sudanese to flee their homes. The Darfur conflict, which began in 2003, was another major driver of displacement, as violence between government forces, militias, and rebel groups targeted specific ethnic groups, causing a humanitarian crisis. Refugees from Sudan often sought safety in neighboring countries such as Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Uganda, while others were resettled in Europe, North America, and Australia. The situation worsened again after the secession of South Sudan in 2011, leading to new border tensions and internal conflicts within Sudan.

In recent years, the conflict between Sudan's military forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which erupted in April 2023, triggered another wave of displacement, creating one of the largest refugee crises in Africa. Civilians have fled the fighting in Khartoum and other regions, escaping violence, persecution, food shortages, and the breakdown of essential services. The majority of these refugees continue to face difficult living conditions in camps or urban settings in host countries. Sudan's ongoing instability, combined with economic collapse and humanitarian crises, has made it one of the top refugee-producing countries in the world, with millions of Sudanese people living

as refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Sudan as a host country of refugees: Despite facing its own internal challenges, Sudan has also served as a host country for refugees from neighboring nations for many years. Due to its geographic location in northeastern Africa, Sudan has received large numbers of refugees fleeing conflicts and crises in countries like South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, and the Central African Republic. Many of these refugees arrive seeking safety from war, violence, and persecution in their home countries. Sudan has hosted one of Africa's largest refugee populations, with many living in camps or urban areas, especially in eastern Sudan and near the South Sudanese border.

Sudan's role as a host country has put additional pressure on its already struggling economy and limited resources. Refugees in Sudan often face difficult living conditions, limited access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. Despite these challenges, Sudan has continued to offer asylum to those in need, often with the support of international organizations like the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). However, the ongoing conflict within Sudan has also impacted the safety and well-being of both refugees and host communities, making humanitarian assistance essential for their survival.

ORAT's Support: ORAT has submitted sponsorship applications for 68 Sudanese refugees. To date, 46 of these refugees have successfully arrived in Canada, while applications for 16 individuals remain in process with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The remaining applicants have been able to access other durable solutions outside of Canada.

Volunteer Testimony: Sr. Juvenia Augusto



Hello everyone! My name is Juvenia Bire Augusto, a Missionary Sister of the Precious Blood (CPS). I have been volunteering with the Office for Refugees Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT) since the end of 2022, and it continues to be an incredibly meaningful and enriching experience.

I've had the privilege of working closely with staff from various departments, each of whom has generously shared their knowledge and guidance, allowing me to gain insight into the complexities of refugee services and the vital role ORAT plays in supporting newcomers to Canada.

Through this experience, I have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges refugees face, which has further motivated me to continue working toward supporting those in need.

I am thankful for the inclusive and welcoming environment at ORAT, which has made volunteering not only impactful but truly fulfilling, and I will always be grateful for the opportunity to contribute to such an important cause, and to be part of an organization that places compassion, dignity, and respect at the heart of its mission.

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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