



Canadian Aid to Persecuted Christians

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CAPC

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Standing Committee on Citizenship & Immigration
House of Commons
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Refugees Backlog, Wait Time & Sponsorship to Canada

I'm writing to share the plights of Pakistani and Afghan refugees. Thank you for providing us an opportunity to express my fears, concerns and recommendations on the refugees' backlog and application processing time involving countries such as Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Nepal. Christians from Pakistan leave the country after facing accusation from Blasphemy Laws.

The draconian blasphemy laws are the problematic and controversial laws behind the persecution of Christians in Pakistan. Article 295C Penal Code of Pakistan defines, The Pakistan Penal Code, the main criminal code of Pakistan, penalized blasphemy against any recognized religion, providing penalties ranging from a fine to death.

According to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, around 80 people are known to be incarcerated in Pakistan on blasphemy charges. Half of those imprisoned are facing life in prison or the death penalty. From 1967 to 2014, over 1,300 people were accused of blasphemy, with Muslims constituting most of those accused. According to human rights groups, blasphemy laws in Pakistan have been exploited not only for persecuting minorities but also for settling personal rivalries, often against other Muslims. Though no judicial execution has been carried out under these laws, many of those accused, their lawyers and any persons speaking against blasphemy laws and proceedings have become victims of lynching or street vigilantism in Pakistan. There have been reports about more than 75 people were murdered for blasphemy between 1987 to 2021, including a mob attacking 20 Churches and 7 Christian locations. Several pastors were assassinated in a targeted killing and two high profile political dignities,

Pakistani refugees escape this suffering by fleeing to nearby countries, that have lenient visas policies. These families claim asylum through UNHCR to seek refugee status. But unfortunately, Thailand does not recognize the United Nations Human Rights (UNHCR) declaration. Thai police arrest asylum seekers and lock them in detention centers and also fine them. The Pakistani asylum seekers remain in limbo, they leave everything behind in the country of origin and stranded, facing severe challenges and difficulties in asylum seeking countries because

- They have no source of income in asylum seeking countries. They are not allowed to work.
- A family of 4 to 6 live in a small rented room, without boundary of the bathroom and kitchen.
- Sleeping on floor, lack of nutrition diet or skipping meals because simply they cannot afford it.
- Can't afford medical facilities, in some cases a family head died because he could not afford surgery, medical checkups and medication.
- No proper schooling for children and distance education for adults

The UNHCR officers usually do not provide refugee status to Pakistani Christians. The asylum seekers claim that the UNHCR interview officers are biased and discriminate against them. Their interviews are misinterpreted. These issues had been raised by the refugees' families living in above mentioned countries. Here are some recent stories.

Abbu Dhabi, UNHCR denied taking asylum seeker case application of Prof. Masih's first hand. Masih faced physical attack and escaped targeting killing attempt in Peshawar. He flew to U.A.E, Masih tried two times to file his case by himself but he failed. Then he took a local Church leader with him to get an appointment to briefly share his statement and submit an asylum application.

Azerbaijan, Bako. The interior ministry works on the behalf of UNHCR for taking asylum seekers application. George, escaped religious persecution and landed in Baku to claim asylum through UNHCR. The interior ministry denied taking his case first hand after George's visits to the office. The ministry accepted his application for review. How can you expect that George's application would be reviewed if it was hard to file an application.

Thailand, the police raided early in the morning and smashed the entrance doors, rushed into the apartment to arrested those without valid visas. The refugee cannot afford paying for visa renewal every three months.

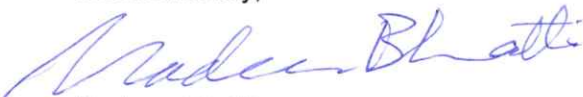
Malaysia, the police arrested a Pakistani asylum seeker while he went to the mall. The police officer took away money in his wallet and released him after three hours. In another incident, a children's school van driver raped an 8 years refugee girl. The school for refugees is funded by United Nations.

Here are some suggestions and requests for solutions to the refugee crises.

- Canadian Aid to Persecuted Christians requests the Canadian Government to open the doors for suffering Pakistani Christians that have left their homeland to seek peace. The Canadian government welcomed 25000 refugees from Syrian in 2015 and promised to bring 40000 refugees from Afghanistan in 2021. Our organization will assist these Pakistani refugees to resettle in Canada.
- The Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) and Private sponsoring groups wait years before the sponsored family arrives in Canada. There is a huge backlog of 8 to 10 years wait time before the refugee families arrive to Canada. IRCC must take measures to expedite in all possible ways the processing of applications, given the applied context in which Canadians have been galvanized to respond to this population in particular. Further, in the spirit of fairness and non-discrimination, the Immigration department must expedite processing for Pakistani applications in parallel to all, other refugee groups. It is neither right nor fair for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan to wait since September 2020.
- Canadian Immigration to reduce application process time to one year and ask UNHCR, Country Heads and refugees related agencies ensuring human rights, dignity, safety and security of the refugees, in these above-mentioned countries.

I, ask the committee to consider our recommendations in whatever manner possible for the betterment of these refugees who are helpless to help themselves.

Most Sincerely,



Nadeem Bhatti
President