



World Day of Migrants & Refugees



The Archdiocese of Toronto together with the parish community of St. Catherine of Siena invites you to a special Mass on the occasion of the 110th

World Day of Migrants *and* Refugees

Sunday, September 29, 2024
11:30 AM

at St. Catherine of Siena Parish
2340 Hurontario St, Mississauga, Ontario

Celebrant & Homilist:
Most Reverend Ivan Camilleri

Co-Celebrant:
Reverend Jose Gabriel Forero Martinez c.s.

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

"You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."
LEVITICUS 19:34



The theme selected by His Holiness Pope Francis for the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees is "God Walks with His People." To read Pope Francis' complete message click [here](#).

The Archdiocese of Toronto together with the parish community of St. Catherine of Siena will commemorate this day with a Mass on Sunday, September 29, 2024, at 11:30 AM. Mass will be celebrated at St. Catherine of Siena Church, which is located at 2340 Hurontario Street in Mississauga. Bishop Ivan Camilleri will preside and deliver the homily.

You can access a digital copy of the event poster by clicking [here](#).

All are warmly invited to attend.

Parishes are invited to mark this day. A few suggested activities are offered for consideration, including:

1. Referring to the day and incorporating prayers for migrants & refugees in the Prayers of the Faithful.
2. Acknowledging any refugee families that the parish has sponsored in recent years. and,
3. Recognizing the efforts of the parish refugee committee in supporting refugees in need.

Let us pray for all those who suffer as migrants and refugees.

We Ignore Religious Freedom 'at our own Peril'

Source: Susan Korah (The Catholic Register)

Different kinds of persecution are top of mind in political and media circles, but what receives little attention is Christian persecution, said John McKay.

The Liberal MP, commenting on the 2024 edition of World Watch List, a report produced by Open Doors, an international NGO that supports oppressed Christians, said it's a topic that is largely under the radar.

"Freedom of religion or belief gets short shrift, even though

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We Ignore Religious Freedom ‘at our own Peril’

Source: Susan Korah (The Catholic Register)

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it’s a fundamental human right,” McKay told The Catholic Register. “We talk a lot about discrimination based on race,

ethnicity and other factors, but there isn’t much focus on religious discrimination.”

The report highlights the rising trend that sees 365 million Christians around the world oppressed and often targeted for discrimination and violence for their religious beliefs.

One section sheds light on the double impact of persecution on Christian women who are attacked both for their religion and their gender. It states that during attacks on Christian communities, women and girls are raped or sexually assaulted, while husbands and boys are killed. This happens in many sub-Saharan African countries but also in the Middle East and Asia, in particular, Myanmar.

McKay, who co-hosted the report’s launch in parliament with Conservative MP Kelly Block, noted there is a tendency to neglect Christian persecution.

“Western nations live in a post-Christian culture and there is less personal interest in Christian persecution, so it goes under the radar and is ignored,” he said. “We are more concerned about other religions than Christianity.”

McKay and Block called for more action by the Canadian government to combat global Christian persecution.

“We ignore religious freedom at our own peril,” McKay said. “An example would be the Russia-Ukraine war. If we don’t understand the religious dimension, we are more apt to make policy mistakes.”

Block and McKay called for the restoration of the office of Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, held by Rev. Andrew Bennett from 2013 to 2016. It was abolished by the Liberal government in 2016. The ambassador had an important role and was mandated to give informed advice to the government on how to formulate foreign policy by viewing it through a freedom of religion or belief lens, said McKay.

Block said the Conservative Party’s policy declaration statement calls for the restoration of the Office of Religious Freedom.

“The findings of World Watch List 2024 are grim,” emphasized Gary Stagg, executive director of Open Doors, which promotes freedom of religion or belief in more than 70 nations. “Global Christian persecution is on the rise, with growing attacks on churches in China, India, Nigeria, Nicaragua, Ethiopia and sub-Saharan Africa.”

The report states that the number of attacks on churches and other public Christian properties was “an astonishing 14,129” during the reporting period.

“Open Doors only records verifiable incidents,” Stagg said. “So, these numbers are just the tip of the iceberg. About 365 million Christians around the world are experiencing some form of persecution.

“We are building something in Canada towards helping persecuted minorities. But we need to do more to address Christian persecution.”

The 2024 National SAH Conference



Each year, Immigration Canada hosts a meeting with Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) across Canada. This annual SAH Conference provides sponsors an opportunity to engage with representatives from Immigration Canada to discuss matters related to resettlement of refugees in Canada with the goal of strengthening Canada’s refugee sponsorship program.

Sponsors will network, receive program information updates from Immigration Canada and share their concerns. This enables the exchange of ideas, knowledge and resources, while receiving training to solve existing refugee program challenges.

The 2024 National SAH Conference will be held in Toronto from Wednesday October 2, 2024, to Friday October 4, 2024.

Country Report: The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The Democratic Republic of Congo, also known as Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Zaire, Congo DR, DR Congo, DRC, or simply either Congo or the Congo, is a country in Central Africa bounded to the north by the Central African Republic and South Sudan; to the east by Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania; to the southeast by Zambia; and to the southwest by Angola. To the west are the country's short Atlantic coastline, the Angolan exclave of Cabinda, and Congo (Brazzaville). By land area, the DRC is the second-largest country in Africa and the 11th-largest in the world.



Geo-historical context: The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has a complex and turbulent history shaped by colonization, independence struggles, and ongoing conflicts. Colonized initially by Belgium under King Leopold II in the late 19th century, the region was exploited for its abundant natural resources, particularly rubber and minerals, leading to widespread abuse and suffering among the Congolese population. Independence in 1960 marked a hopeful but tumultuous period, with Patrice Lumumba becoming the first democratically elected Prime Minister. However, political instability and interference from external powers, including the assassination of Lumumba, plunged the country into chaos. Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorship from 1965 to 1997 further exacerbated corruption and economic decline, despite the country's vast wealth in minerals like copper, cobalt, and diamonds. The aftermath of Mobutu's rule saw regional conflicts and civil wars, contributing to ongoing instability and humanitarian crises, despite efforts towards democratic reform and peace agreements in recent decades.

Following Mobutu's ousting in 1997 by rebel forces backed by Rwanda and Uganda, Laurent-Désiré Kabila came to power,

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Processing Information in Turkey

Source: IRCC Regional Processing Information

The following is an excerpt from Immigration Canada's recent Regional Information Report related to Turkey.

Interview: Interviews are conducted in-person at the embassy in Ankara, with the assistance of the International Organization of Migration (IOM), which provides scheduling, transportation (including securing travel permits), and housing to refugees.

Medical Assessment: IOM conducts medical exams, and the process is smooth with no issues.

Biometric Collection: Biometrics are collected at the embassy. IRCC are conducting a pilot to determine whether they can effectively use the Visa Application Centre (VAC) instead. The VAC requires advance notice, which can make coordination challenging.

Exit Permits: Exit permit issuance is managed by IOM and UNHCR. The process is straightforward in Turkey, and there are rarely any issues.

Topics of Concern: The Government is very involved in the refugee response from registration through status determination and resettlement. This adds a layer of operational complexity contributing to delays between visa issuance and travel to Canada. An increase in detentions has been noted, particularly linked to refugees who are out of status.

Applicants should not approach Turkish authorities to obtain exit permits unless instructed to do so. Turkey has an interest in retaining highly skilled Syrian refugees, which means that exit permits for those with higher levels of educations may be denied.

The Ankara office has open channels of communication with authorities which has allowed for some exceptions based on vulnerability or special individual circumstances.

Outreach Activities: IRCC is working diligently at maintaining close ties with Turkish authorities who have been largely amenable to facilitating Canadian refugee resettlement efforts, particularly with respect to urgent efforts in the face of the devastating earthquakes that have affected parts of South-eastern Turkey, where many refugees resided.

Country Report: DRC

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renaming the country and promising change. However, Kabila's rule was marred by the Second Congo War (1998-2003), involving multiple African countries and rebel groups, and resulting in millions of deaths and ongoing instability. Joseph Kabila succeeded his father in 2001 and oversaw a transitional government, leading to democratic elections but continued conflict in the eastern provinces. Despite international peacekeeping efforts and political agreements, the DRC continues to grapple with internal strife, regional power struggles, and challenges to governance, highlighting the complex and enduring geo-political dynamics shaping its history.

Religious Affiliation: The DRC is predominantly Christian, with Catholicism being the largest denomination followed by Protestantism. Traditional African religions also hold significant influence, particularly in rural areas, where practices often blend with Christian beliefs. Islam is a minority religion primarily concentrated in the northeast regions bordering countries with Muslim-majority populations. The religious landscape reflects a diverse mix of beliefs and practices, contributing to the cultural and social fabric of the nation amidst its socio-political challenges.

Refugee Outflow: The DRC has been a major source of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to decades of conflict, violence, and instability. Ongoing armed conflicts in the eastern provinces, driven by ethnic tensions, competition over natural resources, and militia activities, have displaced millions within the country and led to significant outflows of refugees to neighboring countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Angola.

One of the primary socio-political challenges is governance and political instability. Weak institutions, corruption, and a history of authoritarian rule have undermined democratic processes and governance structures. This has led to a lack of accountability, unequal distribution of resources, and limited access to basic services for many Congolese citizens.

Ethnic tensions and regional divisions also pose significant challenges in the DRC. The country is ethnically diverse,

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My name is Marina Vivar-Dy, a parishioner and volunteer at St. Martin of Tours Parish in Mississauga, Ontario. Over the years, I've had the privilege of being involved in various volunteer organizations within our parish community. In 2021, our Pastor, Fr. Gijo Muthanattu, informed the Finance Committee, of which I am a member, about an upcoming presentation by representatives from the Archdiocese of Toronto's Office of Refugees (ORAT).

On November 16, 2021, Sr. Noemi Silva and Luciano Moro from ORAT visited our parish to discuss Project Hope, an initiative aimed at resettling refugees, particularly those facing persecution due to their religious beliefs (i.e., Christians). During their presentation, we learned about a family from Pakistan who had been approved and granted refugee status by the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Moved by their plight, our Pastor, Fr. Gijo, generously agreed to sponsor this family, appointing me to lead the Refugee Committee.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, our team of five swiftly mobilized to handle various aspects such as budgeting, administration, resource allocation, and organization. With the invaluable guidance and support from ORAT, Deacon Rudy, and Project Hope, we diligently completed the required documentation and liaised with relevant organizations to facilitate the family's settlement in Canada.

After months of meticulous planning and coordination, February 9, 2022, marked a joyous occasion as the family finally arrived in Canada. Alongside Fr. Gijo and Enzo Baldan, a fellow committee member, I had the honor of welcoming them and accompanying them to their new home. Our commitment to the family did not end with their arrival. We provided ongoing assistance, guidance, and support, ensuring their seamless integration into Canadian society.

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Country Report: DRC

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with hundreds of ethnic groups, and historical grievances have fueled inter-ethnic conflicts. Competition over land, political representation, and access to resources exacerbates these tensions, leading to sporadic violence and displacement of populations, particularly in the eastern provinces.

One of the main drivers is the longstanding armed conflicts, particularly in the eastern provinces such as North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri. These conflicts involve a multitude of armed groups vying for control over lucrative natural resources like minerals, timber, and agricultural land. The competition for resources often leads to violence against civilians, forced displacement, and widespread human rights abuses.

Human rights abuses, including widespread reports of sexual violence, child recruitment by armed groups, and impunity for perpetrators, also remain critical issues in the DRC. Efforts to promote human rights and ensure justice for victims are often undermined by insecurity, weak rule of law, and limited capacity of the justice system to address these challenges effectively.

These multifaceted challenges have created a protracted humanitarian crisis in the DRC, with millions of people internally displaced and hundreds of thousands seeking refuge in neighboring countries. The humanitarian response led by international organizations like UNHCR and humanitarian NGOs aims to provide lifesaving assistance, protection, and support to affected populations, but sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis require addressing the underlying causes of conflict, promoting peacebuilding efforts, strengthening governance, and enhancing economic opportunities for all Congolese citizens.

ORAT's Support: ORAT has submitted applications to sponsor 69 refugees from the DRC. Currently, 40 refugees have successfully arrived in Canada, with an additional 28 refugees in various stages of processing. One application was withdrawn during the process. Approximately 30% of these refugees were identified and selected during ORAT's mission trips to Ghana. Another 16% were referred to us and receive financial support from the Archdiocese in Bangkok, Thailand, and through Project Hope funds, similar to our other mission trip cases.

Story of a Parish Refugee Committee

St. Martin of Tours, Mississauga

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From arranging medical appointments for their son to assisting with government forms and helping them navigate the nuances of Canadian life, we remained steadfast in our dedication.

Despite the challenges we encountered along the way, our perseverance paid off. Today, I am pleased to share that the family is thriving—they are settled, employed, and making meaningful contributions to the Canadian community.

In times of adversity, we drew inspiration from Psalm 18:6, "In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears."

Marina Vivar-Dy

Internship – Canada Summer Jobs

Written by Ayo Solaja



Hello everyone! My name is Ayo Solaja, and I am so happy to be working with ORAT this summer. As an Administrative Assistant Summer Student, I am working with the Case Processing team to help assess cases for submission to Immigration

Canada. I have years of experience working on immigration applications, and in my last role I was a Legal Research Analyst. I have a bachelor's degree in legal studies and business, and I will start attending the University of Toronto's law school in August.

I have already learned so much about refugee resettlement since I started working with ORAT in May. The ORAT team is dedicated and thorough in their amazing efforts to help refugees find a new home in Canada. I look forward to contributing to this great cause as a summer student.

Volunteer Opportunities at ORAT

Our work as a refugee sponsor is not possible without the help of many dedicated volunteers who assist us with various tasks, including data entry & analysis, research, scanning & electronic filing of case forms, and development of refugee profiles. In addition to assisting us in ministering to those who suffer as refugees, volunteers at ORAT develop useful skills.

We are currently in need of volunteers to assist us in this ministry. If you are interested in becoming part of our volunteer team, please contact us at: oratrefugeeoffice@archtoronto.org



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