



Refugee Sponsorship Newsletter

If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 1 John 4:11

World Refugee Day

Is celebrated on June 20th each year with the goal of increasing the public's awareness of the challenges facing refugees and encouraging their involvement in solutions. It also highlights the continuing necessity for the international community to support the United Nations working through the UNHCR to promote resettlement.

The UNHCR serves as the 'guardian' of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. According to the legislation, States are expected to cooperate with the UNHCR as it works to ensure the rights of refugees are respected and protected. The core principle is non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This is now considered a rule of customary international law. Thailand and Malaysia are not signatories to this Convention and are dangerous asylum countries for refugees.

Canada's Private Refugee Sponsorship Program

Since its inception in the late 1970's, Canada's unique program, has become internationally recognized for its engagement of citizens in providing resettlement opportunities for refugees. This government program allows City of Refuge to provide assistance to Christian refugees who often have no other hope of finding safety.

The annual World Watch List 2016, published by the Open Doors International, highlighted the 50 countries where, according to its global survey, it is most difficult to live as a Christian [a ranking of 1 indicated "Extreme levels of persecution" down to 50 as "High levels of persecution"]. North Korea #1, Iraq #2, Eritrea #3, Afghanistan #4. Syria #5 and Pakistan #6.

Due to the largest refugee movement since World War II, Canadians have focused their assistance on Syrian refugees. Syrians and Iraqis continue to flee to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey in record numbers and these countries are struggling to host millions of refugees.

City of Refuge received several referrals of Syrian and Iraqi Christians from Evangelical churches in Beirut who are connected with Middle East Reformed Fellowship. These churches are reaching out to provide assistance to refugees in their area. Last year we matched 6 of their referred families with a sponsor and hopefully they will begin arriving within the next 3 - 6 months. We still have 8 Syrian or Iraqi families who are praying God will provide them with a sponsor.

Every month 4,000 Eritreans flee their homeland to escape mandatory lifetime military conscription, poverty or religious persecution. It is estimated that 9% of Eritrea's population has fled the country due to its oppressive regime. Many Pentecostal Eritreans have requested our assistance, but until recently we did not have an opportunity to sponsor them. This year, Immigration processing changes has created new opportunities to sponsor Eritreans.

Many of the requests received in the past year came from Pakistani Christians who fled to Thailand to escape persecution and allegations of blasphemy. These charges can stem for a wide range of reasons, such as professional jealousy, advocating for the rights of Christians, refusing a marriage proposal, promoting inter faith cooperation, or conversion to name only a few. The laws in Pakistan do not offer effective protection to Christians falsely accused of blasphemy. Death threats and vigilante justice are a very real and constant danger and in some cases, caused people to flee with their extended families.

Pakistani's flee to Thailand because they are not required to have a visa, making travel relatively easy. However they have no legal protection in Thailand because it has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. Pakistani Christians are being caught by the Thai authorities as they recently intensified their efforts to locate illegal immigrants suspected of terrorism. The authorities routinely raid apartment buildings suspected of housing refugees, arresting and detaining them indefinitely under terrible living conditions.

We cannot offer the opportunity of resettlement to every refugee requesting our assistance. However we can respond to let them know Christians are aware of their situation and

praying for them. We can encourage them to continue placing their hope and trust in God's plan for their lives.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4

2016 Allocations

In May, City of Refuge received 91 spaces from Immigration, Refugee & Citizenship Canada which will allow us to continue offering hope for resettlement to refugees. Interested churches requiring additional information before making a decision to sponsor should call the Coordinator for access to various online resources.

Providing settlement assistance and mentoring a newcomer can be challenging but also a very rewarding experience for the whole congregation.

If your church is interested in sponsoring a Christian refugee, please review the attached list of short profiles for refugees from 4 of the top 6 countries listed by World Watch as most hostile to Christians. Contact the Coordinator Heddie Driegen at refugee.efrc@msn.com for further information.

New Staff!

Thankfully, the interest in sponsorships continues to grow within the Reformed Churches! To respond to the many new requests from churches as well as refugees, City of Refuge is pleased to have Lieneke Stiksma as an Assistant Coordinator. For the past 18 months Lieneke has served as a City of Refuge committee member and is passionate about serving refugees in her new role.

Thank You from a sponsored Pakistani, who's family is imprisoned!

Thanks be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for his intervention in our situation. Our thanks go to our brothers and sisters in Canada who have intervened on our behalf and continue to pray for us. We are so thankful our application has been sent to the Visa office. My family is relieved and happy to hear this good news, especially my wife who is having a most difficult time in detention. Please continue to pray for us and for my wife that we may continue to be strong and persevere. In thanks to our faithful God. Samson

The Lord has done great things . . .



The Khalil family arrived in BC in January



Billy's family arrived in BC in June

When are they coming?

The most frequently asked question! Arrivals of Syrians and Iraqis has slowed since March due to reduced staffing levels in the Visa offices. We are praying 6 Syrian and 1 Iraqi family will arrive in Canada before the end of the summer.

Your Gifts Make a Difference!

Through your generous support, refugees are finding hope and the help they need to rebuild their lives with dignity. Please make your cheques payable to Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, writing City of Refuge in the memo line. Send to James VanderZwan, 26829 33B Ave., Aldergrove, BC V4W 3G8

Syrian Refugees

#1998. Beirut (5) Bahieje is a 37 years old divorced mother with 2 sons ages 19 & 15 and an 18 year old daughter; they fled to Beirut in Oct 2013 to escape the bombing and kidnapping threats. They were members of the Assyrian Church in Syria but became Evangelical believers in Beirut and were referred by their Lebanese pastor. Bahieje has manicure and pedicure work experience.

#2006. Beirut (4) Jumaa is 42 and his wife is 36, they have 2 sons, 13 & 8 years old. They fled to Beirut in 2012 to escape the bombing in Aleppo. They are from an Islamic background but became believers and were baptised in Beirut. They faithfully and joyfully attend the Nazarene Evangelical Church, in spite of the hardships and loss of their families, who have cursed and threatened them. He is a tailor and she has worked as an elementary teacher.

#2010. Beirut (5) Sawsan is 30 and her husband is 34 and they have 12 year old twin daughter and son as well as a 5 year old daughter. They fled in 2013 to escape the war. They were formerly Sunni but came to know the joy of serving the Lord through a local Christian organization "The Hope of the Nation" and were recently baptised in the Evangelical Baptist church. He is a professional machinist of jeans

#2011. Beirut (6) Nidal is 42 and his wife is 43, they have 2 sons, ages 15 & 11 and 2 daughters, ages 13 & 8. They came to Beirut in 2012 to escape the war. He had asked his parents questions about who Christ Isa was but was told not to blaspheme. In Beirut he was given a New Testament to read and upon reading John 11, God graciously opened his eyes to who Jesus is, the Son of God who came to save all those who would believe on Him. He is a professional painter and is sending his children to school.

#2012. Beirut (2) Salwa is a 50 year old widow with a 13 year old son. Her husband was killed in the war and her house blown up, they fled in 2013. She had 2 years of university education and has worked as a teacher in Syria and as a chef and housemaid in Lebanon. She is from a Druze background in Syria and late in 2014 was introduced to the Good News of the gospel through Bible study with her neighbours and was baptised in the First Baptist Church in March 2016. She speaks English.

#2020. Rome (1) Rami is 35 years old and came to Cyprus as a visitor at the beginning of the Syrian war in 2012. He has mechanical engineering experience and speaks English.

2028. Beirut (5) Wassam (36) wife(29), 2 young sons ages 10 & 11 and his mother(55) recently fled to Lebanon to escape the war in Syria. Several years ago Wassam's brother Sam fled to the Netherlands, married a Dutch citizen, became a Dutch national and now has two children. Sam and his wife are immigrating to Milton, Ontario and plan to arrive in July 2017. Ideally a church in the **Greater Toronto Area** would sponsor Wassam and facilitate this family reunion of brothers and their mother. Sam would be an asset to the sponsor since he speaks English, Dutch and Arabic.

Iraqi Refugees

#1996. Beirut (1) Saadi is 52 years old, he fled to Lebanon in April 2014. He became a believer in Iraq and was persecuted for abandoning his Shiite background. He has a Technical diploma in Electricity. He attends Baptist Evangelical Church and is very involved in its outreach ministry. Referral received via MERF.

#2005. Beirut (3) Hasanain is 30 and his wife is 27, they have a 3 year old son. In March 2013 Hasanain when became a believer he lost his job and his family threatened to kill him and his wife. They fled to Beirut in Nov 2014 where they are members of the Nazarene Evangelical Church. He has a technical degree in electrical and she has a BS in Business Administration.

#2009. Beirut (1) Basheer is 37 and he first arrived in Lebanon in 2002 and became a believer and was baptised in 2005. He returned to Baghdad in 2008 to care for his sick mother. For the next 7 years he struggled to find security and freedom to worship in several cities in Iraq. Finally in 2015 he returned to Lebanon to escape the constant persecution and death threats. He lives in the Emmanuel Baptist Church in exchange for helping out, he cannot work or legally stay in Lebanon. He is a master tradesman in Aluminum/glass. referral received via MERF

Pakistani Refugees in Thailand - processed by Canadian Visa office in Singapore-

#1836. (4) Aqeel, wife and 2 children (12 & 15) fled in 2013. He worked with SIGHT International teaching children the Gospel along with ordinary education curriculum. As the popularity of his class grew the Muslim extremist ordered him to stop or 'face dangerous consequences'. Aqeel has a degree in Computer Science and certificate to teach ESL. His wife has a B.Ed and a Special Ed degree.

#1867 (4) Christopher, wife and two sons(10 & 12) fled in 2013. He worked for 20 years as an accountant at the Christian Technical Training Institute Gujranwala. In April 2011 someone burned pages from the Quran and a fundamentalist Muslim leader blamed Christopher's colleague at CTTC and the colleague's son. Both men were arrested and their neighbourhood was filled with police and fundamentalist Muslims eager to wreck havoc, throwing stones and fire balls onto houses and churches. The police raided Christopher's home and arrested him along with three other colleagues. Christopher speaks Urdu, Punjabi and English.

#1896. (3) Raheel, wife and son(1). Raheel has some post secondary education and 6 years experience working as a receptionist at a Medical factory. Fanatical Muslim extremist began targeting Raheel after his brother and sister in law escaped to Thailand because his sister in law was accused of blasphemy. Raheel fled in August 2013 and he was recently arrested and placed in detention by Thai authorities leaving his wife and son without any support. He speaks English. Raheel's brother has been sponsored by a church in BC.

#1923.(5) Asif and wife have 3 (9, 7,2)daughters. Asif is an I.T. professional working with International Christian Non-Governmental Organization which protects the rights of Christians and other minorities in Pakistan. In 2008 he started receiving threatening phone calls,and in March he and his younger brother **Kashif** and brother in law **Faisal** were stopped in a routine police check post, beaten and taken to the police station for further severe torture over the next 3 weeks. In Feb 2013 Asif was again receiving threatening phone calls, he was physically threatened and warned that next time they would kill him and his entire family. The family fled in Nov 2013. He speaks English.

1935. (4) Kashif Asif's brother and sister in law with 2 (3,2) sons

1936.(1) Maream Asif's widowed mother and **1937. (1) Sumaira** sister of Asif

#1925.(2) Arshad and wife fled in July 2014. Arshad is a Pastor of Heavenly Church of Pakistan and secretary of Child Evangelism Fellowship of Pakistan Karachi. They were building a center to teach religious education to Christian children; this was opposed by some extremist who threatened them with death if they did not stop building. The family to move to another area of Pakistan because the police refused to offer protection. Arshad was again threatened by armed extremists who ordered him to stop his Christian religious activities or his family would be killed. A month later the family was again threatened and decided they would not be safe in Pakistan. They all speak English.

#1926. (1) Stanley son of Arshad AND **#1927. (1) Bunita** daughter of Arshad

#1941a (2) Aneel and wife (total of 9 connected family members)

Aneel was Vice President of the Non Governmental Organization - Society of Legal Awareness and Equal Rights whose aim is to provide legal aid to people on the basis of equality. His son Imran has a Master is Computer Sciences and a Bsc in math and Physics and has worked as a teacher. The problems for this family started when SOLAER provided legal aid and protection to a Muslim girl who wanted to divorce her husband. After attending the court hearing, both Imran and his father in law Aneel were berated and beaten, both sustained minor injuries. After the next court date they were again attacked and later learned the husband had issued a Islamic Fatwa (death sentence) against Imran and Aneel which put their whole family in danger. They moved but within weeks they were located by their pursuers, attacked and badly beaten. They have been in Thailand since Oct2013. Imran & Aneel speak English AND **#1940. (3) son Imran**, wife and son age 4 AND **#1941b (2) daughter Noveen** and her daughter age 3 AND **#1941c (1) daughter Anita** AND **#1941d (1) nephew Nafees** age 24.

#1947A (2) Anis and husband. Anis is a nurse and teacher and in Sept 2012 she was falsely accused of insulting Islam and their prophet. An Imam threatened that she and her family would be killed. The police were not willing to assist her, choosing to believe the accusations. The same evening many mullahs and Muslims came to her house to threaten that her daughter would be forced to marry a Muslim and they would be killed if they did not convert to Islam. They fled to her sister's house and later learned the Mullahs had destroyed their home. **#1947B (1) Maryam** (1997-03-09) daughter of Anis

#1954. (5) Babar and his wife have 3 children(8,9 & 12). Babar is an Evangelical Pastor with a double Masters in Political Science and Divinity and his wife has a Masters in Education. Babar's younger brother is also a Pastor whose ministry of healing has changed many people's lives. Some Muslim also received healing and became Christians causing Muslim Extremists to become very angry. In August 2012 Babar's brother was attacked by Muslim clerics who intended to kill him. When this failed they issued a Fatwa against his brother and charged him with death. His brother escaped to Thailand on Sept 14 and on the 16th, the police and many Muslim clerics came to Babar's house demanding that he tell them where his brother was. Babar and his wife were beaten and narrowly escaped being killed, they fled to the home of relatives and learned from neighbours that their home had been damaged and all their possessions burned. They obtained visas and arrived in Thailand Nov 19/12. They both speak English. A British Columbian friend of the family is prepared to contribute monthly financial assistance if they are sponsored.

#1957. (5) Akram and his wife have 3 sons(23,21&15). Akram was a deacon and evangelist in his Pentecostal Church as well as a driver and electrician. In August 2012 the church arranged a seminar in tents and some Muslim men demanded that he shut down the sound system. The men shouted verbal abuse at him and the Christian religion. The next day he was stopped by 3 armed men who pointed a gun at him, beat him and told him that if his church had another program they would kill him and his whole family. He went to the police to report the incident but they refused to do anything. He hired a lawyer and a week later had his first hearing in front of a judge who ordered an investigation. This infuriated the Muslims who shouted in the streets "Akram committed blasphemy. Let's kill him. No trial, no court, no investigation." The family went into hiding because they knew the police would not protect them. They fled to Thailand in July 2013. They speak English.

#1994. (3) Amir (28) and his wife (27) have a 3 year old son. They fled to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia in July 2015 to escape a blasphemy charged against him and his brother Asif as a result of a seminar they had organized in Feb 2013 to promote inter faith harmony between Muslims and Christians. They have been recognized by UNHCR as refugees and are not in immediate danger of being deported. Amir has a BA in Commerce and speaks English.

#2003. (6) Tariq and his wife have 2 daughters ages 18 & 17 and 2 sons ages 15 & 10. Tariq owned a general store and starting in Jan 2013 was forced to pay Islamic extortionist Rs. 5,000 every month, this was increased in July to Rs. 10,000, increased to Rs. 20,000 in December and in March 2014 it was increased to Rs.50,000.on threat of death if he did not pay. When he tried to explain that this was impossible, he was beaten and kicked by several men, his store smashed and he was given 3 days to pay or they would charge him with blasphemy and kill his family. The police took him to the hospital but refused to provide any protection so they fled to Thailand. He and his children speak English.

#2008. (3) Aamir (34) and his wife(31) have a 8 month old son. Aamir fell in love with a Muslim girl, who converted and was baptised in June of 2011 and they were married in Dec 2011. Her family threatened to kill them and asked for the public's assistance to find them so they could be killed. Aamir has a BA in Commerce and his wife has an Arts degree, they both speak English. They were forced to flee to Thailand in May 2013

#2027. (5) Shahbaz is a 44 year old husband and father of 3 daughters (ages 11,10 & 5) who fled from Pakistan to Malaysia in 2013 after receiving threats and being attacked and severely beaten many times by Islamic extremists. Shahbaz had a very successful consultancy office but due to jealousy of his business competitors, he has been charged multiple times with blasphemy. He was then forced to either shut down his business (which he did) or convert to Islam or his daughters would be kidnapped. He has a Masters in Business Administration and speaks English and his wife, Nasreen (age 38), is a teacher. Even in Malaysia he has been attacked and is persecuted and living in constant fear for his family.

Other Refugee Nationalities

#1757. Rome (2) Bereket and his wife are **Eritreans** in their late 30'. During his time in the military he was arrested 3 times and detained for long periods of time for activities related to being a Christian. They fled to Sudan in 2011 where he was recognized as a refugee by the UNHCR. He speaks English has completed high school and works as a carpenter.

#1738. Rome (5) Netsereb and his wife are **Eritreans** and have 3 young children. They fled to **Sudan** to escape persecution as Pentecostal Christians. He speaks English.

#1824. Abu Dhabi (5) Bisrat and his wife have 2 sons ages 7 and 3. His wife was detained and tortured by the military who had come looking for him. They fled from **Eritrea** to **Yemen** in 2011 to escape the life time requirement to serve in the military. She speaks English, they attend an Evangelical Church in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is currently at war with Yemen increasing the danger for this young family.

#1844. Singapore (4) Simon, wife and 2 teenage daughters (18 & 15) fled to Malaysia in March 2011. In **Iran** they had become interested in Christianity and in Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia** they attended a church where they were baptized in Oct/11. Simon has a degree in Urban planning and taught at the University of Ashtian.

#1848. Nairobi (1) Laban is 32 years old in **Kenya**. He was very young when his family fled the genocide in **Rwanda** in 1994. He has managed to obtain a Bachelors degree and has worked as IT support and computer maintenance. He speaks English and French and has been a member of a local Baptist Church in Kenya for the past 15 years. His brother attends Simon Fraser University in BC.

#1864. Singapore (4) Hamid and his wife are have 2 sons (27 & 24). Hamid's interest in Christianity was not tolerated in **Iran**. In 2008 to avoid prosecution, they fled to **Malaysia**. They were baptized in 2010 and are all active members of a local church. Hamid has a B.S in Industrial Administration and speaks English.

#1934. Nairobi (1) Desalegn is **Eritrean** in **Ethiopia** since 1998. With the financial support of his brother in the USA, Desalegn recently earned a Master's degree in Christian Leadership and a 2nd Master's degree in Counselling from Grace Graduate School in collaboration with Vision International University in the USA. As an evangelical Christian it would not be safe for him to return to Eritrea and he cannot remain in Ethiopia. Desalegn requires the use of crutches to walk due to a childhood accident. If sponsored, his brother would provide all the required financial support for his settlement.

#2026 Nairobi (4), Syaviha is a 37 year old journalist from the **Congo** who has faced persecution since 1996. He has been tortured, poisoned, and threatened to be killed many times because of his career and his Christian faith. His wife is also traumatized after being sexually abused by some soldiers who came looking for her husband and couldn't find him. Syaviha speaks 5 languages including English and French and has a degree in Communication. Since 2010 he has been living in **Nairobi** with his wife, Rafiki (age 30) and 2 daughters, ages 3 and 4. They are active members of a local church and have a passion for the work of God. Syaviha accepted Christ as his Savior at age 15 and his wife was saved at age 23.

#2030. Pretoria (8) Julia is **Congolese** widow with 7 children under the age of 16. In 2014 soldiers broke into their home at night, beat and raped her and took away her brother and her husband. Her brother escaped and warned her to flee because they had killed her husband. Her 7 year old daughter has Cerebral Palsy. She fled to **Zimbabwe** where she lives in 3 m x 3 m hut in a refugee camp. Julia has a brother and sister in law in BC who were sponsored in 2012.

Estimated processing times based on current inventories in Visa offices:

Abu Dhabi: people in Yemen 45 months

Beirut: people in Lebanon 9 months

Nairobi: people in Kenya 75 months / people in Ethiopia 71 months / people in Zimbabwe 49 months

Rome: people in Cyprus - 45 months / people in Sudan 57 months

Singapore: people in Malaysia 34 months / people in Thailand 45 months