



## World Day of Migrants & Refugees

Pope Francis urges freedom in his message for this year's World Day of Migrants & Refugees, which is being observed on September 24th. This year's theme is "Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay." Click [here](#) to read Pope Francis' full message.



The Archdiocese of Toronto together with the parish community of Jesus the King Greek Melkite Catholic Church

invites you to a special Mass on the occasion of the 109<sup>th</sup>

### World Day of Migrants *and* Refugees

Sunday, September 24, 2023  
12:00 PM

at the Cathedral of the Transfiguration  
10350 Victoria Square Blvd, Markham

*Celebrant:*  
Monsignor Makarios Wehbi

*Homilist:*  
Bishop John Boissonneau

SHORT PROGRAM 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 Archdiocese of Toronto will mark this event with a special Mass that will take place at the Cathedral of the Transfiguration, located at 10350 Victoria Square Blvd., in Markham. Mass will begin at 12:00PM and will be celebrated by Msgr. Makarios Wehbi. The homilist will be His Excellency, Bishop John Boissonneau, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

Please join us as we pray for all migrants & refugees.

## New CG Partners Needed

Over the years, ORAT has developed a close working relationship with several Christian communities, including Eastern Rite Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches, whose members have been deeply affected by the global refugee crisis. We work with their leadership to assist their members in sponsoring family members who are in need of refugee resettlement.

ORAT is looking to expand the list of church communities to partner with.

If you or someone you know is a member of a Christian community that would benefit from this type of collaboration, we would ask that you bring this to our attention or ask that their leadership contact our office for further information.

Luciano Moro, ORAT's Resettlement Educator & CG Animator is heading up this work and is available to provide further information about this program. Luciano can be reached by email at [orateducator@archtoronto.org](mailto:orateducator@archtoronto.org) or by phone at (437) 290-9333

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## West Doesn't View Religion as Right

By Susan Korah, *The Catholic Register*

An increase in religious persecution can draw a straight line to Western nations that prioritize economic interests over human rights, concludes Aid to the Church in Need's latest religious freedom report. "Persecution worsens and impunity reigns" is the title of the latest report produced by the international pontifical charity. The five words capture the current state of religious freedom (or lack thereof) around the world. Click [here](#) to read the full report.

## Mideast Exodus Continues

By Susan Korah, *The Catholic Register*

Nuri Kino, a Swedish journalist and activist who founded A Demand for Action (ADFA) organization in 2014 to alert the world of the ISIS genocide of Christians, said the time has come to remind the international community again that the situation of Mideast Christians is still fragile.



"ADFA has advocated for the rights of these genocide survivors and followed their progress since the fall of Mosul in 2014 when so many of them fled in terror," said Kino. "Now we are gravely concerned that nine years later their situation has not significantly improved." Click [here](#) to view the full article.

## Turkey's Asylum Procedures

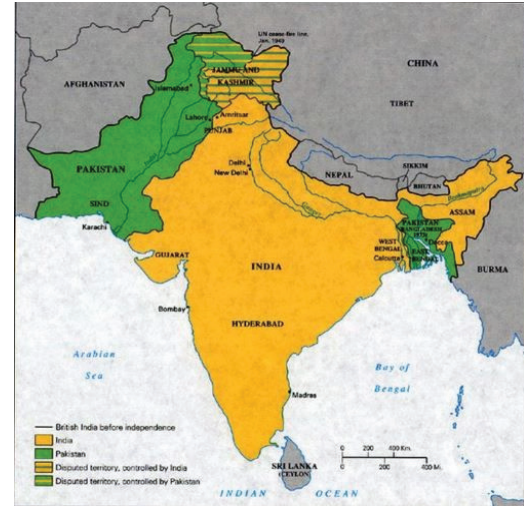
Source: *UNHCR Report*

The State of Turkey is the principal provider of protection in Turkey. Registration with the Turkish authorities is therefore the most important way of securing your rights in Turkey. Registration is an important obligation for foreigners in Turkey as it forms the legal basis for your stay in Turkey and allows you access to public services. Registration protects you against forced return to your country. Click [here](#) to view the full article.

## Pakistan Country Report

Pakistan is located in South Asia, sharing borders with India to the east, Afghanistan and Iran to the west, China to the northeast, and the Arabian Sea to the south.

*History:* The nation of Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947, when after almost two centuries of British rule, from the mid 18th century until the mid 20th century, British India was divided along largely religious lines.



*Minority Religious Persecution:* Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country, and religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and others, have faced discrimination and persecution. Numerous incidents of violence, forced conversion, and targeted attacks on places of worship have been reported. The government has taken steps to protect minority rights, but implementation remains a challenge, and many minorities continue to face social, economic, and legal hurdles.

*Blasphemy Law:* Pakistan's blasphemy laws have been a subject of controversy and international concern. This set of related laws criminalize the act of insulting Islam, the Quran, or the Muslim prophet Muhammad. In practice, they have been misused to target religious minorities and individuals with false accusations, leading to arrests, lengthy trials, and even violent mob attacks. The penalties for blasphemy can be severe, including the death penalty. According to Amnesty International, "charges against Christians or Ahmadis appear to have been brought solely because they are members of these communities, i.e., because of their religious beliefs." and "trials of blasphemy cases are invariably accompanied with agitation by local clergy who interrupt proceedings, shout slogans demanding the death sentence and threaten the defendants with abuse." (Amnesty International, n.d.).

## New ORAT Team Member

Written by Sharice Choi

Hi! My name is Sharice Choi and I am the newest member to the ORAT team. I am thrilled to have this opportunity to share with you a significant chapter in my life journey.



For nearly 8 years, I had been serving as a volunteer at the Hong Kong Society for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (HKSASR). Working closely with the asylum seekers and refugees in Hong Kong, I have witnessed firsthand the resilience and strength of individuals seeking safety and a new beginning. I used to

help the group with their court case applications, manage the weekly playgroup and activities, provide educational supports and advocate for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Hong Kong. My time at HKSASR enriched my understanding of the challenges faced by those fleeing persecution and instilled in me an unwavering dedication to support the refugees. The connections I formed with the refugee community fueled my desire to pursue a Master's Degree in International Immigration & Public Policy, further honing my knowledge in the field.

I've embarked on a new journey to the diverse and welcoming city of Toronto earlier this year. Very fortunately, I was given the opportunity to join the Office for Refugees in late May. In the past few months at ORAT, I have had the privilege of delving into the narratives of individuals who have braved unimaginable challenges in search of safety and their accounts have broadened my horizon. I look forward to using my skills and knowledge to serve the refugee community, to which ORAT has been dedicated; and also continuing my journey in Toronto, contributing to a city and a world that values compassion, diversity, and justice.

# EDUCATION CORNER

## Pakistan Country Report

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“Judges and police are also known to have on their own account, without any discernible objective grounds, altered the charges against members of religious minorities and to have introduced the charge of blasphemy.” (Amnesty International, n.d.)

Refugee Outflow: Due to the serious consequences and the lack of proper safeguards in the application of the blasphemy law, individuals accused of blasphemy often face a real threat to their lives and safety. In such cases, some people choose to flee the country to seek asylum or refuge in other nations where they hope to find safety and protection from persecution.

For Pakistani Christians, many of whom are not able to obtain a travel visa to a western nation where protections exist for asylum seekers, they travel to nearby countries, like Thailand and Malaysia, where no such protections exist. In these countries, once they overstay their visitor visa, they are subject to arrest and lengthy detention.

## Finding a Family Doctor for Newcomers

Written by Simolen Tala-Jumbam



One of the ways in which ORAT follows up with newcomers to ensure their settlement needs are met is through surveys sent out two months after their arrival.

These surveys help us identify gaps in settlement services and address them accordingly. One significant issue that has emerged from the survey responses is the challenge newcomers face in finding a family doctor. This problem is exacerbated by the shortage of primary care physicians in Ontario, Canada. According to Statistics Canada, approximately 1.3 million people in the province currently lack a family physician, a situation that experts believe will continue to impact the healthcare system as a whole.

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## My Journey to Canada with My Son

My name is Faisal, and I am no longer a refugee. My story begins with having to flee the only home I knew in search of a new home where I could live without fear of violence and death. I waited nine long years before being given the chance to begin a new life in Canada. It is during this time as a refugee in a third country, living without basic human rights, I met with ORAT. In 2018 I met Deacon Rudy. I left filled with hope for the first time in many years. My case was put forward through the assistance of ORAT and soon after I was given notice that the Canadian government accepted me as a refugee. All I needed to do was wait three years before I boarded the plane to Canada.



Once I lived a good life in my homeland. I had a good job as a business owner of a grocery store. I was married and had a baby son. There were many family celebrations, meals, and love shared among a large extended family living in the same city. Everything changed with violence and fear as those that shared my family's faith were targeted, often having their homes set on fire and many were killed. It is under these circumstances that I too was targeted, feared for my own life and that of my family. We fled in terror in 2013.

It is during my time as a refugee, living without any rights in Bangkok, Thailand that my sorrow became almost unbearable. My wife and young son were arrested and detained in a detention centre. My wife was pregnant with our daughter, and sick with kidney failure. Medical attention was denied. I lost both my wife and daughter. I thank God, I was able to be reunited with my son. It is after this tragedy that I was connected with ORAT.

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### Finding a Family Doctor for Newcomers

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We understand the gravity of this issue and have compiled steps that can improve the chances of finding a family doctor:

*Ask for Referrals:* Seek recommendations from friends, family, neighbors, or colleagues who have a family doctor. Inquire if their doctor is accepting new patients or if they know of other physicians who are.

*Register with Health Care Connect:* This program can refer you to a local doctor or nurse practitioner who is accepting new patients. To use this service, you need to have OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan) and not be currently registered with an Ontario family healthcare provider. The program is run by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and you can register by filling out an [online form](#) or calling 1-800-445-1822 (TTY 1-866-797-0007).

*Use Online Resources:* Utilize the [Doctor Search](#) feature on the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario website. This search tool helps you find doctors who speak your language or have the specialization you may require.

*Contact Local Clinics and Offices:* Reach out to the [nearest hospital](#) to inquire about their family practice unit. Additionally, call local medical clinics and doctor's offices in your area to check if they are accepting new patients or have a waiting list you can join.

*Seek Help from Settlement Agencies:* Local settlement agencies may have a list of doctors who are accepting new patients or who speak your language. To find assistance, use the "[Services Near Me](#)" feature and search for "settlement services" in your area.

*Be Flexible:* Consider being open to different locations or working hours for the doctor, as finding a family physician in a high-demand area or with specific availability may be more challenging.

*Temporary Clinics:* In certain regions, temporary or mobile clinics might be set up to provide medical services, including the opportunity to register with a family doctor. Keep an eye out for such events in your community.

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## My Journey to Canada with My Son

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This was the first time in many years that I was given hope that I may be able to build a new life. ORAT assisted me with paperwork and information, and it wasn't long before I knew that someday I would be moving to the safety of Canada.

My son and I arrived in the very northwest corner of Canada late in September. We were met at the small airport by a group of excited Canadians who quickly bundled us into winter clothing and took us to our new home. We have experienced so much in our short time here including, snow, skiing, skating, swimming in lakes, beautiful mountains, and good, lovely Canadian people. I have secured employment and recently got my driver's license. My son attended school for the very first time. I am so thankful to have Yukon Cares as part of my extended family and have made lasting friendships in this community.

My life was so difficult, fleeing the violence in my homeland, and then living in secrecy in Bangkok. I am happy now, I have everything I need here. My son is studying in school, and I am beginning my employment journey.

Today I feel like a full member of Canadian society. I have many friends in my new community and I hope that some day I can assist in supporting a new refugee family settling in this community. It is with much gratitude that I thank ORAT for giving us this new life.

# EDUCATION CORNER

## Finding a Family Doctor for Newcomers

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Finding a family doctor might require some patience and persistence, but don't lose hope. Continue exploring different options and remain persistent in your search. While waiting for a family doctor, it is essential to schedule a medical checkup at a walk-in clinic within the first 2-3 months of arrival in Canada. Walk-in clinics provide medical care for people who do not have a family doctor or have one and are unable to reach them. Click [here](#) for a list of walk-in clinics in Toronto.

## The Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

*Excerpt from RSTP's June 2023 Bulletin*

*What is the IFHP?*

The Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) provides limited, temporary coverage of healthcare benefits for specific groups of people in Canada, including sponsored refugees. It is administered by Medavie Blue Cross on behalf of IRCC. In most provinces, newcomers who arrived as sponsored refugees are exempted from the three-month wait period for provincial healthcare coverage. Please check the eligibility requirements with your provincial healthcare dept. While they wait to qualify for provincial healthcare or to receive their provincial health card, newcomers who arrived as sponsored refugees receive healthcare coverage via the IFHP.

*What Type of Coverage Does IFHP Provide? How Long Does It Last?*

After the arrival of the sponsored refugees, IFHP provides two broad categories of coverage:

Basic coverage (until the newcomers are eligible for provincial coverage, to a maximum of 3 months after arrival), including:

- a. Doctor visits
- b. Hospital care
- c. Laboratory, diagnostic and ambulance services

Supplemental coverage (until the end of the sponsorship period—usually 12 months—even if the newcomer qualifies for provincial healthcare), including:

- a. Limited vision care
- b. Urgent dental care
- c. Mental health services
- d. Prescription medications

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## The Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

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IFHP also covers the cost of the pre-departure Immigration Medical Exam (IME) for sponsored refugees.

### *How Do Newcomers Apply For IFHP?*

There is generally no need for sponsored refugees to apply for IFHP. Sponsored refugees are usually provided with an IFHP Certificate of Eligibility by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) upon arrival in Canada at the Port of Entry. Some refugees may also receive their certificate overseas, but where this is the case, they will receive another one on arrival in Canada. Note: It takes two business days from the day the certificate is issued for the eligibility information to be reflected in the Medavie Blue Cross system.

Beneficiaries will not be reimbursed if they pay up-front for a product or service covered by the IFHP. They must request services from a healthcare provider who is registered with Medavie

Blue Cross and who will be able to receive reimbursement for services or products delivered under the IFHP. Beneficiaries must therefore first identify healthcare providers who are registered with Medavie Blue Cross before accessing a service or product. To find a list of IFHP providers registered with Medavie Blue Cross, please click [here](#).

### *Does IFHP Cover Mental Health Services?*

Yes, mental health services provided by physicians and by mental health hospitals is covered under the Basic Coverage. Mental health services provided by clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, or counselling therapists is also covered under the Supplemental Coverage. For more information, click [here](#).

IRCC is piloting the extension of the mental health counselling covered by the IFHP for sponsored Afghan refugees that arrived on or after June 01, 2022. Through this pilot, sponsored Afghan refugees who have undergone an initial assessment for mental health counselling in their first year post-arrival will continue to be covered under the IFHP for counselling sessions and related interpretation services for an additional year, for a total of two full years.

Other resources:

- [IFHP Information Sheet](#)
- [IRCC webpages about IFHP](#)

*What does*

**Interim  
Federal  
Health  
Program**

*cover?*

[iamsick.ca](http://iamsick.ca)



The Office for Refugees is Supported by

**SL ShareLife**



**ORAT**

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