



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
COMMUNITY ACTION.



March 12, 2024

The Honourable Marc Miller, PC, M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6
By email: Marc.Miller@parl.gc.ca

RE: Ensuring Equitable and Fair Temporary Immigration Measures for Humanitarian Crises

Dear Minister Miller,

YWCA Toronto is Ontario's largest multi-service women's association and a steadfast advocate for those we serve, including refugee claimant, non-status, and immigrant women, girls, and gender diverse people. Through our programs and services, we see daily the precarity, struggles, and resilience, of these communities. We are writing today to express our deep concern with measures that have been put in place by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) that indicate inequitable processes for those fleeing conflict, particularly from [Gaza](#) and [Sudan](#), and seeking refuge in Canada.

We echo the concerns raised by our colleagues at the Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), recognizing that the discrepancies in recent humanitarian responses "reflect systemic racism in our immigration system and underscore the need for an effective, equitable and transparent policy framework to guide emergency immigration responses." Regarding humanitarian measures for Gazan and Sudanese people seeking refuge, we are deeply concerned about the stark disparity in the number of temporary visa measures being granted, the financial burden on claimant families, inequitable access to healthcare, and the information required from applicants, amongst other concerns. We urge the government to consider and address the inequitable, restrictive and burdensome IRCC measures outlined below:

- **Restrictive Temporary Visa Measures:** Currently, crisis visa measures have only been extended to 1,000 Gazan applicants and 3,250 Sudanese applicants. These limited numbers are inadequate to meet the respective number of persons fleeing violence in Palestine and Sudan. In response to the war in Ukraine, IRCC's [Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel \(CUAET\)](#) program approved over 960,000 applications and accepted 210,000 Ukrainian nationals. Further, the CUAET program

was extended to any Ukrainian impacted by war and conflict, while, the measures for Palestinians in Gaza and Sudanese people are strictly limited to those with familial connections in Canada. The stark contrast in the responses to each tragedy exposes institutional racism and inequity. We urge IRCC to remove the cap on potential visas and the necessary familial connection for Palestinians and Sudanese people who are seeking refuge in Canada.

- **Financial Burden and Alarming Information Requirements:** The goal of a temporary pathway is to ensure expedited measures are in place for those fleeing violence, crises, and war. Unfortunately, the financial burdens and application requirements for Gazans and Sudanese people are troublingly burdensome. Foremost, the financial burdens faced by Palestinian and Sudanese arrivals are expected to be carried by their family connection in Canada. In contrast, accepted claimants through the CUAET program were provided with financial support in the form of a one-time non-taxable benefit for \$3,000 per adult and \$1,500 per child. Moreover, the government waived settlement fees and provided community support.

In addition to the financial burden faced by Palestinian claimants, we are also concerned by the alarmingly invasive screening requirements of applicants, who are being forced to share social media accounts, details about scars and marks on their bodies, information from every passport ever held, and other information that is unrealistic to acquire after months living in a warzone. Particularly, these requirements put undue additional burdens on caregivers, most frequently mothers, who often take responsibility for the information of their dependents, including children, elderly parents, or people with disabilities.

- **Inequitable Healthcare Access:** Currently, there is [limited health coverage](#) available to Palestinians under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), and many Sudanese nationals with temporary visas are not receiving any health coverage at all. We encourage the government to consider the immense physical, mental, and psychological strain that those fleeing violence face and extend comprehensive health care coverage under the IFHP to all temporary visa residents for the duration of their visas.

In Gaza, [one mother dies every five hours](#), and in Sudan, [a child dies of starvation every two hours](#). [United Nations experts](#) have raised concern over the use of “gender-based violence, including sexual violence as a tool of war to subjugate, terrorize, break and punish women and girls, and as a means of punishing specific communities.” The need for equitable and expedited



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
COMMUNITY ACTION.



pathways for Sudanese and Gazan women, girls, and gender diverse people fleeing violence is urgent.

As a multiservice feminist organization, we know that as we respond to violence and trauma it is imperative to advocate for the rights, freedom and justice of those who experience systemic marginalization.

As a self-proclaimed feminist government, you have the opportunity to enact your values and ensure women, girls, and gender diverse people fleeing violence have the utmost potential to seek safety and refuge in Canada.

As a civil society partner, YWCA Toronto is committed to working with you and your government to ensure the safety and wellbeing of women, girls, and gender diverse people seeking refuge. In this vein, we welcome the opportunity to meet with you to introduce ourselves and discuss potential solutions to address this crisis and others. Please contact Sami Pritchard at [437.286.9627](tel:437.286.9627) or spritchard@ywcatoronto.org to advise us of some potential dates that could work with your schedule.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather M. McGregor".

Heather M. McGregor, C. M.
Chief Executive Officer

CC: Soyoung Park, Assistant Deputy Minister of Asylum and Refugee Resettlement for IRCC