

# NEWSLETTER

# FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

Winter 2024



## FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE AT THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH 2024



### >>> FAREWELL TO SR. SUSAN DONOHUE FCJ

Sr. Susan's term of office as Area Leader for the Americas ended on Jan. 31, 2024. The Board of Directors on behalf of FCJ Refugee Centre staff expressed their thanks to Sr. Susan for her generous support of the Centre throughout her term. She will be missed.



### >>> WELCOME TO SR. JUDITH ROUTIER FCJ

Welcome to the New Area Leader for the FCJs in the Americas Sr. Judith Routier is originally from Jersey, Channel Islands and began her ministry as an FCJ teaching in a primary school in England. She spent 10 years in Sierra Leone, teaching and working for the Kenema Diocese. After the FCJ Society had to leave Sierra Leone, Sr. Judith spent many years in the Philippines training leaders for Basic Ecclesial Communities. Her most recent ministry was as Province Leader of Asia-Australia.





**PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY PAUL CHIANG VISITED THE FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE ALONGSIDE MP JULIE DZEROWICZ TO DISCUSS ISSUES SURROUNDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING, HOUSING, MIGRANT WORKERS, AND OTHER CONCERNS. THEY ALSO REVIEWED THE WORK BEING DONE BY THE FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE TO SUPPORT THOSE IN NEED.**



**WE ARE DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE OF MPP MARIT STILES' VISITING YOUTH PROGRAM DURING ITS MONTHLY FAMILY DINNER AND HER ONGOING SUPPORT.**





# ANTI- HUMAN TRAFFICKING

FCJ Refugee Centre participated at the annual conference on Human Trafficking, hosted by Love 146 at the University of Toronto . The Love146 University of Toronto Student Chapter focuses on the issues of exploitation and sex slavery among youth and young adults (ages 0-25). The FCJ Refugee Centre's team shared their work and organizational perspective on Human Trafficking, discussing the exploitation of migrant workers trafficked to Canada, along with immigration remedies and their limitations.

Another activity the Centre was involved in was the Migrant Labour Conference in Montreal. It was organized by RATTMAQ (a Quebec group dedicated to supporting migrant farmworkers). The event aimed to tackle the exploitation of temporary migrant workers in Quebec and throughout Canada. It served as a platform for advocates, organizations, and workers to discuss challenges and build collaborative strategies.



The AHT team contributed to a panel focused on the obstacles faced by grassroots organizations and groups supporting temporary migrant workers. Tenzin Khentse, Anti-Human Trafficking - Youth Coordinator, drew from his experiences at the Centre to shed light on the difficulties experienced by both workers and the organizations committed to aiding them. The underlying goal of the panel was to foster cooperation in combating the widespread mistreatment of these workers.

The conference also addressed Canada's growing dependence on temporary migrant workers across numerous industries, emphasizing the complexities of providing essential support and advocacy. Participants deepened their understanding of the impact of Canadian immigration policies on this vulnerable workforce. The valuable insights shared by researchers, community groups, and the workers themselves will form the basis for future action plans. The ultimate objective is to establish collaborative strategies and put an end to the exploitation of temporary migrant workers.



# ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING WOMEN'S PROGRAM

The Anti-Human Trafficking Women's Program continues supporting a feminist, trauma-informed approach to addressing systemic barriers faced by migrant women with lived experiences of human trafficking and domestic violence, as well as those at risk of human trafficking. We provide holistic case management, we conduct community outreach and deliver presentations to both partners and survivors/women at risk of trafficking, and we host peer-led, women connection seminars with 5-15 participants per session to provide a safe space to build community, encourage healing, and promote resilience. Most recently, community connection seminars included holiday-themed pottery classes, entrepreneur skills workshops such as Miyuki jewelry making and facial cleansing and massage techniques training, and employment workshops. In the coming months, we are offering more employment workshops, mental health, comfort and consent dialogue opportunities, and arts sessions.

## >>> MIGRANT MOBILE PROGRAM

Our Anti-Human Trafficking team has continued to support migrant workers across the province, and even across the country. Our team has been traveling to rural and remote areas in regions across Ontario to meet with migrant workers, talk about their rights, and raise awareness about exploitation. These cities included Oshawa, Simcoe, Belleville, and London. In addition to information sessions with migrant workers, our team has also been providing training to service providers and other stakeholders such as the Guatemalan embassy where we presented the realities of exploitation in Canada and possible resources for victims. Our team has attended several events held by other organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture and Neighbourhood Organization (TNO) where we provided resources through an information table.

## >>> EVENTS

FCJ Refugee Centre collaborated with the Sisters of St Joseph and Migrante on the Migrant Justice Forum that took place in Edmonton, "Migrant Workers Fight Back! Solutions for Migrant Justice". This event was extremely successful and saw human rights activists in advocate for migrant rights, Union representatives, and Catholic faith-based organizations such as the United Church of Canada meet. We heard powerful testimonies from migrant women about their struggles and the ways they fought back, and we shared successes, challenges, and campaigns across the country. This event showed us that we are not in this fight alone, and that small wins can lead to large wins. FCJ Refugee Centre attended the Migrant Rights Network (MRN) Strategy Meeting held in January where we met with organizations across Canada, who are advocating for migrant justice and Status for All. Throughout the 3 days, we planned exciting new events for the year to push the campaign for regularization. We discussed major issues that we are seeing across Canada and strategized how we can work together. Our network feels stronger and more united than ever and we hope to hear of a new inclusive regularization program in the spring. Stay tuned for more events this year and the next Status for All rally on March 16!

## >>> PUBLIC APPEARANCES

In November, Loly Rico and Jovana Blagovcanin were on the program Freedom Fighters: Code Gray, at Rogers TV, talking about how human trafficking impacts precarious status migrants, where it takes place, and what support is available for migrants who have been trafficked. You can find the link here:

<https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/2023/11/the-reality-of-labour-exploitation-and-uprooted-people-loly-rico-and-jovana-blagovcanin-on-freedom-fighters-code-gray/>



# HOUSING CRISIS: MIGRANTS ARE NOT TO BLAME

On November 29th, 2023, CBC News released a Leger poll result, which found that three in four Canadians are blaming the higher immigration numbers for the worsening housing crisis in the country. This finding is worrisome because it would fuel anti-immigrant sentiment, which may result in an increase in harm against migrants in Canada.

It is not difficult to understand why many Canadians hold on to anti-immigrant rhetoric; our politicians love to use migrants as scapegoats for all our social problems. In the recent past, we have heard politicians blaming refugees for the shelter crisis in our cities, migrant children for overcrowded schools, the undocumented for our overburdened healthcare, and now, migrant students for high housing costs.

The surge of articles and opinion pieces linking astronomical housing costs with immigration numbers comes amid an increase in tenant rights organizing across the country. It also comes in a context where there has been increased pressure by migrants on the Prime Minister to fulfill his regularization promise to over half a million undocumented people residing in Canada.

The anti-migrant rhetoric has not only led to an increase in anti-migrant sentiment among Canadians but it has also been used to justify harmful government policies and attacks on migrant rights. In January 2023, the federal government announced a policy to reduce the number of migrant students living in Canada by 35 percent within the next two years. The announcement came as a response to the increasing housing costs and mounting pressure from the opposition party. In addition, the federal government also announced a cruel mass family separation policy that bans family members of migrant students who are not in graduate-level studies from entering Canada.

Migrants are not responsible for the housing crisis. On the contrary, migrants are among the most affected by the crisis because their lack of permanent residency status prevents them from getting the necessary support and protections that are available to permanent residents and citizens. This leaves them vulnerable to exploitation by their landlords. This is why we fight for permanent resident status for all.

An increase in immigration numbers does not correlate with an increase in housing prices. According to Statistics Canada, residential property prices went up by 6.3 percent in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to just 0.7 percent in 2019. This happened even though Canada only welcomed 184,500 new permanent residents in 2020, whereas 2019 saw 341,000 new permanent residents and 401,000 in 2021.

Migrants are being used as scapegoats to distract us from the real culprits of the housing crisis, which are government policy failures and greedy investors. The housing crisis in Canada is not a recent occurrence. It is an expected result of a society that treats housing as a commodity instead of a fundamental human right. Housing developers rely on investment from profit-driven investors to build new houses, so when the interest rates increase, investment drops and construction stops. An October 2023 study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives revealed a 21 percent decrease in investment for new single-family homes since April 2020 and a 36 percent decrease since interest rates were hiked starting in 2022. There are not enough houses being built in Canada because investors refuse to accept a lower profit margin.

Blaming migrants is not the solution to the housing crisis; what we need is for the government to build more public and not-for-profit housing.

# YOUTH PROGRAM

This quarter has been focused on working to re-center the conversation of the transition from Youth Engagement to Youth Leadership and putting this into practice in all facets of our programming. We were able to consolidate a look at the past year's activities in the Bestie Book; which is a celebration of the youth, with contributions from the youth in the form of poetry, art, stories, advocacy, recipes and memories.

January was a month focused on strategic planning and defining expectations for the FCJ Youth Network by the FCJYN members themselves. February focused on financial literacy and we were able to have two youth friendly sessions on budgeting and setting financial goals, as well as smart money allocation and long-term financial planning. We wrapped up the month with an engaged discussion at Family Dinner with our local MPP for Davenport, Marit Stiles, on several topical areas such as immigration status, employment, education, 2SLGBTQ+ rights, inflation, housing amongst many other important topics that surrounded proactive civic engagement.

# ACCESS TO EDUCATION PROGRAM

Through the second half of the year, in addition to the programs and services we had already been doing, we identified the need to focus on addressing Access To Education gaps through expanding the in-house programs we offered. The new areas of our in-house Access To Education programming – the Uprooted Series are as follows:

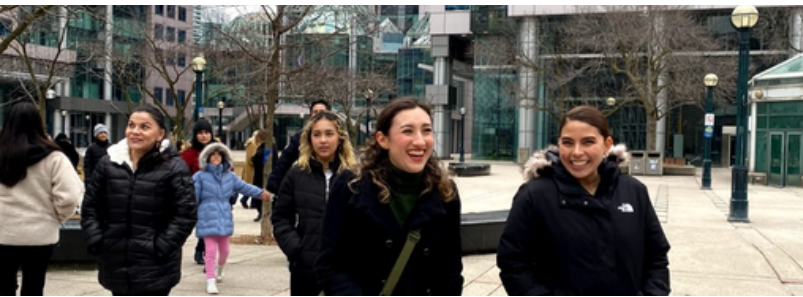
## **Uprooted Junior (In-person; Ages: 6-12)**

**Bridging To School** – this is a program that has a 3-week curriculum in English and Mathematics curated by one of our placement students and delivered twice a week by volunteer teachers at FCJ to ensure that children who are facing unequitable treatment from school boards are not missing schooling, while we continue to advocate at the school, board, and trustee level to ensure that enrollment takes place.

## **Uprooted Youth (Online; Ages: 13-30)**

**Virtual English Classes** – this program was designed to bypass a status requirement eligibility to learn and practice speaking English in a youth-focused space. It is taught by a couple of our volunteers twice a week virtually.

Uprooted U has offered a successful semester of classes titled 'Topics In Global Studies', facilitated by Dr. Tyler Correia. Around 15 students have participated in this program while awaiting future post-secondary education options.





# REFLECTING ON ‘MULTIPLE JEOPARDY’: INSIGHTS AND ACTIONS FOR NON-STATUS FAMILIES AND WORKERS IN THE GTA



On March 7th, 2024 we witnessed the of groundbreaking research titled *Multiple Jeopardy: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Non-Status Families and Workers in the GTA*. Directed by Professor Luin Goldring of York University's Department of Sociology and Professor Patricia Landolt from the University of Toronto's Department of Sociology, this project was a collaborative effort with the FCJ Refugee Centre. Initially involving the late Co-Director Francisco Rico, the project continued under the leadership of Executive Director Loly Rico and Senior Director Diana Gallego.

The event showcased the insights of three esteemed speakers, each bringing their unique perspective from working closely with people of precarious status in Toronto. They reflected on the research findings, discussed the evolving landscape post-pandemic, and proposed various initiatives aimed at mitigating the challenges faced by this vulnerable population.

Deepa Mattoo, Executive Director, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, highlighted the importance of strengthening support for non-status migrant families. She advocated for enhanced government protections, housing support, accessible online education, improved healthcare access, and pathways to legalization. Mattoo emphasized the need for gender-sensitive policies, community outreach, and stakeholder collaboration to foster a more inclusive society that reevaluates existing norms and structures.

Deena Ladd, Executive Director, Workers' Action Centre, spoke on the profound hardships undocumented people and migrant workers faced during the pandemic. She criticized the deep-rooted systemic racism in immigration laws and the lack of basic protections, such as paid sick days, by the provincial government. Ladd called for a collective effort to advocate for the dignity and justice of undocumented and migrant workers, ensuring no one is left behind.

Akm Alamgir, Director of Knowledge and Learning at Access Alliance (Toronto), emphasized the significance of non-status individuals within our community. He pointed out the direct impact of their well-being on our economy and productivity. Alamgir advocated for a shift towards sustainable health management, ensuring dignity and comprehensive access to quality care for all, promising better health outcomes for the community at large.

The event was a success, with great discussions and interactions among attendees. It's clear from the speakers' insights that while challenges remain, there are actionable paths forward. Through continued research, advocacy, and policy change, we can strive towards a society that not only recognizes but also supports the rights and contributions of non-status families and workers in the GTA and beyond.

# ONGOING COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING ESSENTIAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES



In the ongoing commitment to providing essential healthcare services to undocumented individuals and those facing vulnerability due to their immigration status, the Primary Care Clinic Program perseveres into 2024. The clinic achieved significant milestones in extending medical support:

## Family Care:

A total of 527 appointments were facilitated, catering to the diverse healthcare needs of families within the community.

## Mental Health Services:

The program accommodated 117 appointments, offering vital psychiatric support and care. In 2023, the clinic welcomed 120 new patients.

Collaboration and support from esteemed allies remained instrumental throughout 2023, with institutions such as Women's College Hospital (WCH), Cross Roads Clinic, St. Michael's Hospital (SMH), North York General Hospital (NYGH), Toronto Western Hospital (TWH), as well as Community Health Centers like Black Creek and UNISON, contributing significantly through their Diabetes Program, addressing critical health concerns within the community.

Starting this winter the clinic will extend its presence in Family Practice with dedicated full-day sessions every Thursday and Saturday mornings. Additionally, Mental Health Assessments (Psychiatrist) will continue to be available on Tuesdays. The Population Health (POP HEALTH) team continues supporting our program with immunizations, with plans underway for the 1st immunization day of 2024. For information, "stay connected to our social media and website".

Furthermore, exciting collaborations with various healthcare providers are anticipated to bring forth a series of well-being workshops throughout the year. These workshops will cover essential topics such as mental health, primary care, self-care, oral health, and sexual health, fostering holistic wellness within the community.





# NEW UPDATES FROM THE FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM

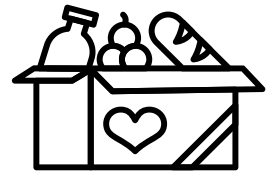
The Center has established a new pantry to accommodate all the food donations. We extend our gratitude to our incredible donors, including program donor Second Harvest, What a Bagel St. Clair for providing bread every week for intake day, which we then distribute to the clients, and Luciano's No Frills for offering space in their store to collect food donations.

Their ongoing contributions are invaluable, as the food security program is crucial to many of our clients. Additionally, we wish to thank our dedicated volunteers who tirelessly work to sort, organize, and distribute the food.





# FOOD BANKS INTERACTIVE MAP OF THE GREATER TORONTO AREA



You now have full access to all food bank locations in the Greater Toronto Area. Just visit the FCJ Refugee Centre's website and check the Food Security Program page. You can zoom in on the map and click on the markers to get addresses and contact information. A green marker indicates that the food bank accepts clients who are in the refugee process or have precarious status.

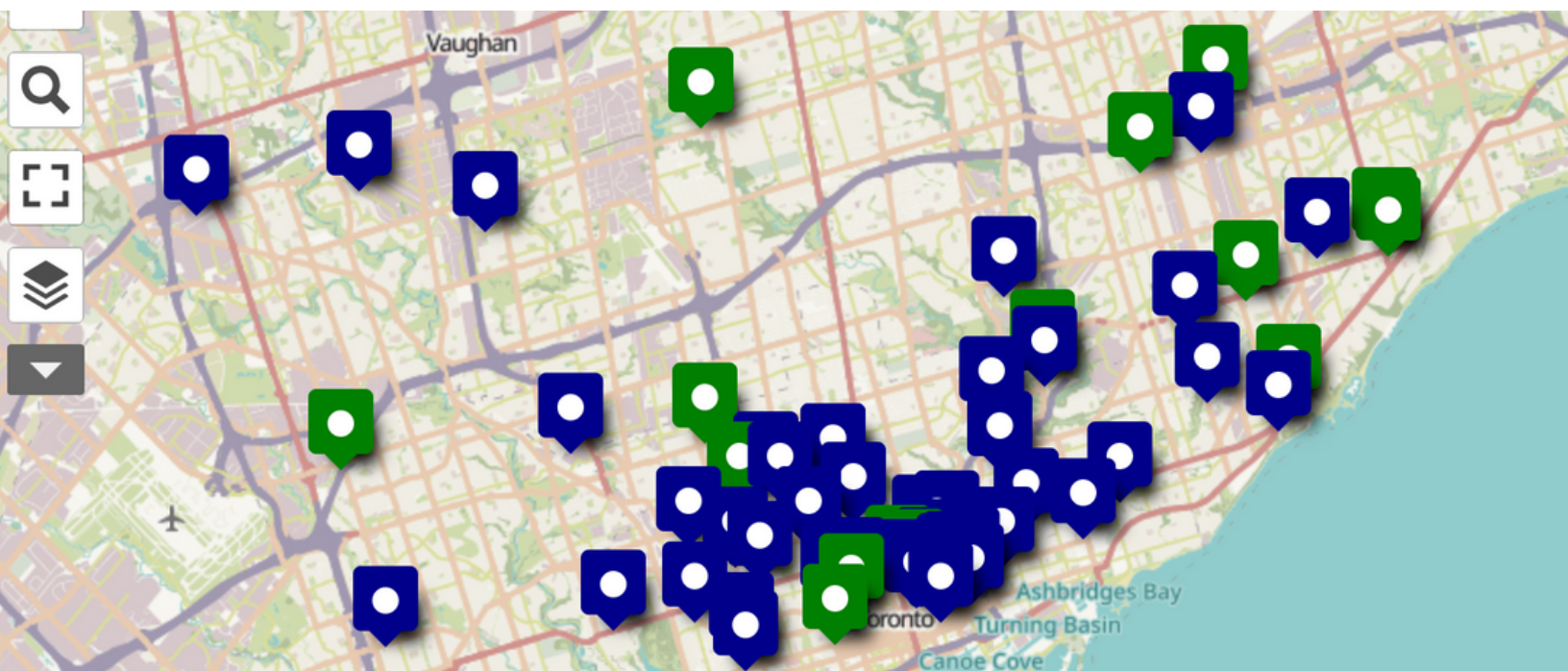
## >>> DONATE

We need your help to promote food security in our community. Every donation counts.

You can leave your food donation at our offices during business hours, or at our drop –off bins in No Frills.

- Non-Perishable food items can include (but are not limited to)
- Canned meat soup/ chicken, chowder, beef stew etc.
- Canned tuna
- Canned beans (chickpeas, black beans, etc.)
- Canned fruits & vegetables
- Canned chili
- Pasta and pasta sauce
- Cereal
- Rice
- Dry beans
- Snacks (chips, cookies and granola bars)
- Coffee
- Juice
- Oatmeal
- Peanut butter
- Lentils
- Cooking oil
- Dried herbs & spices
- Sugar
- Barley and quinoa
- We also accept hygiene products like soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes and Diapers for kids etc.

- Check the interactive map at [fcjrefugeecentre.org/food-security-program/#map](http://fcjrefugeecentre.org/food-security-program/#map)
- The map is a work in progress. We'll keep adding new food banks and updating the information.





# VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR MEXICAN CITIZENS: A STEP BACK

In a new episode of the *Borderless Voices* podcast, the FCJ Refugee Centre expresses disappointment with the federal government's decision to reimpose visa requirements on Mexican nationals, a policy change that started taking effect this February 29th. Loly Rico, the Executive Director of the FCJ Refugee Centre, voiced her concerns, stating that the decision will disproportionately affect Mexico's most vulnerable populations, including women fleeing trafficking and domestic violence, as well as single mothers with children. She emphasized that such measures often impact individuals from the Global South, especially those lacking significant economic resources. Loly also raised concerns that the new visa requirements might lead to an increase in irregular migration, putting individuals at risk of exploitation by smugglers.

Moreover, she criticized the Canadian government for potentially violating its international obligations under the United Nations Refugee Convention by using visa requirements as a means to deter people from making refugee claims. Overall, Loly's comments reflect deep concern for the safety and rights of vulnerable groups affected by the policy change and critique the political motivations and implications of these immigration policies.

## ENGLISH CLASSES

This year, we have successfully conducted two orientation sessions for new students. As we continue these classes, we are always in search of volunteers to assist with teaching and support. During these orientations, we provide detailed information on how the classes operate, the materials required, and an overview of the FCJ Refugee Centre's programs and services.

## MUSIC BOX

Field trip organized by Music Box, to "Dan Brown's Wild Symphony" in partnership with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The event was on Sunday, March 3rd, at 4:00pm at the Roy Thomson Hall. Prior to the concert, there were free, fun activities for families in the lobby from 3:00-4:00pm. This included the opportunity to interact with live birds, an instrument discovery zone, and a special performance of Camille Saint-Saëns' "Carnival of the Animals" by the Brampton Youth Orchestra.



# “FRIENDS OF FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE” MONTHLY DONATION CAMPAIGN

We are excited to announce the launch of our very own "Friends of FCJ Refugee Centre" Monthly Donor Campaign in March! We are pleased to align with Canada Helps' Make It Monthly initiative, a remarkable opportunity that is currently live throughout March.

Until June 1st, 2024, CanadaHelps is offering a generous offer: for every new monthly donation of \$20, they will match it with an additional \$20! For existing monthly donors who boost their contribution by \$10 or more, CanadaHelps will add an extra \$10!

Our ability to provide essential services and aid to refugees and newcomers within our community depends on your steadfast support. We can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who need it most by working together.

To honor and recognize our valued donors, we have introduced exclusive donation tiers, each with its own name. Stay tuned for the details on our website!

As a monthly donor, you can help propel our mission forward and provide essential support and resources to refugees and newcomers. Your consistent contribution will truly make a profound difference in the lives of those we serve.

Let's make a lasting impact together! Join the Friends of FCJ Refugee Centre Monthly Donor Campaign.



**FCJ Refugee Centre**  
*Walking With Uprooted People*

## FRIENDS OF FCJ MONTHLY DONATION CAMPAIGN

Become a monthly donor and join us in our mission to provide vital support and resources to refugees and newcomers in need.





# UPCOMING EVENTS

## >>> REFUGEE RIGHTS DAY

### Refugee Rights Day April 4th:

Refugee Rights Day is celebrated each year in Canada on April 4th. It is an opportunity to bring attention to the advances made in the protection of refugee rights in Canada as a result of the Singh Decision. Refugee Rights Day is also a time to learn about the threats to those rights.

### What is Refugee Rights Day?

April 4th is the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1985 Singh decision. In this decision the Supreme Court found that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the fundamental rights of refugees. The Court decided that 'everyone' includes refugee claimants in the sentence: 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.'

Refugee claimants are therefore entitled to an oral hearing, in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice and international law.

## >>> ART SHOW AND BENEFIT FUNDRAISING EVENT



**CALL FOR  
ARTISTS:  
ART SHOW  
AND BENEFIT  
FUNDRAISING  
EVENT**

If you are a talented refugee with great artistic skills, do you have art that you would like to share with people? Do you want a platform that provides you with exposure and the opportunity to network with other artists and people from the community?

To take advantage of this amazing opportunity, get in touch with us before April 30th at:

[resourcedevelopment@fcjrefugeecentre.ca](mailto:resourcedevelopment@fcjrefugeecentre.ca)

### When:

June 27th, 28th, 29th, 2024

### Where:

Friend's House

60 Lowther Ave, Toronto, ON M5R 1C7

## >>> CONTACT US

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