

# REFUGEE UPDATE

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## MIDDLE EAST REVOLUTIONS, POWER CHANGES AND REFUGEES.

BY JEHAD ALIWEIWI

It is difficult not to be inspired and encouraged by the events sweeping the Middle East and North Africa today. Hope and stability may, at last, be within reach for millions of people in the Arab World. At the heart of the people's revolutions is a simple demand for an end to rampant governments and officials' corruption and the brutality of various states' security apparatuses. Over the years autocratic regimes have squandered billions, looted entire treasuries, wasted immense wealth on spectacular spending sprees that became the tale of legends. Quite simply, one ruler after the other has treated each country as if it were his father's farm, free and ripe for picking anytime, and as if it is his uncle's lunch buffet- bag all you can get away with.

Regimes have made sure that they govern unchallenged. To achieve that, they have systematically dismantled any notion of plurality and destroyed any semblance of civil society. There is no organized or coherent opposition in any Arab country. The Muslim Brotherhoods, and the various incarnations of it, are the more established and better financed groups.

As a result of years of suppressed civic society, political and social progress has been severely retarded. With few exceptions, advocacy groups, social and economic justice organizations, labour unions and syndicates have been meek, mainly for self-preservation, obedient to governments, military and police services.

As much of the world moved toward greater social and political reforms, further democratizations, improved transparency in governance and better economic gains and equality, the Arab World remained stuck in one-man-one-party-rule reality for much of the past 50 years. Despite impressive natural and human resources, the region consistently measures poorly, and in certain areas, alarmingly low, on just about every indi-



Refugees awaiting evacuation in Tunisia (Wordpress.com)

*Continued from page 1*

cator of success, according to the United Nations Human Development Index.

This has served as the backdrop to and created the perfect condition for the ongoing blowing storm. The new dawn, referred to by many as the "Arab Spring" started an irreversible turn toward a better future. Presidents, who until the end of 2010, seemed as immovable and permanent as the pyramids, are now gone. Others are on notice; all are nervous, watching and waiting.

This is all hopeful and promising. Yet, the reality remains that conditions are unstable and change is precarious. This could be the best thing that happened to the region in more than 200 years. It will not be without challenges, sufferings and chaos. It could get messy for some.

Among those who may fall through the cracks that are opening up the regions to new possibilities, are the millions of migrant workers, already displaced people, minorities, and others who will flee for their safety. Basically, these could potentially be refugee producing events with devastating outcomes. We have already seen signs of that in Libya, Tunisia and to a lesser extent in Egypt.

Again, the outcome of these revolutions and social movements is far from certain. The one thing that is more clear though, is that these events are already displacing people from their communities and cities, forcing others to be on the run for their safety and security. The situation facing refugees fleeing Libya is dangerous and proven to be more perilous than other unfolding situations in the region. In Tunisia, the revolution that saw the end of the 25 years autocratic reign of Zane El Abideen Ben Ali has created a wave of Tunisians fleeing on boats and makeshift floating devices to Europe. Few safely made it; most remain held in detention in Southern Italy and Greece. The majority of those fleeing were Tunisians, mainly young people, seeking a better and more stable future in the North. The official reception, unwelcome, centre is Lampedusa, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, nearly half way between Tunisia and Italy. Thousands fleeing turmoil in North Africa, mostly from Tunisia, had already reached Lampedusa and are held in detention centres. Many were rescued from bad weather in the sea.

Italy has formally asked other European countries to help with the influx of migrants to its shores expected to swell as thousands more seek to escape

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unrest in Libya amid an uprising against Muammar Gaddafi's regime. "We believe there are about 1.5 million illegal immigrants in Libya, some estimate even 2.5 million," Roberto Maroni, the Italian interior minister, told a parliamentary committee in February.

Unlike the situation in Tunisia, in Libya, the massive impact is on foreign workers, mostly migrants from the Horn of Africa. To complicate matters more, many of the African workers are viewed as an instrument of the Libyan regime; many are not only accused of, but also seen as being mercenaries fighting on behalf of the Muammar Gaddafi regime. This is a dangerous situation. African workers have been targeted by both sides of the Libyan divide and the majority are simply caught in the middle of the conflict. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, Chad, there are thousands of Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians and other Arab expats. Others including Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are almost totally forgotten. UNHCR and other aid agencies were clear about their fear and concerns "for asylum-seekers and refugees inadvertently caught up in the violence".

To deal with the influx of refugees fleeing Libya into relatively more stable Tunisia, the international aid community is coordinating a response that facilitates people's departure to a safe destination rather than becoming easy prey for human trafficking and smugglers. Melissa Fleming, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) spokeswoman, told reporters in Geneva: "Thanks to a rapid response from the international community, significant progress has been made with the evacuation of Egyptians and other nationalities from Tunisia" (quoted on Aljazeera English online in March 2011).

While the unfolding situation is alarming enough, it is development in the Gulf region that will have the greatest impact and will likely be the largest refugee producing event in the Middle East. For there are more than 20 million people living and working in the six Gulf nations who have no permanent residency status nor will they be a priority to protect or relocate. They are the most vulnerable. This is why a comprehensive plan with these people in mind needs to be devised now. The need, without exaggeration is for a large scale refu-

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gee support and crisis response management system that can process, shelter and feed 100,000 people a day, several times the scale of what's happening in Libya.

In preparing for the inevitable, one must recall the lessons of the first Gulf war of 1991 when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Overnight, flourishing and successful communities were eviscerated, driven out of the country with their families and little else and never compensated for years of work, loss of property, injury, and in many cases, death. The international community was less prepared and more surprised in 1991. Today, they should not be surprised, much less excused, for not having a plan to protect refugees fleeing for safety and security.

Today the scale of evacuating refugees from Libya is massive; the nationals include 50,000 Bangladeshis, 35,000 Egyptians, 5,500 Chinese, 1,000 Indians, 1,760 Filipinos and close to 800 Vietnamese. This does not include the Libyan refugees, which are in the thou-

sands.

Backlash against refugees and using them as a convenient scapegoat is not a new phenomena. Today's accusations of Africans as being the fighters in Muammar Gaddafi's war against his people are reminiscent of the same blame game against the Palestinians in Kuwait as being the instrument of Saddam's invasion. It was wrong then and it is wrong now. These are practices of racism that ongoing revolutions need to address.

The revolutions in the Arab World today are a source of hope for millions. The rebuilding of the civil society and strengthening of human rights instruments must include a clear commitment to protecting refugees and an obligation to provide asylum for seekers of sanctuary and safe haven regardless of their race, colour, religion or sex. Then we can all rejoice and celebrate, unconditionally, the blossoming Arab Spring.

*Jehad Aliweiwi is Executive Director of Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office*

## THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1951 CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES

BY JAMES C. SIMEON

This year marks an important historical milestone for one of the most significant refugee rights instruments ever drafted and agreed to by States and the international community at large: the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. The *1951 Convention*, first adopted on the 28 July 1951, and entered in force on 22 April 1954, was one of the first international instruments promulgated under the United Nations, which itself was newly formed in the aftermath of the Second World War in 1945, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Fundamentally, the *1951 Convention* is a treaty that is intended to provide protection to those who have a 'well-founded fear of persecution'. It is intended to protect us from the most severe breaches to our human rights and dignity as human beings. When the *1951 Convention* first came into force there were only six States Parties, but over the last 60 years some 138 additional States have ratified and acceded to this international refugee law instrument. This treaty has not only grown in the number of States Parties, but it has also evolved and developed over time with the dramatic changes to the international environment and to international law. It will continue, undeniably, to adapt, evolve and develop with the changing times, over the next 60 years.

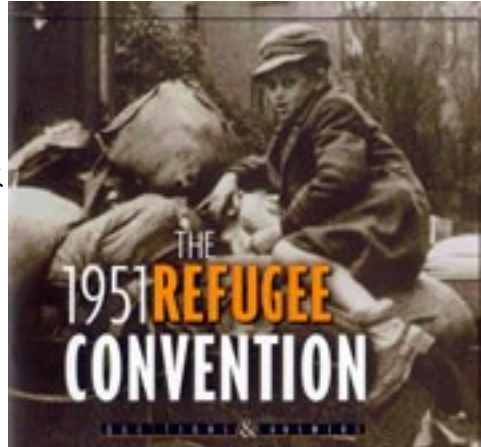
### A Treaty Like No Others

It is significant to emphasize that the *1951 Convention* is a treaty amongst States Parties. Treaties are, of course, formal agreements under international law between two or more sovereign States and/or international organizations. Treaties are negotiated by States and are entered into freely with "good will" and in "good faith." In other words, States agree willingly to accept the terms of a treaty, barring any reservations, with the best intentions, presumably, of fulfilling the terms of the treaty to the utmost of their means and abilities. All States expect this of each other and are mutually bound by this common undertaking in a collective effort, to achieve the principles, purposes and objectives of the treaty<sup>1</sup>. Hence, all States Parties to a treaty have obligations to fulfill the terms and conditions of the treaty. Consequently, implementation of the *1951 Convention* is also a collective effort amongst the State Parties with the support, assistance, coordination and supervision of the United Nations, and its principal agency responsible for refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

It is also important to note that when the *1951 Convention* was first ratified and acceded to by States Parties it was neither endorsed nor adopted universally by the

world's States at the time. In fact, there were only six States that ratified and acceded to the *1951 Convention* when it came into force on 22 April 1954: Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Federal Republic of Germany, and Australia<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, by the end of the first decade of the *1951 Convention* there were only 22 States who had ratified and acceded to the treaty.

At present the *1951 Convention* and its *1967 Protocol* have been ratified and acceded to by 147 States Parties or about three quarters of the 192 member States of the United Nations. Other treaties have a much higher accession rate. For instance, the *1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child* has been ratified and acceded to by all of the world's States except two, the United States and Somalia. Understanding the history of the origins and development of the *1951 Convention*, over the last 60 years, is important in helping us to understand how and why it has changed over time and why this treaty operates the way it does today.



### Canada, a Late Signatory to the *1951 Convention*

Interestingly, Canada was not one of the original States Parties to the *1951 Convention*. In fact, Canada did not become a State Party to the *1951 Convention* until 1969, 18 years after the *1951 Convention* was first adopted, and only after the *1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees* was adopted on 31 January 1967, and entered in force on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1967. The *1967 Protocol* is the companion treaty to the *1951 Convention*. It was, in fact, the *1967 Protocol* that made the *1951 Convention* a universal international refugee rights instruments, by lifting its temporal and geographic limitations. Canada became a State Party to both the *1951 Convention* and its *1967 Protocol* on June 9, 1969.

What do we make of the fact that Canada did not ratify or accede to the *1951 Convention* until after its *1967 Protocol* was proclaimed? Some might argue that the *1951 Convention* had, initially, both temporal and geographic limitations. From the very outset, it was intended, to address the millions of people who were forcibly displaced in Europe at the time of the Second World War.

It is relevant to point out that even though Canada was not a State Party to the *1951 Convention* it was a strong supporter of the UNHCR and a member of its Execu-

tive Committee. Indeed, Canada accepted large numbers of refugees; consider the 37,000 Hungarian refugees who were admitted to Canada when the Soviet Union crushed the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the 12,000 Czech and Slovak refugees that came to Canada in 1968, as a consequence of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact that ended the “Prague Spring.”

The tradition of accepting large groups of refugees continued after Canada became a signatory to the *1951 Convention*. For example, in 1972, Canada accepted some 7,000 Ugandan Asians that were expelled by dictator Idi Amin under his racists’ policies. This was followed in 1973 with about 7,000 Chileans who fled to Canada after the democratically elected Marxist government of Salvador Allende in Chile was deposed by a military *coup* by General Augusto Pinochet. And, from 1975 to 1981, Canada admitted some 77,000 Indo-Chinese refugees, “the boat people.”<sup>3</sup> And, more recently, from 2006 to 2009, Canada resettled close to 3,000 Karen who were living in refugee camps in Thailand for 20 years.

### The *1951 Convention* is an International Legal Instrument that Protects Our Most Fundamental Human Rights

The *1951 Convention*’s significance in the development of international refugee law and the promotion of international refugee rights cannot be over emphasized. In addition to being one of the first international instruments negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations, it was the first truly international agreement that covered the most fundamental aspects of a refugee’s life.

The *1951 Convention* consists of a Preamble, 46 Articles, a Schedule and an Annex (Specimen Travel Document).

More specifically, the 46 Articles are divided into seven Chapters that breakdown as follows:

- Chapter 1, General Provisions, Articles 1 through 11;
- Chapter 2, Juridical Status, Articles 12 through 16;
- Chapter 3, Gainful Employment, Articles 17 through 19;
- Chapter 4, Welfare, Articles 20 through 24;
- Chapter 5, Administrative Measures, Articles 25 through 34;
- Chapter 6, Executory and Transitory Measures, Articles 35 through 37;
- Chapter 7, Final Clauses, Articles 38 through 46.

*Continued from page 4*

It is interesting to point out that more than half of the 46 Articles of the *1951 Convention* deal with human rights guarantees that State Parties to this treaty are obligated to provide to those persons who are determined to be Convention refugees. These human rights include non-discrimination, freedom of religion, right to association, access to the courts, wage-earning employment, self-employment, housing, public education, and relief, among others. Perhaps one of the most important is found in Article 33, the prohibition from expulsion or return to a country where the refugee would have a well-founded fear of persecution<sup>4</sup>.



Undoubtedly, the most significant human rights guarantee enshrined in the *1951 Convention*, solemnly promised to all and recognized immediately as the most fundamental and basic of all human rights, is the right to asylum itself; that is, the right to seek refuge from a well-founded fear of persecution or protection from the most severe and serious violations to a person's foremost inherent rights to life, liberty and the security of the person and/or from the vile degradation to their human dignity.

The *1951 Convention* is clearly the full and further articulation of Article 14(1) of the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, "the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." In this sense, then, the *1951 Convention* is very much an international human rights instrument that provides us all with international protection against the severest and most vile breaches to our essential rights and dignity as human beings.

### Conclusions

It is important to stress that the *1951 Convention* has evolved, developed and grown over time. It has developed as an international refugee law instrument and it has grown consistently in the number of States that have ratified and acceded to it and have come to form part of what is called the "international refugee protection regime." It is without doubt vital to the United Nations *raison*

*d'être*, the protection of human rights as one of the indispensable antidotes to mass violence and war<sup>5</sup>.

Over the years, the *1951 Convention* has remained resilient and adaptable within a highly evolving and ever changing international environment. Women and gender-based persecution have both been recognized in the *1951 Convention*. What constitutes "persecution" has also changed with the times. Non-state agents as well as States are now recognized as being "agents of persecution." The *1951 Convention* has adapted with the times and has been called, accordingly, a "living international legal instrument." It will continue to remain the "cornerstone of protection" for refugees and the *Magna Carta* of international refugee law.

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<sup>1</sup> For an in depth analysis of treaties in international law see Martin Dixon, *Textbook on International Law*, Fifth

<sup>2</sup> Marilyn Achiron, "A 'Timeless' Treaty Under Attack," *Refugees*, Vol. 2, No. 123, (2001), p. 6-29 (see page 14).

<sup>3</sup> Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 347-8. It is also worth noting that during the Vietnam War, when the United States still had compulsory military service or the draft for young males, 18 to 25 years of age, Canada took in thousands of draft evaders who came to Canada because they refused to serve in the military during the Vietnam War, 1955 to 1975.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Clark, *The Global Refugee Regime: Charity, Management and Human Rights*, Second Edition, (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 2008), Chapter 8, *Refuge, Status and the 1951 Convention*.

<sup>5</sup> Professor John Humphrey, who drafted the UDHR, likely the most cited legal document ever drafted by a Canadian, believed that there was "a fundamental link between human rights and peace." He noted that, "There will be peace on earth when the rights of all are respected." See John Humphrey (1905-1995), McGill University, About McGill, <http://www.mcgill.ca/about/history/pioneers/humphrey/>. (Accessed May 24, 2011)

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# BUREAUCRACY WITHIN THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

BY EZAT MOSSALLANEJAD

For years, the Canadian immigration system for refugees and related humanitarian immigration has suffered from chronic bureaucracy. Officials making decisions about access to health, work, travel or residency documents work behind closed doors with little accountability and no accessibility. There is almost no person to person contact. Most of the work is being completed by paper screening at different Centres: Vegreville, Sydney, Mississauga, etc. In almost all cases, applicants are asked not to contact nameless officials for long periods of time. It takes more than five months for the Centre in Vegreville to open clients' landing applications. The Centres use standard letters when they write to applicants, never giving their names and contact phone numbers. Clients may call the Immigration Call Centre, but the number is busy most of the time and when they finally get hold of a person, they do not receive more than general information. Clients face the same problem when they check the status of their application on the CIC website.

This total lack of humane human contact is extremely harmful to refugees and survivors of torture who are in desperate need of love, care and special attention. Most of these individuals have already been subjected to overly bureaucratic processes at every step of their journey since they fled their countries of origin, and have been forced to repeatedly recount their stories of trauma and hardship. This process exposes them to scrutiny and attempts to block their access to entitlements amidst policies of fiscal responsibility, austerity, and often implicit xenophobia. Having to repeatedly correspond with tight bureaucratic systems may also be retraumatizing to those who have dealt with strict regimes previously. Further, when language is a barrier for newcomers who are attempting to learn English, trying to communicate with already hard-to-access officials at Immigration Centres can be frightening, frustrating and discouraging.

Bureaucracy has had a historical tendency to keep non-citizens in tormenting limbo – neither granting nor refusing any status with which to remain. It takes many years for officers receiving applications from inland refugee claimants or related immigration cases to remain on humanitarian and compassionate grounds (H&C) to make a decision. No person is accessible while the file is being processed, and while clients and their counsel can write to the local Immigration Centres, officials hardly bother to answer. When it comes

to a hearing on refugee status (refugee hearing), there is no consistency. The Immigration and Refugee Board may call a client for a hearing within 14 months, but some remain in limbo for more than 2 years.

Getting any form of status seems worse if the person runs up against the crude admissibility criteria and Canada cannot deport the person – they may have to try to

*Bureaucracy is a system in which relationships required to meet basic needs become subordinate to strict and mostly redundant rules. It is characterized by officialdom, rigidity, red-tape, fixed procedures, hierarchical authority, and complex systems of decision-making.*

exist in limbo for years and even decades. I have a client who had a vague affiliation with an organization that advocated violence thirty-five years back. This organization has not existed for the last twenty years, and the client has been in limbo for fifteen years. This can also apply to stateless people who

have exhausted all legal remedies in Canada and cannot be removed to any country.

There are many redundancies in the system. These redundancies create a tremendous loss of our society's financial and human resources. They also create suffering for vulnerable people for no reason. For instance, when refugee claimants get accepted as Protected Persons, they receive a Notice of Decision that is not applicable as a status document when they apply for travel documents or try to register in an education institution. They must apply for a Protected Status document and wait for several weeks to receive it.

Protected Persons are discouraged from applying for travel documents. When they apply, they are advised to wait for five months to receive it. It takes only ten days for Canadian citizens to receive passports. The situation is different in most European countries. Following their acceptance, Convention refugees receive a special kind of passport that acts as their work permit, travel document and refugee certificates. In Canada, work permits, Interim Federal Health certificates, and Social Insurance Numbers expire after a year or so. Refugee claimants have to apply and reapply and wait for a long time to receive renewed documents. PR cards also expire within 5 years. These are all redundant.

Refugees and those who work with them face all these problems due to the lack of any link between immigration and human rights and as a result of the absence of person to person relationships in the system. I have frequently heard complaints from my clients about a rigid system that has no heart and is devoid of compassion and human spirit.

*Ezat Mossallanejad is a policy analyst at the Canadian Centre for the Victims of Torture, Toronto.*



The Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS) is pleased to announce the creation of 2 bursaries for undergraduate refugee students enrolled at York University.

- 1) UNHCR/CRS Refugee Student Bursary. This bursary, in collaboration with the UNHCR, CRS, and private donors, supports undergraduate students who have refugee status in Canada and who have demonstrated financial need. One award of \$1,000 - \$1,500 will be issued each year.
- 2) CRS Bursary for Refugee Students. This bursary, funded by CRS, York faculty and private donors, supports entering or continuing undergraduate students who are in the process of making a refugee claim or are applying for permanent residence status under humanitarian and compassionate grounds, have graduated from a Canadian high school and who have demonstrated financial need. One award of \$1,500 will be issued each year.

## **"EVEN A DAY": DETENTION OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

BY AVIVA BASMAN

*At the heart of a free and democratic society is the liberty of its subjects. Liberty lost is never regained and can never be fully compensated for; therefore, when the potential exists for the loss of freedom for even a day, we, as a free and democratic society must place the highest emphasis on ensuring that our system of justice minimizes the chances of an unwarranted denial of liberty.*

**R. v Hall, 2002 SCC 64 at para. 47 (emphasis added), per Justice Iacobucci**

Diana Johnson is from a small country in the Caribbean. When she was 13, her stepfather began sexually abusing her. Her mother knew, but did nothing to protect her, not wanting to bring shame to the family. By the age of 19, she had 2 children, both from her stepfather. When she was 31, Diana came to Canada, and had a daughter. She never told anyone about the abuse, and did not know that she could make a refugee claim. She was deported back to her country 9 years later. When she was issued her Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA) prior to leaving in 2008, she was too ashamed to disclose the abuse.

Back in her country with nowhere else to go, Diana returned with her daughter to her mother's house. Her step-father resumed his abuse, not only of Diana, but of her daughter too. Diana eventually fled again to Canada with her daughter in March 2010. She was detained on an immigration hold, with her daughter who, as a Canadian citizen, is considered a "guest" by authorities. Since Diana had never made a refugee claim before, she had a right to make a claim. This right, however, would end if she was ordered deported or excluded from Canada.

Unfortunately, Diana's new lawyer did not advise her

to make a refugee claim. At an admissibility hearing, unrepresented, Diana told the adjudicator and the Hearing's Officer that she was afraid to go home. Both ignored her comment. The exclusion order was issued; her chance to make a refugee claim was lost. When she left the hearing room, the Hearings Officer (an employee of the Canada Border Services Agency) waived the exclusion order in the air, gloating to a colleague that she had obtained it, preventing Diana from access to a refugee claim.

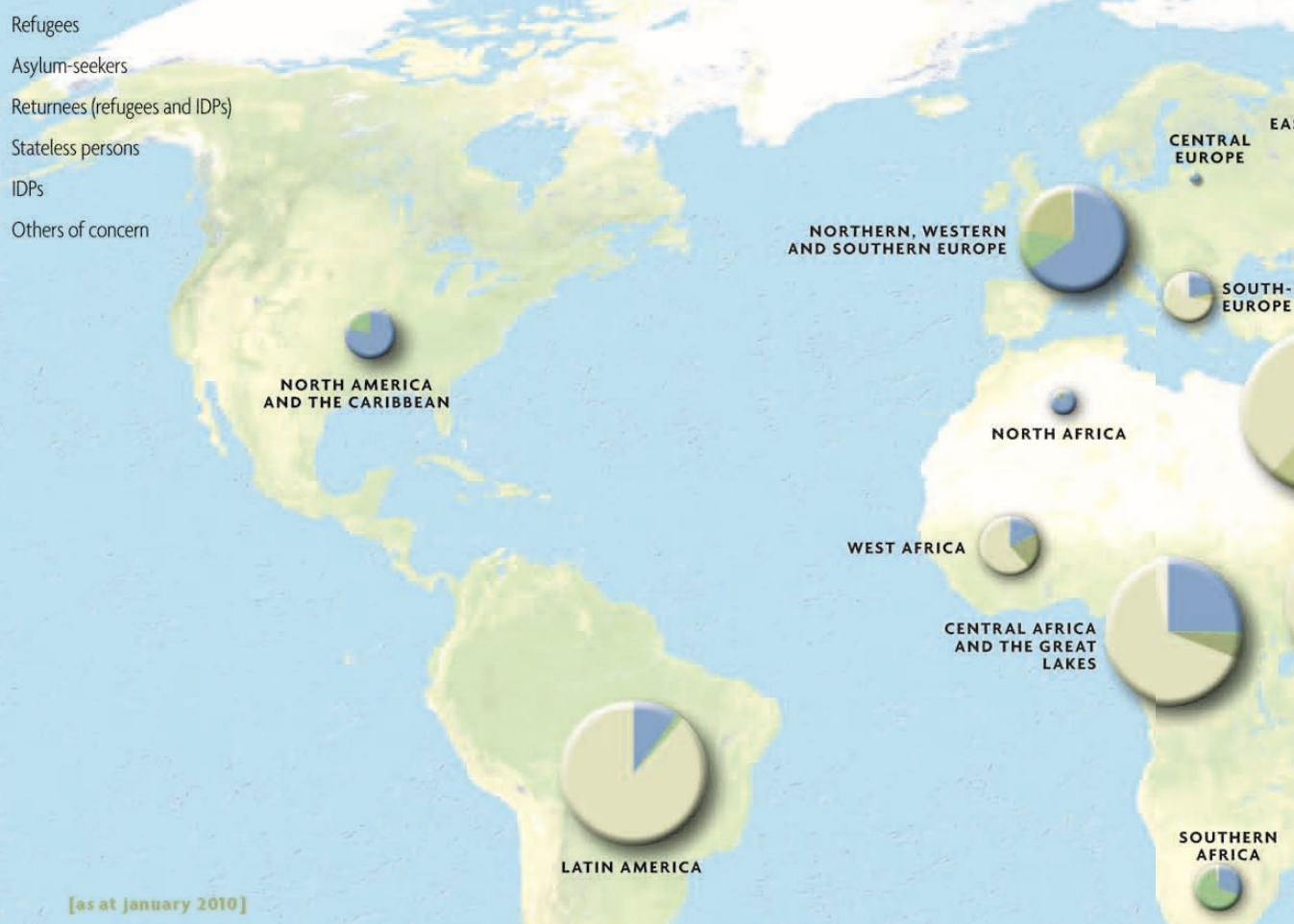
If Diana had been allowed to make a refugee claim, she would have been quickly released from detention. Instead, Diana was in detention with her young daughter for 6 months. Her daughter suffered from a serious illness, and Diana was diagnosed with major depression.

Justice Iacobucci's comments above show that the Charter right to liberty is considered fundamental for a person charged with a crime, due to the presumption of innocence. Diana's only "crime" was coming to Canada without permission to find protection, unaware of her legal rights. Yet she was detained for six months without regard for her own trauma and the best interests of her daughter. CBSA gloated at its "victory" of preventing her access to a refugee claim. While criminal and immigration detention are different in many ways, the fundamental deprivation of liberty remains the same: In 1995, Justice MacKay of the Federal Court wrote in *Salilar v. Canada (MCI)*, 3 F.C. 150 that "detention is an extraordinary restraint in our society." In 2011, we must fight to restore this fundamental right for our immigrant and refugee clients.

*\*Names and identifying details have been changed.*

*Aviva Basman is a lawyer in Toronto.*

# POPULATIONS OF CON

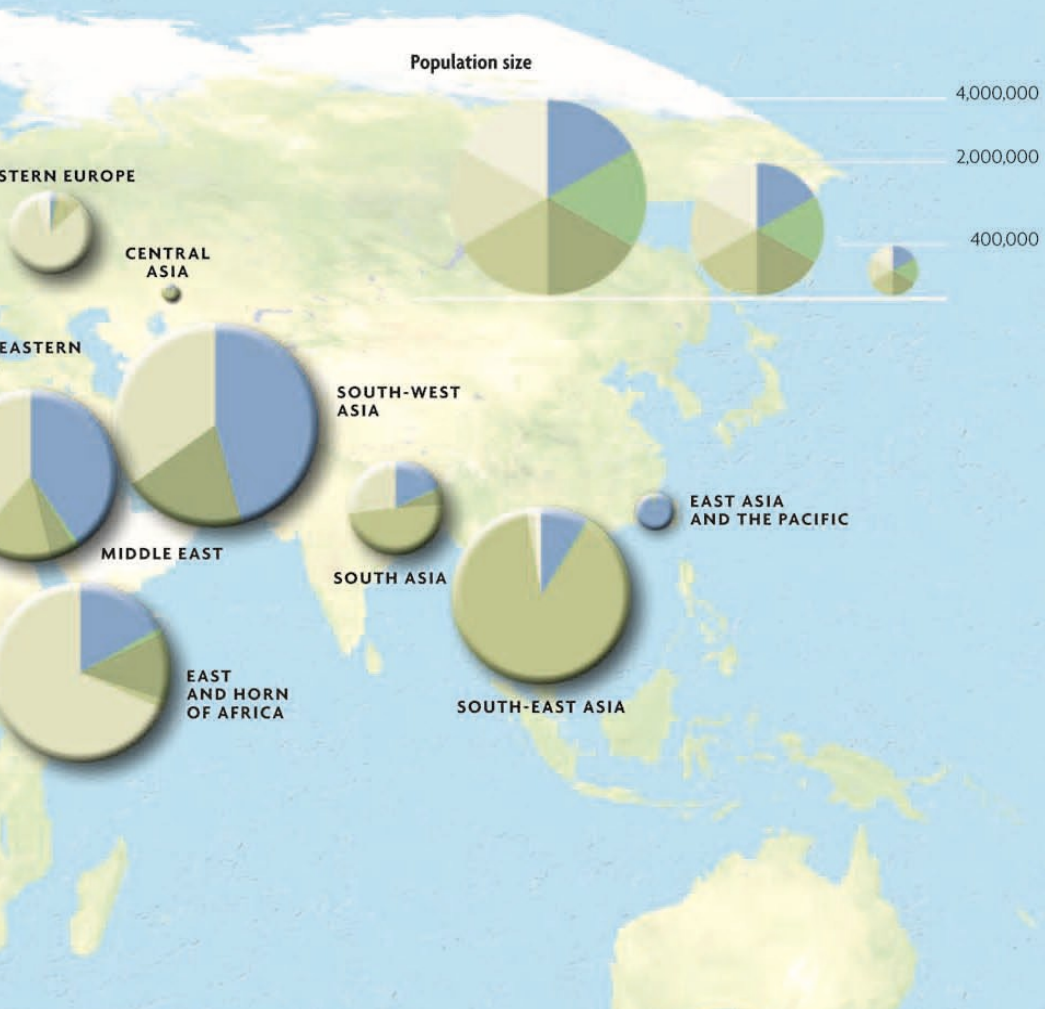


[as at January 2010]

Subregion	Refugees	Persons in refugee-like situations	Total refugees	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Asylum-seekers	Returned refugees	IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR	Returned IDPs
Central Africa and Great Lakes	945,180	24,100	969,280	626,820	19,910	99,190	2,520,210	99,630
East and Horn of Africa <sup>(1)</sup>	779,210	33,920	813,130	718,600	64,630	33,770	3,429,440	579,600
West Africa	149,020	10	149,030	139,660	9,320	2,010	519,140	166,820
Southern Africa <sup>(2)</sup>	143,420	-	143,420	62,280	325,690	2,500	-	-
North Africa <sup>(3)</sup>	104,800	26,000	130,800	92,220	3,940	12,010	-	-
The Middle East <sup>(4)</sup>	1,857,620	17,490	1,875,120	522,320	30,240	38,040	1,802,000	167,740
South-West Asia <sup>(5)</sup>	1,829,920	981,320	2,811,240	2,811,240	4,300	57,590	2,191,690	1,113,620
Central Asia	8,060	-	8,060	3,800	2,140	10	-	-
South Asia	291,740	2,300	294,040	98,850	6,760	1,490	434,900	94,600
South-East Asia <sup>(6)</sup>	202,630	200,790	403,410	200,640	22,390	430	67,290	-
East Asia and the Pacific <sup>(7)</sup>	334,250	5,000	339,250	3,400	7,030	-	-	-
Eastern Europe	24,400	5,000	29,400	21,820	9,980	60	1,018,600	6,150
South-Eastern Europe	119,720	570	120,280	114,640	520	4,290	340,810	1,380
Central Europe	30,840	-	30,840	6,610	6,240	-	-	-
Northern, West and Southern Europe	1,466,920	-	1,466,920	70	276,590	-	-	-
North America and the Caribbean	444,960	-	444,960	70	125,200	10	-	-
Latin America	74,190	293,180	367,370	89,910	68,560	60	3,303,980	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,806,880</b>	<b>1,589,680</b>	<b>10,396,550</b>	<b>5,512,950</b>	<b>983,440</b>	<b>251,460</b>	<b>15,628,060</b>	<b>2,229,540</b>



# CONCERN TO UNHCR



Stateless Persons	Various <sup>(1)</sup>	Total population of concern
-	155,060	3,863,280
100,000	-	5,020,570
-	4,660	850,980
-	14,480	486,090
-	-	146,750
694,260	-	4,607,400
-	-	6,178,440
46,890	-	57,100
800,000	480	1,632,270
4,270,770	61,400	4,825,690
2,000	-	348,280
122,810	83,050	1,270,050
30,040	74,840	572,160
6,220	60	43,360
486,460	17,680	2,247,650
-	-	570,170
120	-	3,740,090
6,559,570	411,710	36,460,330

The data are generally provided by Governments, based on their own definitions and methods of data collection. A dash (-) indicates that the value is zero, not available or not applicable.

<sup>(1)</sup> Persons of concern to UNHCR not included in the previous columns but to whom UNHCR extends protection or assistance

<sup>(2)</sup> Uganda: The IDP figure represents the remaining IDPs in camps and transit sites. They remain of concern to UNHCR, together with the 408,000 who have already returned to their villages.

<sup>(3)</sup> South Africa: Asylum-seekers refers to an estimated 171,700 undecided cases at first instance at the end of 2009 and 138,100 undecided cases at the end of 2008 (no update available).

<sup>(4)</sup> According to the Government of Algeria, there are an estimated 165,000 Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps.

<sup>(5)</sup> Refugee figures for Iraqis in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic are Government estimates.

<sup>(6)</sup> Refugee figures for Pakistan include recognized Afghan refugees (2,800), registered Afghans in refugee villages assisted by UNHCR (756,000), and registered Afghans outside refugee villages who are living in a "refugee-like" situation (981,000).

<sup>(7)</sup> Malaysia: According to UNHCR, and based on lists provided by refugee communities, there are 20,000 unregistered asylum-seekers in Malaysia who share the same profile as the current population of asylum-seekers and refugees and who are being progressively registered and having their refugee status determined.

<sup>(8)</sup> Figures previously cited for the number of stateless persons in Thailand are being reviewed according to clarified criteria.

<sup>(9)</sup> China: The 300,000 Vietnamese refugees are well integrated and in practice receive protection from the Government of China.

"UNHCR was established in 1951 to respond to the estimated 1 million people uprooted in Europe after World War II. The main goal was to facilitate their return to their home countries. However, the world continues to see more and more countries in conflict within themselves and with other countries. Increasing numbers of people have been forced to flee their countries, crossing into neighbouring countries or making their way to far-away places; taking incredible risks to seek asylum. The latest statistics available show that the number of refugees stood at 10.4 million at the beginning of 2011. A further 4.7 million registered refugees are waiting in approximately 60 camps in the Middle East, assisted through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was set up in 1949 to care for displaced Palestinians.

The refugees are spread around the world, with more than half in Asia and some 20 percent in Africa. They live in widely varying conditions, from well-established camps and collective centres to makeshift shelters or living in the open. Some may also be offered shelter by host families. More than half of all refugees of concern to UNHCR live in urban areas. They all face three possible solutions: repatriation; local integration or resettlement." (adapted from UNHCR website)



## Take Action! CCR campaign updates and activities

Join the Canadian Council for Refugees in raising public awareness of challenges to refugee rights and successful integration in Canada.

### What do you want for refugees in Canada?

Do you want refugees to be treated fairly and honourably, in a process that is independent and af-



fordable? Join the *Four Faces, Four Values: What we want for refugees* campaign!

**SPEAK OUT** in favour of protecting refugees in Canada. These are Canadian values and treating refugees in this way is good for Canada and good for refugees.

**JOIN THE CAMPAIGN!** Here are three easy ways to get involved:

1) **Create portraits** – Put a human face on the people who flee persecution and those who believe they should be welcomed.

2) **Speak out!** What do you want for refugees in your community? Why do you stand up for fairness, independence, honour and affordability? We have heard a lot recently from people who want to shut the door on refugees. We need to hear strong messages from people who believe in protecting refugees.

3) **Spread the word** - Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Create posters or an exhibit in your local community
- Include 'What we want for refugees' videos as part of your next film event
- Use your recorded messages in a radio broadcast or podcast
- Post photos and banners on your website
- Use your 'What I want for refugees' photo on your Facebook profile
- Empower refugees in your community to voice 'what we want for refugees'

For more information and activity ideas, see: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/4faces-4values>

### Get involved in new projects from the CCR! Violence against Non-status, Refugee and Immigrant-Women: Join the national forum

CCR has launched two new online resources to address violence against non-status, refugee and immigrant women. CCR members and allies created a national forum to connect people serving newcomer women in situations of violence across the country. Here it is:

1) *New website:* Information, resources, tools, and links to initiatives from across Canada. If you are a frontline settlement worker, lawyer, researcher or working with a women's rights or community organization this website is meant for you.

To visit the webpage, go to: [ccrweb.ca/vaw](http://ccrweb.ca/vaw)

2) *New email discussion list:*

Sign up to join the CCR's *Violence Against Women* email list. It's a great place to share information and resources, ask questions and get answers from colleagues on serving newcomer women in situations of violence.

To sign up to the email list, send an email to:

[vaw@ccrweb.ca](mailto:vaw@ccrweb.ca)

### Impacts of Missing and Mistaken Identity Documents on Permanent Resident Youth

Losing your permanent resident card or having the wrong information on it can keep you from accessing the services that you need. Are you facing this problem? Do you help youth deal with lost or stolen identity documents?

Complete the online survey: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/youthID>

The CCR Youth Network is also looking for volunteers across Canada to help collect and tell the stories of permanent resident youth who have lost or mistaken identity documents.

This is a great opportunity to:

- Work in solidarity with refugee and immigrant youth across Canada
- Gain or share valuable interviewing skills
- Contribute your time to a great cause
- Get to know newcomer youth advocates from across the country

For more information and to apply to volunteer, go to:

<http://ccrweb.ca/en/youthID/volunteer>

Find videos on the CCR's YouTube channel:

[www.youtube.com/ccrwebvideos](http://www.youtube.com/ccrwebvideos)

# WHY SHOULD CANADA CARE ABOUT THE ROMA PEOPLE?

BY JACINTA GOVEAS

The Roma people have been living in various countries in Europe for centuries, taking on the citizenship of the country they call 'home'. Despite this reality, they continue to be discriminated against in ways that make it often impossible for them to feel safe in their own country.

Within the 1951 Convention, the Roma in many countries in Europe have a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group....'

During the 1990s, the Roma were often targeted by right wing supremacists in the new emerging democracies in Eastern Europe. Many fled from the countries they considered home and some managed to make it to Canada, where they claimed refugee status. Towards the end of 2010, there were 30,000 Roma living in Canada, 15,000 of these in Toronto. 8,000 were waiting a hearing. Of these, 4,000 were Hungarians.

Canada imposed visa restrictions on the Czech Republic in July 2009 in response to the growing number of Czech refugee claimants, many of these from Roma people. The long wait until the hearing, and the conditions that they waited in, forced many to return home. Ironically, Canada sheltered Czechoslovak political refugees in 1948 and 1968, and was firm in support for 'dissidents' throughout the Communist period. Similar trends are impacting the Roma people in other countries in Europe.

The past year and a half have been increasingly difficult for Roma families across Central and Eastern Europe. Despite the European Union's human rights agenda, the Roma people continue to endure a degree

of racism, violence and marginalization, while governments and the majority of the citizens continue to ignore the grim reality. Eastern European countries have struggled with hatred, war, ethnic cleansing and economic hardship for decades. However, it seems to have made them oblivious to the violence and pain of other groups within their context.

An April 2011 news release reported that "a group of NGOs: the European Roma Rights Centre, Chance for Children Foundation, Amnesty International Hungary, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities urged Hungarian authorities to promptly react to renewed anti-Roma patrols by the paramilitary group Szébb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület (Civil Guard Association for a Better Future). The joint reaction was issued following the commencement of patrols in Hajdúhadház on 12 April 2011. In their reaction, the submitting organizations called on Hungarian political leaders to swiftly condemn anti-Roma violence and intimidation by Szébb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület and instruct Hungarian police to intervene to prevent and investigate any actions in violation of Hungarian law."

From Hungary to Canada

Most Canadians are accustomed to think of 'refugees' and 'refugee claimants' as people coming from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It is not easy to think of these categories of people in the same sentence as people coming from Europe. As a result not many Cana-

*Continued on page 12*



## Follow the CCR on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube:



formed about refugee and immigration issues in Canada and share ideas and actions with others online. If you already use social networking applications, simply:



be a fan of the CCR on Facebook and receive regular updates: [www.facebook.com/ccrweb](http://www.facebook.com/ccrweb)



to follow the CCR on Twitter at: [www.twitter.com/ccrweb](http://www.twitter.com/ccrweb)

dians know anything about the Roma people. The impact of this ignorance is seen in the silence that greets Canadian government arguments that, as member states of the European Union, the Roma citizens of Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia are free to live in any of the other 26 EU countries, and thus are not considered legitimate asylum claimants. If this were true, how can the decision of the French President Nicholas Sarkozy to expel Roma migrants from France be explained?



At present the largest group of Roma people are supposedly living in Hamilton. The majority came from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic. Hungary is presently Canada's third-largest source of refugee claimants, according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada. There were concerns that Canada would impose visa requirements on Hungary to stop the flow of refugee claimants from that country.

This is serious, particularly in light of the reports coming out of Hungary. Independent 'fact-finding' missions should be sent out to enable members of the IRB to have access to relevant and truthful information.

What can Canada do to also facilitate lives of safety and dignity for the Roma living in Europe? Canada is in a unique position, with its reputation in human rights and refugee asylum, to work with the European Union and the Hungarian governments on this serious human rights issue that has long existed. The Roma do not have much to offer Canada, unlike the Middle East.

There will be no military intervention to stop the violence against this historically vulnerable group of people. The only option is to appeal to the humanitarian side of Governments. Without international pressure it is unlikely that the Hungarian government will take any action against the organized and systemic violence against the Roma. Can the country that vociferously protested apartheid in South Africa now take a stand against an equally sombre reality?



The theme of the 2011 World Refugee Day revolves around the marking of the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which will be launched on World Refugee Day. The campaign is titled '1 is too many', reflecting 'UNHCR's goal to strengthen global protection'.

This reflection spins from the suggested taglines for education on that day:

When is 'ONE' too many?

- One victim of systemic oppression is too many;
- One person forced to flee their country because of their social location is too many;
- One person seeking asylum because of political repression is too many;
- One person who is stateless and hiding in limbo is too many;

### Who are the Romany people?

The Romany (Roma) People, often referred to as Gypsies, are a heterogeneous ethnic group who live primarily in Southern and Eastern Europe, Western Asia, Latin America, the southern part of the United States and the Middle East. They are believed to have originated mostly from the Rajasthan region of the Indian Sub-continent. They began their migration to Europe and North Africa via the Iranian plateau about 1,000 years ago.

The cause of the Roma *diaspora* is unknown. One theory suggests the Roma were originally low-caste Hindus recruited into an army of mercenaries, granted warrior caste status, and sent westwards to resist Islamic military expansion. By the 14th century, the Roma had reached the Balkans; by 1424, Germany; some migrated from Persia through North Africa, reaching Europe via Spain in the 15th century and by the 16th century, Scotland and Sweden. Larger-scale immigration began in the 1860s; many Roma also settled in Latin America. Roma began immigrating to the United States in colonial times, with small groups in Virginia and French Louisiana.

Wherever they arrived in Europe, curiosity was soon followed by hostility and xenophobia. Roma were enslaved for five centuries in Romania until abolition in 1864. Elsewhere in Europe, they were subject to expulsion, abduction of their children, and forced labour.

During World War II, the Nazis murdered 200,000 to 800,000 Roma in an attempted genocide known as the Porajmos. Like the Jews, they were sentenced to

*Continued from page 12*

forced labour and imprisonment in concentration camps. They were often killed on sight. In Communist Eastern Europe, Roma experienced assimilation schemes and restrictions of cultural freedom. The Romani language and Roma music were banned from public performance in Bulgaria.

Czechoslovakia implemented a policy of sterilization of Romani women in 1973. A 2005 report by the Czech government's independent ombudsman identified dozens of cases of coercive sterilization between 1979 and 2001.

Amnesty International reports anti-Roma discrimination in recent years, particularly in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Kosovo. Amnesty International writes, "The Roma community suffers massive discrimination throughout Europe. Denied their rights to housing, employment, healthcare and education, Roma are often victims of forced evictions, racist attacks and police ill-treatment. The Roma are also among the most vulnerable to police ill-treatment and other racially motivated violence."

Sources:

Amnesty International  
Roma Cultural Centre website

One person forced to become a refugee is too many;  
One refugee languishing in a camp is too many;  
One refugee lost from family is too many;  
One refugee who loses a child while fleeing is too many;  
One refugee returned to danger is too many;  
One refugee without hope is too many;

One family forced to flee is too many;  
One family torn apart by war is too many;  
One family without shelter is too many;  
One family without hope for the future is too many;  
One family with children who know no country is too many;

One child without a nationality is too many;  
One child growing up in a camp is too many;  
One child without dreams for an education is too many;  
One child separated from their family is too many;  
One child forced into prostitution to survive is too many;  
One refugee denied a safe haven in Canada is too many;  
One refugee child behind bars in detention at Pearson is too many;  
One refugee whose claim is denied because of ignorance is too many;  
One refugee exploited by employers in Canada is too many;  
One refugee hiding in fear of deportation to death is too many;

One person who cares is not too many;  
One person who will fight against oppression is not too many;  
One person who will walk along with another in solidarity is not too many;  
One refugee who becomes a Canadian resident is not too many;  
One person who votes for a Government that cares is not too many.

*Jacinta Goveas teaches at Seneca College and is a member of the Refugee Editorial Board.*

## **INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS CONDEMNS CANADA'S DIRECT-BACK POLICY**

BY RICK GOLDMAN

In August 2003, an Albanian couple and their minor children approached the U.S.-Canada border to claim asylum. They knew their case was a strong one. To their dismay, however, Canadian border officials told the family they could not begin processing their asylum claim that day. Instead, they gave them an appointment to return at a later date and sent them back to the U.S. without any effort to check how U.S. immigration authorities would treat them.

Alas, the couple's worst fears came true. U.S. immigration authorities split the family upon their return, placing the father in immigration detention and leaving the mother and children to fend for themselves. When the date came for the family to return to Canada, the father was still in detention. Facing a painful choice, the mother returned to the Canadian border with the children. They were allowed to enter to pursue their asylum

claim. A few months later, the father was deported by the U.S. to Albania. This egregious situation was the direct result of a policy change made by the Canadian government just a few months earlier. In January 2003, the government modified its "direct-back" policy. Under this policy, which applies only at the U.S. – Canada border, refugee claimants can be sent back temporarily to the U.S. if Canadian border officials cannot process their claims immediately. Like the Albanian family, they are given an appointment to return at a later date.

The change that took place in January 2003 was the following: until that date, Canadian border officials operated under a directive which prevented them from sending a claimant back to the U.S. unless they first obtained a confirmation from U.S. border authorities that the claimant would be able to return to Canada to pursue his or her claim.

As of January 2003, however, this directive to obtain assurances from U.S. authorities was dropped, with terrible consequences for this family and untold others.

Faced with this unjust situation, the Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International Canada and a number of American partners, including the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic, filed a complaint with the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR).

The victims named in the petition were the Albanian man, as well as two other men who were directed back under this new policy and subsequently deported to their countries of origin: Pakistan and Malaysia. The victims were identified in the Petition simply as “John Doe” numbers 1, 2 and 3.

The Petitioners alleged that this new policy was in violation of a number of rights set out in the American Declaration on the Rights of Man, namely: the right to seek asylum; the protection against *non-refoulement* and the right to due process before the courts. In March of this year, the IACHR finally made public its decision on the merits of this complaint. The Commission found in favour of the Petitioners on all three grounds.

With regard to the right to seek asylum, the IACHR found that this right “ensures at a minimum a hearing to determine his refugee status”.

The IACHR noted that this does not necessarily rule out agreements to “share responsibility” for refugee determination among states (such as the US-Canada Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) -- which was not the subject of this complaint).

However, the IACHR found that, before returning a refugee claimant to a third country, a state must carry out an individualized assessment of the claimant’s case, taking into account all the facts of the claim in light of the third country’s refugee laws and “If there is any doubt as to the refugee claimant’s ability to seek asylum in the third country, then the (state) may not remove the refugee claimant to that third country.”

The IACHR found that Canada’s forced return of the John Does to the U.S., without seeking any assurances that they would be able to return to Canada or to present their asylum claims in the U.S, was in violation of this obligation, and, consequently, of their right to seek asylum.

On the question of the protection against *non-refoulement*, the Canadian government argued that it was in compliance with its obligations, as it had determined

that the U.S. is a “safe country” that provides fair procedures for deciding refugee claims. The IACHR rejected this argument, holding that a general analysis of the asylum system of a third country is insufficient. An individualized assessment of the risk of persecution the claimant would face in their home country, as well as of the risk the refugee claimant could be returned to their country of persecution, by the third country, was required.

It is also noteworthy that the European Court of Human Rights recently issued a decision along similar lines, finding the Belgium had violated the rights of an Afghani asylum-seeker in sending him back to Greece and “exposing him to the risks linked to the deficiencies in the asylum procedure in that State” (MSS vs Belgium & Greece, January 2011)

Finally, with respect to the due process rights, the IACHR found that, given that the claimants were returned to the U.S. in a matter of hours it would have been impossible for them to apply to a Canadian court for a stay of their removal, even if they were aware such a procedure existed. Further, once on U.S. territory, a Canadian court would have no power to order their return. Thus, the new direct-back policy was also in violation of the John Does’ right to due process, before the courts, to challenge their return to the U.S.

There was a surprisingly happy ending for the Albanian family. The mother and children were granted refugee status in Canada and the father miraculously managed to make it back to Canada from Albania (likely avoiding a stop-off in the US) and was also granted refugee status. However, the fate of the other two John Does, and many others who have fallen prey to this policy remains unknown.

While, as noted above, the STCA was not the subject of this complaint, all of the IACHR’s findings in this case are directly relevant to the STCA.

Under the STCA claimants are sent back to the US without any individualized assessment of whether they would have access to the US asylum system or would be at risk of refoulement, by the U.S. to persecution in their country of origin. Nor do they have access to a Canadian court to contest their return to the U.S. Advocates of justice for refugees in Canada can only hope that the IACHR will soon have an opportunity to rule upon the STCA itself.

For more details check the following links:

1. Decision of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: [http://ccrweb.ca/files/iachrdecision\\_johndoe.pdf](http://ccrweb.ca/files/iachrdecision_johndoe.pdf)
2. *Rights Groups Urge OAS to Declare Canadian Refugee Policy a Rights Abuse*, Canadian Council for Refugees media release, 1 April 2004: <http://ccrweb.ca/petition.html>

*Rick Goldman is a lawyer in Montreal.*

## SECURITY CERTIFICATES

BY EZAT MOSSALLANEJAD

Security certificates have been used in Canada dating as far back as 1979, despite their controversial application and numerous critiques about their constitutionality. They have been used as a powerful tool to remove permanent residents or any non-citizen to an unknown fate. A certificate is issued under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) against a person who is deemed to be inadmissible in Canada on the basis of security or criminality suspicions.

Amidst various criticisms of security certificates, the UN Committee Against Torture has criticized Canada for the IRPA's blanket exclusion of the status of refugees or others in need of protection, who fall within the security exceptions provided by these certificates. The government, by issuing and applying security certificates, is enabled to imprison people without charge, trial, or conviction, often for many years, and without them or their lawyers knowing the evidence against them. In essence, security certificates have been used as a mechanism for indefinite detention.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled security certificates to be unconstitutional in 2007, allowing the government one year to provide a revision. The government accepted the court's suggestion to add special advocates, enacting into law in 2008 Bill C-3, which enabled these lawyers to view all the evidence, even though they are unable to discuss the evidence with the accused.

In recent years, one eventual success emerged from Canada's dismal record of issuing security certificates. In December 2008, Federal Court justice Richard Mosley quashed the security certificate being held against Syrian-born Hassan Almrei, who had been accused by the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) of being a terrorist suspect with connections to the "Bin Laden Network". Under the security certificate provisions of the IRPA, Almrei was detained in prison without charge, trial or conviction for eight years. Justice Mosley determined that Almrei was "not engaged in terrorism and is not and was not a member of an organization that there were reasonable grounds to believe [made him] a danger to the security of Canada".

It is essential for refugee and immigrant rights workers all over the country to keep the injustice of security certificate alive and work towards its complete abolition.

## THE FORGOTTEN AFGHAN REFUGEES IN IRAN

SORAYA ATTAI

Throughout history, Afghans have gone through catastrophic tragedies. Afghanistan has been beset by invasion, external pressure and internal upheaval since, and even before, the time of Alexander the Great until now with the Western invasion. Afghanistan is known for its freedom fighters and war-torn, ravaged cities and villages. It has one of the highest numbers of refugees and displaced people in the world. The Afghan people have suffered hardships beyond imagination. In fact, for many Afghans, nothing has changed through time except the weapons which have been used against them.

Afghanistan is located in Central Asia. The neighbouring countries are Pakistan, Iran, China and Russia. Since the Soviet invasion in December 1979, millions

of Afghans have sought refuge in Iran, many of them Shit'tes from Hazarajat, the central, largely Shit'te district of Afghanistan which has been virtually autonomous since 1979. Afghan refugees include the Tajiks and Turkmen from the northern provinces of Afghanistan. The province of Herat is the neighbouring province to Iran. It is estimated that 1.5 to 2 million Afghan refugees have sought asylum in Iran; the UNHCR has estimated 600,000 Afghan refugees in the Iranian province of Khorasan, 15 km away from the Afghan border. The number of Afghan refugees in Iran continues to grow. They live in the worst possible situations, deprived from receiving any kind of national relief or support. Refugee camps are located in the deserts of Iran, with limited access to basic food and clean water. The only assistance is through the relief program of UNHCR

Many live in poor health conditions, with reported outbreaks of cholera, tuberculosis and dysentery. Currently, Afghan refugees face mass deportations back to a country ravaged by war and abject poverty. Recent reports indicate that approximately 320 women and children died from extreme cold conditions in the process of removal. The lack of medical care, food and winter supplies in the refugee camps will increase the death toll. The Iranian government established a Council for Afghan Refugees (CAR) in 1979, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Interior. They are concerned that the growing numbers of Afghan refugees would cause major health and security problems.

The UNHCR has appealed to the Iranian government to decrease the level of forced repatriation. In

March 2008, Iranian Interior Minister, Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, announced that Tehran planned to repatriate one million Afghans. He warned “illegal” Afghans to leave the country voluntarily. Instead of supporting Afghan refugees, the CAR has acted as a tool for their deportation. This is unjust and against Article 33 of the UN Refugee Convention of 1951.

Finally, it is important that the government of Canada uses all bilateral, as well as multilateral means to protect Afghan refugees in Iran. Citizenship and Immigration Canada should pay a special attention to the resettlement of Afghan refugees at risk. Priority should be given to family reunification with Afghans already living in the Canada.

*Soraya Attai is a settlement counselor living in Toronto.*

**1** refugee without hope  
**is too many.**



## REFUGEE UPDATE

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