

Refugee Letter Writing Toolkit and Sample Letters

Refugee Letter Writing Points

One of the key means to help Refugees in coming to Canada is through reaching out to elected representatives and government officials who have responsibility and influence over issues.

This toolkit is designed to help assist individuals in writing letters that can make an impact and influence the individuals and processes that bear upon those affected.

1) Letters

Letters should be personalized and speak from the heart. Elected officials do not put much value to form letters or those that are cut and pasted. The extra time taken to write a letter will be more effectual and make more of a difference.

A) Minister of Immigration

The focus of this letter should be asking the Minister and the Ministry to take action to move this file forward to a resolution. Its focus is to draw attention to the urgency of the matter and the need for the family's sponsorship applications to be processed right away.

Note: The plan is to send all these letters together to demonstrate the support for the family. Please send them to Rebecca Kaplan at nrkaplan2@gmail.com and Derek Houlbrook at derek.s.houlbrook@gmail.com.

B) Member of Parliament

The purpose of a letter to a local Member of Parliament is to increase the awareness of the family's plight to more individuals who can advocate on their behalf. As elected officials, they have a responsibility to bring issues to the attention of the government and specific ministries. The emphasis should be on asking them to have their constituency offices make inquiries to the Ministry of Immigration. Also, the M.P.s can be asked to raise this question up in Question Period.

Note: To find your Member of Parliament [M.P.], click on the link below and put your postal code in the search field then press enter. This will bring you to your M.P. and their contact information.

Click here to find your M.P. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en/search>

2) Subject Line

To help get the attention of the Constituency Office and Ministry of Immigration, different wording for the letters should be included in the subject line. This will draw their notice while showing they are not form letters. Creativity is good. Options can include, but not limited to:

Attention: Family at Risk
Urgent Action Needed
Update for Refugee Family Required
Need Follow Up - No Communication
Possible Deportation for At Risk Family

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Help Needed - Need Update
Important - Information Needed
Family's Situation is Dire
Please Help!!! Refugee Family in Danger

3) Key Background Points

Background

Originally from Iraqi Kurdistan
Family includes 8 people in total
Father and Mother
3 Sons
1 Daughter, her husband and their son
-Father is a Christian Pastor who was imprisoned for 2 years
-Tortured during his time in detention
-Released if promised to leave country and not return
-Individuals can claim refugee status under the Geneva Convention based on religious discrimination

Currently in the Country of Georgia

Residence permits expired at the end of September and the Georgian government has not issued them new ones, despite their many efforts.

Bank accounts were frozen in early October

-No access to funds
-impact - unable to get further vaccinations, go to the hospital, and they are in danger all the time, as police often stop people who look foreign and ask to see their papers.

Georgia - The country is not known for being the most hospitable to non-Georgians

-Regarding immigration or refugee, it is quite closed and does not look positively to asylum seekers and refugees
-Has recently deported a Syrian refugee back to Syria.

4) Application Details

At the end of each letter, it is important to share the application information for the different members of the family. This information will provide a connection for the offices to look more into.

Note: have put their details below. Please can we push to expedite their application through the Turkey visa office? None of them have had interviews yet or any communication after the creation of the file.

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Application Number: G000295945
PA's Name: ALI, Bawar Abde Ali
PA'S UCI: 1117273039
Temporary Residency expired: September 24, 2021
Birthdate: 09/28/98

Application Number: G000296035
PA's Name: Ali, Kareen Abde Ali
PA'S UCI: 1117273579
Family Size: 3
Temporary Residency for Kareen expired September 20, 2021
Kareen's birthdate Nov 13, 1993

Application Number: G000295973
PA's Name: ALI, Karozh Abde Ali
PA'S UCI: 1117273225
Family Size: 1
Temporary Residency expired: September 24, 2021
Karozh's birthdate: 12/23/96

Application Number: G000296003
PA's Name: HAMZAH, Abdi Ali Hamzah
PA'S UCI: 1117273489
Family Size: 2
Temporary Residency for Abdi expired September 14, 2021 and for his wife Falaknaz expired September 21, 2021.
Abdi's birthdate: 02/02/64

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Sample Letters to Immigration Minister

Sample Letter #1

Dear Minister.

I am writing this letter to you regarding the family of Pastor Abdi.

Our church, St. Clair Community Church in Hamilton, is co-sponsoring Pastor Abdi and his family to come to Canada as refugees.

Abdi is a Christian Pastor and was held in detention in Iraqi Kurdistan for around 2 years where he experienced torture and other abuse at the hands of the local authorities who were not happy with his evangelism activities. Abdi was released from his detention after agreeing to leave the country with his family.

They fled as refugees and eventually found temporary refuge in the country of Georgia. However, the country did not confer refugee status on them, which is a general policy for the country towards all refugees. They gave them temporary residency instead and these residences are renewed frequently. However, they expired at the end of September and the country has not renewed them.

Our church has submitted sponsorship applications for the entire family and we are currently waiting to hear from the Ministry of Immigration regarding their interviews and security and identification checks.

I am asking the Ministry to expedite their claims. Their current situation is very tenuous and they could be deported and experience torture again in Iraqi Kurdistan. The family is committed to making a positive contribution to Canada and our church community is dedicated to helping them integrate into our society.

As they are currently in a situation where they could be arrested and deported despite their desire to be compliant with the local laws, we are urging that prompt action be taken.

The failure to quickly help this family could put them in peril and every day increases that possibility.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely, _____
Signature and Phone Number

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Sample Letters to Immigration Minister

Sample Letter #2

To the Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship.

This letter is seeking the Government of Canada's help in quickly processing the sponsorship applications for Abdi family that is currently located in the country of Georgia.

Our church, St Clair Community Church, is co-sponsoring the family who are originally from Iraqi Kurdistan. The father is a Christian minister who was tortured for approximately 2 years while being held in detention by the Kurdish authorities. The family comprises eight individuals in total.

The pastor was released from custody in 2013 with the condition that he and his family leave their home country. Currently, they are located in Georgia where their visas expired at the end of September. The family attempted to have their visas renewed but the government has refused to respond to their request. One of the sons was recently confronted on the streets while getting groceries by the Georgia authorities. As his papers have expired, the authorities provided a verbal warning.

The family is currently afraid of leaving their premises to avoid these encounters as they risk being sent back to Iraqi Kurdistan where the likelihood of torture remains. Each day brings the possibility of detention and deportation.

Our church is sponsoring Pastor Abdi's family and they are waiting to have interviews and background and security checks. I am asking for the Ministry of Immigration to prioritize the family's applications and the background checks. As individuals who experienced discrimination based on their religious beliefs and having been tortured, their refugee claim is under the Geneva Convention and meets the criteria for refugee status.

Thank you.

Signature and Phone number

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Sample Letters to Immigration Minister

Sample Letter #3

Dear Minister.

Thank you for taking the time to review this letter.

In 2015, the Government of Canada rapidly brought around 40,000 refugees from Syria which was at the height of the war with the Islamic State. Our actions in those months witnessed an outpouring of support from Canadians from throughout the country and from different backgrounds to help out those in need.

That was a moment that all Canadians can be proud of as it represented the best of what it means to be Canadian.

In that spirit, we are asking for your assistance in helping a family from Iraq that is currently stateless. Pastor Abdi and his family fled Iraq, specifically Kurdistan, and currently are in Georgia. He was imprisoned by Kurdish authorities for a few years where he suffered torture and deprivation. With the advocacy of a few senators in the US, the Kurdish authorities released Pastor Abdi with the condition that he leave the country and not return. Since then, the family has been in Georgia while they await their completion of the refugee process.

Their current predicament is quite difficult and each day presents a new challenge. The government has not renewed their temporary residence permits that allow them to legally stay in Georgia. As such, they are in constant fear of being arrested and deported with the high probability of imprisonment or worse if they are sent back to Iraq.

We are asking your team to prioritize this family given their plight. We are asking for more attention by your ministry to complete the remaining components of the process so that the family can safely come to Canada. We believe that if you go through these final stages of their security and background checks, you will notice that the family poses no risk to Canada or its citizens. Rather, the family will make a positive contribution to make Canada an even more welcoming home for others seeking safety and refuge from dangerous situations in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Signature and Phone Number

Letter to Members of Parliament

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Sample Letter #1

Dear MP (use your local MP's name)

I am writing this letter to seek your assistance.

I am working with different members of our local church who are cosponsoring a refugee family to come to Canada. The family that we are sponsoring left Iraqi Kurdistan for the country of Georgia in 2013. Their father, Abdi, is a Christian Pastor and was detained and tortured by the authorities in Kurdistan for around 2 years. He was released with the warning that he needed to leave the country, otherwise, it was likely he would be held indefinitely, if not worse.

Currently, the family is still in Georgia. This country is not welcoming to refugees, refusing to recognize their refugee status, and the family has been allowed to stay through a series of short term residency permits. Despite their best attempts, their permits were not renewed by the government and expired at the end of September. A few days later, their bank accounts were also frozen.

Every day this family is fearful of leaving their home in case they get arrested by local officials for not having current permits and other papers. This has also impacted their ability to get daily necessities such as groceries.

The IRCC has sent the family's sponsorship applications to the Turkey visa office but nothing has happened yet on the files.

I am asking for your help in advocating for this family and getting the government to act on this file. Every day brings the possibility of this family being arrested and deported back to their homeland and being tortured again.

If you can look into this for us, it would be greatly appreciated. Our church is fully committed to supporting this family and their journey to Canada.

Thanks for your help.

Signature and Phone Number

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Letter to Members of Parliament

Sample Letter #2

Dear Mr/Ms _____

I hope that this letter finds you and your team well.

I am hoping that you can help us with a family that we are helping to sponsor as refugees.

There is a family that is originally from Northern Iraq, also called Iraqi Kurdistan, that was forced to leave the country after experiencing severe persecution. Their father, Abdi, is a Christian Pastor who was held in detention for around 2 years. During his time in prison, he experienced torture at the hands of the local Kurdish authorities. He was eventually released after pressure and intervention from some American politicians. After the pastor was released, the family was forced to leave the country and not return or they would likely face detention again.

The family of 8 is currently in the country of Georgia since leaving Iraq. They have been able to stay through temporary residence permits. Recently, the government of Georgia has refused to renew their permits and they expired at the end of September. In addition, their bank accounts have been frozen thus making it impossible to work any job.

The family rarely leaves their home since their permits expired for fear of encounters with the local authorities which could lead to their arrest and deportation back to Iraq.

I am asking if you can petition and reach out to the Ministry of Immigration as this family's situation is dire. Our church has fulfilled all the requirements for the sponsorship of this family to Canada and the family needs to complete their security and identity checks and backgrounds. We are not asking this to be waived, but rather expedited given their circumstances. We are also willing to help out the Ministry with any other assistance they require.

If you can help in moving this file forward, it would be incredibly appreciated.
Thanks for your time and help.

Signature and Phone Number

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Letter to Members of Parliament

Sample Letter #3

To MP (use your local MP's name).

The purpose of this email is to seek your office's help in asking the Ministry of Immigration to take quick action on a certain refugee file and prioritize it.

As a resident of your riding, your position provides you the ability to communicate with the government and various ministries directly regarding certain humanitarian issues.

The family that we are helping to sponsor to Canada has been in Georgia for over eight years. They have lived there as asylum-seekers since fleeing Kurdistan in Iraq. The family was forced to leave as the father was held in detention and tortured for approximately 2 years due to his Christian beliefs. Pastor Abdi experienced torture by the local Kurdish authorities and was released with the proviso that they leave and do not return.

The family has recently had their residency permits expire and the government of Georgia is not responding to their attempts to renew them. Their bank accounts have been frozen. They live daily in fear of arrest and deportation. The mental, emotional and physical strain this has caused has impacted their health as well.

It is our desire to have you and your office connect with the relevant personnel in the Ministry of Immigration to prioritize this family's case. Their situation is unpredictable and tenuous. Our church has met the requirements of sponsorship but the family needs to have interviews and their security and background checks completed. We understand the importance of this process but ask that renewed emphasis be placed on their status and these remaining components given their situation.

If you can help work on this situation for us, we would be grateful.

Thanks for your assistance and if you have any questions, please contact me at the number below.

Signature and Phone Number