



Canadian Council  
for Refugees

Conseil canadien  
pour les réfugiés

**“Every day  
we live with  
fear and  
uncertainty.”**

## **Canadian Processing of Resettled Refugees in Africa**

*Executive Summary*

• **December 2025**

# A EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## African Refugees Still Waiting: Systemic Racism and Refugee Processing

*Refugees in Africa consistently wait the longest for resettlement in Canada, denying them equal access to rights and protection.*

### ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report explores the experiences of refugees awaiting resettlement to Canada, focusing on **Government-Assisted Refugees, Privately Sponsored Refugees and One Year Window** applicants seeking family reunification

The findings are based on case submissions, CCR member input, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data, public information, and CCR's long-standing expertise on refugee processing.

This report assesses both progress made and continued failings, and it makes recommendations for achieving equity in refugee processing.

Two years after Canada's Auditor General revealed serious inequities in how refugee applications are processed, little has changed. The 2023 report found visa offices across Africa were under-resourced leading to larger backlogs and longer processing times for both Government-Assisted and Privately Sponsored refugees.

A Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) report—Canadian Processing of Resettled Refugees in Africa—shows that not only do these inequities persist, they are deeply entrenched.

### PERSISTENT INEQUITIES

Despite efforts by IRCC to address delays, processing times for refugees in Africa being resettled to Canada continue to be slowest. These outcomes are not random—they reflect structural inequities that are built into the system.

African offices are under-resourced, data on regional processing is hard to come by, and the continued government failure to address these barriers results in the violation of the principle of equity where African refugees are treated unfairly—in short: systemic racism.

### LIVES ON HOLD

The prolonged delays in processing have profound effects on thousands of people. As they wait, refugees are living in precarious conditions, often with poor housing, food and medical care. They are separated from family. They are often under constant threat to their safety through violence, detention and deportation. Lives are on hold. Applicants describe despair and frustration.

Silence from visa offices adds to the uncertainty as applicants note that communications is a weak spot in the system. A Sudanese applicant put it succinctly: ***“Every day we live with fear and uncertainty about our lives.”***

## EVIDENCE OF CHRONICALLY DELAYED PROCESSING

---

Processing times for all the categories tracked in this report are the slowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Current wait times are 42 months for Government-Assisted Refugees and 47 months for Privately Sponsored Refugees. In the One Year Window category—where refugees already in Canada have one year to apply to be reunited with family members—wait times are also longest in Africa.

The experience of Sudanese applicants is a searing case in point. In 2024, the federal government opened a **family-based humanitarian pathway to permanent residence for Sudanese** affected by the conflict. Yet, this seems to be a humanitarian pathway in name only as long wait times persist.

## SYSTEMIC FACTORS LEADING TO INEQUITY

---

- **Unequal Resources:** Visa offices in Africa are unable to meet the processing needs of applicants, despite the creation of a “surge team” intended to offset the lack of visa office staff in Africa.
- **Low Immigration Targets:** Immigration levels are far too low for the number of refugees waiting. The targets for Privately Sponsored Refugees are declining, while the backlog of cases grows. This shortfall in levels disproportionately affects refugees in Africa.
- **Stalled Anti-Racism Action:** Although IRCC made a number of commitments and developed **plans** to address racism, it is not clear how inequity in processing cases in Africa will be tackled. IRCC has yet to update its action plan and recently eliminated its Equity Division, further stalling progress on addressing racism.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

---

CCR calls on the government to ensure equitable processing times for resettled refugees across regions, and in particular to end the consistently slow processing times in Africa, through clear policy commitments, service standards and adequate resourcing.

### *To achieve the objective the government should:*

- Set targets for equitable processing times by region, and track and report on them.
- Ensure transparency and accountability by publishing processing times by region and immigration category.
- Increase immigration targets for Privately Sponsored Refugees to eliminate existing backlogs.
- Adopt a transparent and equitable emergency response framework for humanitarian crises that upholds the principle of additionality.
- Provide timely and accessible information to applicants.
- Strengthen information training and information resources for visa officers to improve assessment of applicant’s reasons for flight and current circumstances.
- Create an accessible mechanism for all sponsors to flag excessively delayed cases.
- Introduce flexible processing measures for applicants unable to meet requirements (such as medical examinations or biometrics) due to security conditions or displacement.