

The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
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The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs
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May 3, 2023

Dear Minister Fraser and Minister Joly:

Re: Canada humanitarian response to crisis in Sudan

We are writing to you today in support of the safe repatriation of Sudanese Canadians who are currently fleeing from the war in Sudan.

We welcome the special measures Canada has put in place for Sudanese nationals in Canada, including extension of stay in Canada or change status as visitor, student or temporary worker free of charge; waiving biometric fees; waiving travel documents for permanent resident applicants outside Canada; temporary halt of removals to Sudan; and airlifting more than 375 Canadians as of the weekend.

As evacuation flights are ended for now given the escalating security situation, we trust that Canada will continue to explore every effort to evacuate Canadians who remain in Sudan at great risk, including options by ground and sea.

We encourage the government to provide mobile biometrics processing in countries to which Sudanese Canadians have fled to facilitate their return to Canada; and provide the same when possible for those who are internally displaced, safely and quickly, without risking harm or injury.

We are deeply concerned at reports of the mistreatment of refugees and asylum seekers in nearby regions, including allegations of racism against Sudanese nationals at the Egyptian borders. We are also deeply concerned by reports of the mistreatment of Tigré refugees within Sudan and near South Sudan borders. We urge the government of Canada to demand that these allegations are investigated and addressed, and use all available means to ensure Sudanese and Tigré refugees are treated with dignity and respect.

The government of Canada has a responsibility to advocate for the fair and humane treatment of all refugees and asylum seekers, regardless of their origin or background, while paying particular attention to the current geopolitical context and potential for larger escalations which can result in more people being displaced.

OCASI echoes Sudanese Canadian groups and their families abroad in their call on the government for the following immediate policy and humanitarian interventions:

- Nimble and flexible temporary immigration pathways for family members of Sudanese Canadians, with an expanded definition for “family” to include spouse, partners, children, parents, grandparents, siblings and their families.
- Liaise with the Sudanese communities across Canada to welcome evacuated Sudanese at airports, as well as work with them on appropriate interventions and supports as the conflict and the humanitarian situation in Sudan evolves.
- Provide enhanced settlement services for non-Canadian family members who fled Sudan, including the following supports:
 - mental health and emotional support and trauma informed services
 - health services
 - temporary shelter such as hotels and shelters, and transition and longer-term housing
 - immediate personal needs such as clothes, hygienic supplies and other basic necessities on the ground in Sudan when possible, in neighboring regions and in all repatriation areas, as well as in Canada.

We also urge the government of Canada to add the following to the special measures already announced, consistent with the measures provided for Ukrainian nationals:

- Exempt Sudanese nationals 17 or younger and 61 or older from biometrics. This would be an expansion of the current biometric requirements for people 14 and younger or 79 and older;
- Provide a 90-day grace period after arrival to obtain a medical test; and
- Provide Sudanese nationals already in Canada and family members of Sudanese Canadians enroute to Canada with temporary resident permits of upto three years.

We deeply appreciate the efforts Canada has already made to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, and look forward to your adoption of the additional measures proposed in our letter.

We offer our assistance as civil society partners to support government of Canada in efforts to respond to the crisis, and look forward to your response.

Yours truly,

Debbie Douglas
Executive Director