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# Ending inequity in responses to global refugee crises

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*This is one of five issue papers outlining priority issues for advocacy identified by the CCR's **Anti-Racism project**. The identification of priorities has been informed by member organizations and consultation with people with lived experiences, particularly those of African descent.*

## Summary of the issue

There is a longstanding inequity in Canada's immigration responses to global crises of refugees. People fleeing some regions receive a more open welcome than those from other parts of the world, notably those displaced in Africa.

### Inequitable responses based on race and nationality

- The inequity in IRCC's responses is most clearly seen in the contrast between the major response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine (fast, unlimited and well-supported) and the much more limited responses to Sudan and Palestinians in Gaza.
- Historically, Canadian immigration responses to crises in Africa have been rare, despite the numerous wars and situations of mass displacement. A recent example of this systemic racism: despite the brutally violent war in Ethiopia, there were no Canadian immigration measures at all.
- The Canadian government has **committed** to develop a crisis response framework, with a "transparent and evidence-based assessment mechanism" on when an immigration response should be triggered. However, it has been slow to move forward.

### Impacts of inequitable responses

People's lives are at stake. In January 2024, **a 13 year girl died in Gaza** while waiting for long-delayed processing of her immigration application to join her mother in Canada.

Inequitable responses affect both those displaced by an emergency and communities in Canada.

- Some crises receive a high level of media and political attention and the Canadian government not only makes available a generous immigration response but also encourages Canadians to offer the newcomers a warm welcome and to mobilize community supports.
  - More people are assisted
  - Those arriving benefit from an easier integration process into Canada
  - Communities in Canada with origins in the affected region feel supported by Canada
- Other crises (for example, Sudan) appear largely forgotten by the international community and in Canada. The Canadian government’s immigration response is limited in numbers, restricted to those with family connections, requires applicants to navigate challenging processing hurdles and places the financial and settlement responsibility with family members.
  - Few people can benefit
  - Processing is long and complicated, often putting people at increased risk
  - Communities in Canada feel isolated, unsupported and discriminated against.

### **Comparing scale of recent responses**

Syria	45,000	2015-16
Afghanistan	55,000	2021-24
Ukraine	300,000	2022 – 2024
Sudan	7,000	2024 cap based on 3250 applications
Gaza	cap of 5,000	2023 – 2024

## **Recommendations**

The government must move forward quickly with its commitment to develop a framework for responses to humanitarian crises, designed to root out the systemic racism that has tarnished Canada’s emergency responses to date.

**Canada’s responses to global crises must:**

- Be transparent and equitable regardless of race, nationality and ethnicity
- Offer equal opportunities for nationals, refugees and others needing humanitarian protection to access temporary and permanent pathways to protection in Canada

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