



## Afghanistan crisis – Information update Updated 29 September 2021

### Special Immigration Measures (SIM)

The **Special Immigration Measures** or “Special program for Afghans who assisted Canada” are for Afghans who worked for the Canadian government. The people covered by these measures can be inside or outside Afghanistan.

The measures are based on two temporary public policies that cover Afghans who worked with the Canadian government (including interpreters who worked with the Canadian Armed Forces) and Afghans whose employment “involved a significant and/or enduring relationship with the Government of Canada”.

Global Affairs Canada and Department of National Defence are responsible for identifying people with an “enduring relationship” with the Canadian government. A very large number of applications have been received from people who supported the Canadian government and are still being processed. Those still in Afghanistan may take longer to process because of the challenges there.

Over 2,000 people have arrived in Canada, many after being evacuated from Afghanistan or third countries. On arrival in Canada they go into quarantine and are processed to permanent residence (often while in quarantine), as Government Assisted Refugees. After quarantining they are sent to their final destination in one region or another of Canada. They receive settlement support through the Resettlement Assistance Program.

The people arriving under the SIM do not count towards the commitment to 8,000 Government Assisted Refugees (see below).

### Special program for vulnerable Afghans

The government announced on August 13 an **expanded resettlement program**, intended to resettle 20,000 Afghan refugees. See [web page](#).

Note that the **Liberal campaign platform** included an increase in the number of Afghans to be resettled from from 20,000 to 40,000.

To qualify for the resettlement program, Afghans must be outside Afghanistan.

We are still waiting for the **details of the Afghan resettlement program** to be announced.

The program will include:

- **8,000 Government Assisted Refugees** (these are new places, additional to what was already in the immigration levels).
- **7,000 Privately Sponsored Refugees**

The government wants to focus on:

- women leaders
- human rights advocates
- persecuted religious minorities
- LGBTI individuals
- journalists and people who assisted Canadian journalists
- immediate family members of one of the above
- extended family members of previously resettled interpreters who assisted the Government of Canada

The government has said that they plan to have more flexibility than with normal resettlement programs (for example, flexibility on definitions and inclusion of extended families).

**Government-Assisted Refugees** must be referred by a referral partner (usually the UNHCR). For the Afghan special program, the government is planning to get referrals from organizations other than the UNHCR. An **agreement has already been made with the US government**, which will refer up to 5,000 refugees from among Afghans they evacuated. They are also working with the new referral partners for the **Human Rights Defender program**.

**Private Sponsors** face various barriers to submitting applications for Afghans:

- Sponsorship Agreement Holders have a limited number of application spaces available to them. IRCC is considering giving them additional spaces to allow them to sponsor Afghans.
- Group of Five /Community Sponsors can only sponsor refugees who have documentation showing that they have been determined to be refugees. Most Afghan refugees do not have this documentation. IRCC may be hesitant to waive this requirement out of fear of being overwhelmed by the number of applications (based on the earlier experience when the requirement was waived for Syrian refugees).
- Sponsors in Quebec currently have no ability to submit private sponsorship applications. There is so far no indication that the Quebec government will open the door to Afghans.

## Family reunification

The special program also covers family reunification applications:

- Family Class sponsorships
- Family members of accepted refugees included on their permanent residence application
- Applications from dependants of resettled Afghan refugees

Measures include:

- Priority processing: IRCC **has directed its networks** to “prioritize processing family class applications, applications from protected persons in Canada and their dependants overseas, and applications from dependants of resettled Afghan refugees.”

- **waiving of** some fees and requirement to have a passport
- **Medical exams** can be done on arrival in Canada.

See IRCC directives: **Facilitative measures to support those affected by the crisis in Afghanistan**

IRCC is issuing Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs) to some people whose processing is not finalized. For example, people who have not yet done a medical exam can be issued a TRP and do a full medical on arrival. However, IRCC must consider any risks to public health before issuing a visa.

Protected Persons (accepted refugees) can apply for a travel loan for family members.

## **Temporary Resident Permis (TRP)**

Afghans evacuated to Canada and arriving without a permanent residence visa are being issued one year Temporary Resident Permits, with access to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFH).

- If they qualify for the Special Immigration Measures, they can apply for permanent residence (and will have the benefits of Government Assisted Refugees).
- If they have already made a permanent residence application, processing will continue in Canada. They will receive IFH coverage for three months, and can apply for a work or study permit.
- Others must explore avenues to permanent residence (such as Family Class sponsorship, or making a refugee claim). They will receive IFH coverage for three months, and can apply for a work or study permit. They can apply for another TRP at the end of the year.

## **Refugee claimants**

The IRB is taking measures to expedite all Afghan files. This includes reviewing refugee claims to see if they can be accepted on paper or referred to a short hearing. See **IRB Afghan measures**.