



Canadian Council for Refugees Conseil canadien pour les réfugiés



Nairobi: Long delays

Statement on responding to African refugees

Sadly Canada's processing of refugees is too slow in many parts of the world, but it is slowest of all in Africa.

Processing is particularly slow in the countries of East and Central Africa covered by Canada's visa office in Nairobi.

These long delays leave vulnerable refugees in dangerous situations for longer than anywhere else in the world.

We call on the Canadian government to do more to respond to African refugees, who are currently being neglected by Canada's immigration program.

We call on the Canadian government to ensure fair treatment for African refugees and their families by:

- > **Resettling more refugees, both privately sponsored and government assisted, and significantly speeding up their processing at the Nairobi visa office.**
- > **Significantly speeding up refugee family reunification at the Nairobi visa office.**



Sabontu, aged 28, lives with her two children in the bedroom of a friend's apartment in Nairobi. A member of the Oromo ethnic group, she fled Ethiopia after being imprisoned, tortured and threatened that she and her children would be killed. In 2008 she was sponsored by a Canadian group. She has been told to expect that processing at Nairobi will take approximately **48 months**, and that she is forbidden from making inquiries of the Canadian embassy in the meantime.

Catherine and **Mary**, aged 16 and 12, have been waiting to be reunited with their mother in Canada since she was accepted as a refugee in April 2009. The girls are in Uganda, where they are looked after temporarily by their aunt. They have no father and they miss their mother. In November 2010, the Nairobi visa office said that their files would be reviewed in 2011. Refugee family reunification cases at Nairobi regularly take **more than 2 years** to process.



> **Thousands of refugees in many different countries are affected by the long delays at Canada's Nairobi office**

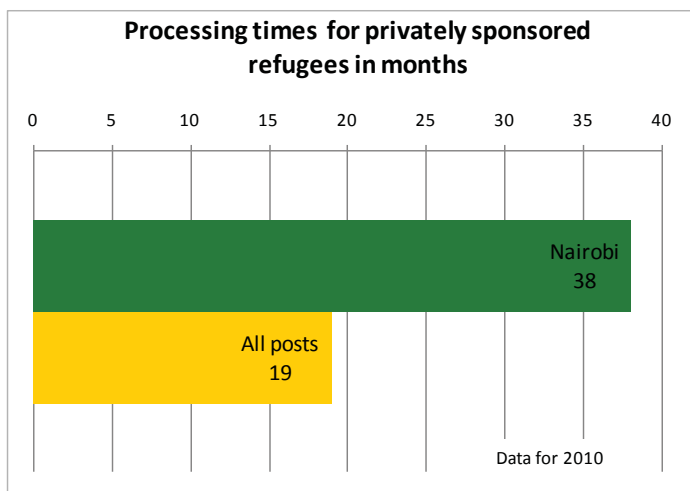
Canada's visa office in Nairobi covers 18 countries in East and Central Africa. These countries host hundreds of thousands of refugees, including Somalis, Eritreans, Ethiopians, Congolese, Sudanese, Rwandans and Burundians. Many have already been waiting years for a durable solution, barely surviving in wretched camps or in precarious situations in the cities

> **Very long processing times at Nairobi for refugees being resettled to Canada**

Despite the great need in the region, processing times for refugees are extremely slow at Nairobi.

Government assisted refugees referred by the UNHCR regularly wait more than two years to be resettled.

Most privately sponsored refugees must wait **over three years**.



> **Canada has the capacity to resettle more refugees from this African region**

There are many Canadians ready and waiting to welcome refugees from this part of the world. However, rather than increasing the numbers of African refugees to be admitted, the Canadian government has asked private sponsors to submit fewer applications at the Nairobi office.

The government has also asked the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to stop referring refugees in this region, because of the large backlog.



Refugees at Dadaab camp in Kenya.

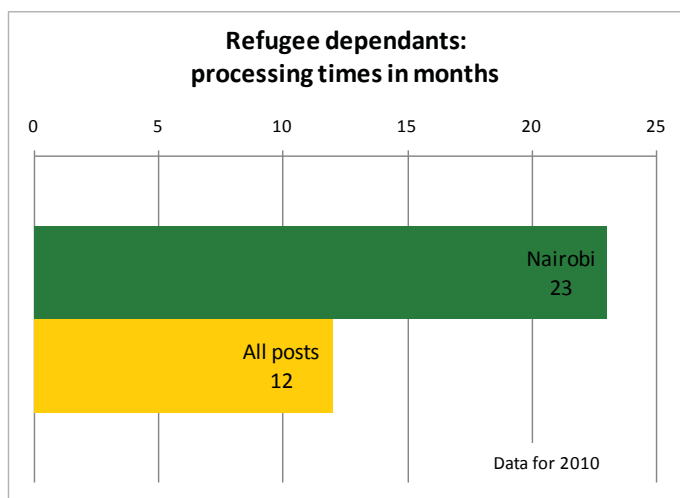
> **Backlog of refugees at Nairobi visa office**

There are 7,500 privately sponsored refugees waiting to be resettled through the Nairobi office, but the government of Canada only plans to resettle 1,000 in 2011 (the same target as last year). This means it will take years to clear the backlog.

Over 3,000 refugees referred by the UNHCR were waiting in the Nairobi backlog at the end of 2010, but the government only plans to resettle 1,365 through Nairobi in 2011.

> **Long delays for refugee family reunification at Nairobi visa office**

The Nairobi office is also one of the slowest in the world for family members of refugees. African children regularly wait more than two years to be reunited with their parents, after their parents have already been accepted as refugees in Canada. These children must often stay in unsafe situations while they wait to join their parents in Canada.



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