

Canadian Council for Refugees



LIVES ON HOLD:

NATIONALS OF MORATORIA
COUNTRIES LIVING IN LIMBO

Whose lives are on hold?

- They are from Afghanistan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Liberia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe (the countries on which the Canadian government has imposed a moratorium on removals)
- They have been living in Canada for years – in some cases over 10 years – in legal limbo.
- The Canadian government recognizes that they are unable to return to their home country because of insecurity there, but denies them permanent residence without which they cannot get on with their lives in Canada.
- They were denied refugee status, under a determination process that has been the subject of considerable criticism and with no right of appeal.

While the citizens of moratoria countries are protected from immediate removal, they remain in Canada in a state of limbo which can continue indefinitely.

The impacts for those in limbo are dramatic and painful:

- they cannot reunite with family members, even spouses and children
 - they have limited job prospects
 - they cannot pursue their education
 - they are ineligible for federal child tax benefits, even if they work and pay the same taxes as Canadians
 - they have access only to emergency health care coverage
 - they cannot travel outside Canada
 - they struggle with profound feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness.



“You show your papers, your work permit. Either they tell you that they will call you back. Which means you are refused. Or they reduce the salary and it is no longer what they told you on the phone. They understand very fast that you are easy prey”

Congolese woman with a master's degree, single parent of 4 children arrived in 1996

“I feel everything is blocked. I can't relax. I am stuck on every side... It is really hard waiting.”

Congolese woman, in Canada since 2000, single mother of 7 children of whom one is Canadian and four are permanent residents

“I have no future and no plans. The two options are either going home and being killed, or staying here and being away from my children.”

48-year-old Zimbabwean

“Everyone says in Canada there is no difference between people. But I feel different; my SIN starts with a 9.”

Iraqi who has been in Canada for 6 years. (A 9 at the beginning of a Social Insurance Number indicates that the holder does not have permanent status in Canada.)

Keeping hundreds of people in long-term limbo is not only inhumane, but also unproductive for Canadian society. Most will eventually be allowed to remain in Canada: postponing their integration and preventing them from contributing fully to society is short-sighted and counter to Canadian interests even as most narrowly defined.

Many individuals caught up in this painful limbo situation are seeking to draw attention to the waste – in human lives, and to society – caused by this gap in policy. They are asking for measures to be implemented to allow them to become permanent residents.

There is a **simple solution** to the problem:

Create a regulatory class to grant permanent residence to all persons from countries to which Canada does not remove who have been here for three or more years.

■ Why should Canada regularize nationals of moratorium countries?

According to an Iraqi man whose life is on hold: “Because this is a country that respects human rights. My rights aren’t being respected.”



For more information, consult the CCR report, *Lives on Hold*, July 2005, available from the What’s new page on the CCR website www.web.ca/~ccr.

Join our campaign calling for the granting of permanent residence to nationals of moratoria countries.

- Sign our petition, available from the What’s new page on the CCR website www.web.ca/~ccr
- Circulate the petition among your friends and colleagues to collect as many signatures as possible.
- Contact your Member of Parliament to ask him/her to support our campaign.

This pamphlet was produced by the Canadian Council for Refugees in collaboration with la Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes, la Ligue des droits et libertés and several organizations of the moratoria communities.

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“You feel dread every time you think about the possibility of getting sick. The document for interim health care doesn’t cover all types of health care.

Sometimes I have to make long trips to see a doctor who will accept this document. I often say to myself that I don’t have the right to get sick. I bear it in silence when I do.”

Rwandan woman who has been in Canada for 5 years, with 3 children, of whom only one has permanent residence.

“There is no way to describe how I feel. We are just survivors keeping our fingers crossed that one day the government will realize this is inhuman.”

Former trade school student in Zimbabwe, who is unable to pursue his education.

“We had paid \$135 for a study permit which they issued for two years to my daughter. The college was \$3,900 per session. She was dreaming of becoming a doctor or something related. But she said to me: ‘No, Mum, you are not going to two – three jobs to pay for my studies. I’m dropping out.’”

Congolese woman, single parent of 4 children, arrived in 1996