

Dear Sponsorship Agreement Holders and Groups of Five:

The situation in North Africa and the Middle East is rapidly evolving and a humanitarian crisis is looming in Libya. Among those displaced by the conflict in Libya are persons who had already applied for admission to Canada under our refugee resettlement program. Canada has no UNHCR referred applications (GAR) for persons in Libya however we do have 134 privately sponsored refugee cases submitted by SAHs and Groups of Five.

This letter is to help you respond to questions you are receiving and provide direction on how you can help ensure CIC has updated contact information for individual applicants. The situation is fluid and this guidance reflects the current situation.

As you are aware, CIC does not have an immigration presence in Libya and in September 2010 CIC asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and sponsors to refrain from submitting new referrals for refugees in the country due to the Government of Libya's refusal to issue entry permits for Canadian officials needing to access refugee applicants or exit permits for refugee applicants. Canada's embassy in Libya is now closed until further notice. Both the UNHCR and the Organization for Migration (IOM) expatriate staff have also been evacuated.

As a result of these constraints, CIC's office in Paris, which is responsible for Tunisia, is working closely with embassy officials in Tunis, the UNHCR and IOM to determine if it is possible to coordinate the resettlement program out of Tunisia for those refugees who have fled Libya and made it to Tunisia refugee camps.

Given the number of persons leaving Libya, including third country nationals needing to repatriate, the UNHCR has confirmed to Canada that their priority, as regards resettlement, is for those who had already registered with the agency in Libya, who had been referred already for resettlement and who are making it to the border (Tunisia). For CIC, our resettlement efforts will focus on refugees who have already submitted complete applications, including IMM8s, to CIC, who are holding a UNHCR refugee certificate and who have also made it to the border refugee camps. Even though Canada has no UNHCR referrals, the UNHCR has agreed to help Canada facilitate the processing of those PSRs who are among the previously UNHCR registered population. From the information we have on file, it would appear that almost two thirds of PSR applicants were indeed already registered with the UNHCR in Libya. These applications will be processed, to the extent we can, in coordination with UNHCR, IOM and Tunisian authorities. We are unable to commit to processing applications for whom only a sponsorship undertaking has been submitted to a local CIC office in Canada, but still invite you to send completed applications for permanent residence (IMM8s) which will allow our Paris office to initiate processing.

As a first step, CIC has already provided UNHCR officials in Canada and Tunisia with a full list of all PSR applications on record with the Paris mission. Information recently received from sponsors about individuals' whereabouts has also been forwarded to the UNHCR. As of

March 29, we are aware of 72 of the 134 case applicants who have made it to the Tunisia border. Of these, seventeen cases (18 persons) are about to be issued visas; the remainder need to be interviewed and undergo medical exams. In early April, the Immigration Program Manager from Paris will be traveling to Tunisia to meet with Tunisian authorities and representatives from UNHCR and the IOM to further coordinate efforts in order to set up interviews and medical exams.

How you can help

Should you become aware of a PSR applicant who was in Libya and who has since left for Tunisia, or another neighbouring country like Egypt, please encourage him/her to contact UNHCR officials as quickly as possible to inform the agency of his/her whereabouts. This is a first step in ensuring the person can receive international protection. UNHCR officials will contact our office in Paris to inform them of persons reaching the Tunisia border. Secondly, please also provide CIC with the PSR applicant's new contact information. This information should include, wherever possible, a way to contact the applicant: telephone number, residential and mailing address, email address, etc. All case inquiries and updated contact information should be sent directly to Amity Salas, Immigration Officer at Canada's embassy in Paris (amity.salas@international.gc.ca). Please ensure that the complete FILE NUMBER ("B" number) is in the title and text of your message. Failure to do so may delay our being able to cross reference the CIC file with the UNHCR's own file, further delaying our ability to process your application.

Although it is not likely we will be able to locate and process all 134 case applicants, we hope with your cooperation to be able to facilitate the resettlement of as many as these persons as possible. We trust you will understand the incredible pressure the UNHCR and IOM are under in trying to respond to this crisis which includes tens of thousands of other persons seeking their assistance. Their willingness to assist Canada's PSR program depends on them not being overwhelmed by persons falsely claiming to be part of Canada's resettlement program.

To that end, we thank you in advance for sharing accurate information with other persons in the community who may not be members of your own SAH or Groups of Fives.