

January 2016

CANADA: Reunite refugee families as soon as possible

What is the longest time that you have been away from your mother or father? Sometimes even being away for one week seems too long. Many refugee children are separated from their parents for years because it takes the Canadian government a long time to process their application to come to Canada.

Here is one example. Sophie is a refugee from Africa who had to flee her home country after her husband was killed. She fled with her children to a nearby country but the people who killed her husband found her there and threatened her.

Sophie was forced to leave her children in the care of an aunt and came to Canada by herself.

Canada agreed that Sophie was a refugee who needed a country where she could be safe. She was allowed to stay, but she had to apply to the Canadian government to ask

for permission to have her children join her in Canada. She made this application almost two years ago. She is still waiting for her children to join her in Canada.



This is what we want: Family members together. Pictured here is a Syrian family who escaped their country and are safe in Norway: 2-year-old Kahraman with his father Hennan Karajoul and mother Sherihan Issou.

Can you imagine waiting three years to see your mother or father again? The worst part is not knowing how long you will have to wait. Three years can seem like forever!

Canada is doing a lot to help refugees now. We should be proud of the way that our government and so many Canadians have welcomed refugees from Syria in the last few months. We must remind our

government that people like Sophie, who make a refugee application after they arrive in Canada, must be treated fairly. This means that after the government agrees they are refugees and gives them permission to stay in Canada, their applications to bring their families (husband, wife or children), must be processed as quickly as possible.



WHAT CAN I DO?

Please write a message to John McCallum, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Congratulate the Minister for all of the good work that Canada is doing to help refugees from Syria. If you or someone you know is helping refugees, tell him what you are doing.

Ask the Minister to make it a priority to reunite refugee families from Syria and elsewhere as quickly as possible.

Ask the Minister to create a special program for refugee families, so that people who are found to be refugees after they arrive in Canada can bring their family to Canada in six months or less.

WHERE DO I SEND MY MESSAGE?

The Honourable John McCallum
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and
Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Postage: No stamp needed
Fax: (613) 992-3921
Email: John.McCallum@parl.gc.ca



WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Check out these books to learn more about the refugee experience of children:

The Arrival, by Shaun Tan (Graphic novel for adults and children)
The Colour of Home, By Mary Hoffman (32 pages) Grades K-3
Close to the Wind, by Jon Walter (290 pages) Gr 4-7

If you have not received this Lifesaver directly from Amnesty International's Toronto office and would like future actions, reach us at the contact information in the header. There is no cost.