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Canada's Gaza Temporary Residence Program

There have been concerns expressed that [IRCC's Temporary Special Immigration Measures for Gazan's](#) with family members in Canada are not being treated equally or fairly because the number of Palestinian applications to be included in the current program is significantly less than the numbers for other recent programs. The Palestinian family reunification program is set, at least for now, at 5,000 applications. We take the position that this program is not discriminatory; it is not anti-Palestinian; it is not Islamophobic. Canada has committed to processing 5000 application. This means 5000 families including immediate and extended family members. With an average of 6.9 people per family in Gaza, Canada's commitment is realistically one where at least 34,500 Gazan temporary residents to Canada will be admitted to Canada under [IRCC's special immigration measures](#). Statistics Canada [census data from 2021](#) indicates that 45,905 of the population identified as being of Palestinian ancestry. The [population](#) of Gaza is approximately 2.1 million. By admitting 5000 families from Gaza to Canada, the Palestinian population of Canada would immediately grow to at least 80,405 people, an increase by 75.16% percent of the community in Canada.

The Differences between the Ukraine and the Gaza Programs

For [the Ukraine program](#), one significant difference is that there was no terrorist organization ruling Ukraine which launched an attack on Russia before Russia invaded Ukraine. There is nothing in the Russia Ukraine conflict, generated by Ukraine, that equates to or approximates the October 7th Hamas attack on Israel.

There is no realistic possibility that Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion were and are terrorists' intent on committing atrocities against Russian citizens. Some Palestinians seeking to flee the Israeli response to the attack of October 7th may well be affiliated with terrorist organizations, dedicated to killing those in Israel and/or involved in harboring hostages kidnapped and held in Gaza. This possibility dictates enhanced screening and is neither Islamophobic nor racist. Rather, these possibilities are factual.

In addition to Hamas, there is a host of Canadian listed terrorist entities located in Gaza - Abu Nidal Organization, Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, Harakat al-Sabireen, Palestine Liberation Front, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, and Popular Front for the Liberation

of Palestine. Determining whether an applicant to Canada from Gaza is a member of a terrorist organization is accordingly significantly more complex than determining whether an applicant to Canada from Ukraine is a member of a terrorist organization or a significant collaborator in another way with the Russian invasion. [According to Hamas sources](#) Hamas had, as of November 4, 2023, 40,000 fighters. That means that, if we take the 5,000 applications or 34,500 Gazan visa applicants, we could realistically be allowing hundreds (approximately 690) of Hamas (and other) terrorists into Canada. That number is significant enough to warrant a much closer scrutiny of applications from Gaza than applications from Ukraine. It must be underscored that since October 7th, 2023, Canada has limited tools to verify whether someone is a terrorist, participated in the events of 10/7 or harbored hostages. The government of Canada has not been transparent as to how it is vetting Gazan visa applicants to determine their affiliation or collaboration with terrorists and/or their entities.

There is significant support for Hamas and other anti-Zionist terrorist organizations in Canada. One can see that support with chants, posters, graffiti, rallies, symbols, marches, and one-sided propaganda across Canada in a variety of fora. Members of Hamas and other anti-Zionist terrorist organizations operating out of Gaza could easily see Canada as a viable refuge and a receptive environment from which to operate. Because of this difference in anticipated welcome, the problematic applications are likely to be far greater from Gaza than they were from Ukraine.

We have to consider not just absolute numbers but also proportionate numbers. Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Ukrainian population, including the population of Crimea, was 43.4 million. Before the October 7th attack of Hamas on Israel, the population of Gaza was 2.1 million. The population of Ukraine was, before the Russian invasion, 20.7 times the population of Gaza.

Attention must be paid to the expansive composition of each Gazan family application. The Canadian program allows a person in Gaza that is related to a Canadian citizen or permanent resident to include in their application both [immediate and extended family members](#). Family members, for the purposes of the program, include spouses, partners, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, siblings, *as well as immediate family members (spouse, partner, child and grandchildren) of the aforementioned family members*. The [average household size](#) in Gaza is 6.9 persons.

It should be noted that under the Canada - Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program the admission figures relate to individuals, not families or households. As of April 1, 2024, [298,128](#) individual Ukrainian citizens have arrived in Canada. Canada's Ukrainian population stood at [1.36M as of 2016](#).

The Differences between the Afghanistan and Gaza Immigration Programs

One difference between the Afghan program and Palestinian program is that the Taliban control Afghanistan, but Hamas no longer controls Gaza. Members of the Taliban are, within the Afghani population, relatively unlikely to want to come to Canada, because it would mean, at least for those who left, abandoning the control they fought so long and hard for and finally achieved.

For Hamas the dynamic is the reverse. Rather than Hamas gaining control over Gaza, the Israeli response to the October 7th attack means that Hamas has been losing control over Gaza. The reasons for wanting to stay are correspondingly less.

To qualify for Afghanistan immigration programs, an Afghani applicant had to be outside of Afghanistan. There is no such requirement in the Gaza program for Palestinians. In this respect the Gaza program is more generous than the Afghanistan program.

Canada was actively involved in combat in Afghanistan. Citizens of Afghanistan that worked with the Canadian military or governmental organizations on the ground found themselves compromised and at risk once the Taliban returned to power. Canada's immigration measures for Afghans were designed primarily to help those who risked their lives in assisting Canada during its deployment. There is no counterpart in Gaza to this Canadian activity in Afghanistan. Canada did not send troops to remove Hamas from power and keep it out of power. There is accordingly no Palestinian population who assisted Canada in an unsuccessful combat operation in Gaza and whom Canada now needs to assist.

The Afghan figures are recorded by the numbers of individual arrivals and not families. The total number of Afghan arrivals as of June 3, 2024 is [52,155](#). The total [population of Afghanistan](#) is approximately 43.3 million. The Afghan community in Canada was approximately [83,995](#) before Canada resettled Afghans to Canada.

Other programs

The limitation of this brief makes it impossible to compare the Gaza program to all others. The Gaza program is generous vis-à-vis the population of Gaza and the Palestinian community in Canada. It is more generous in overall admissions than comparable programs. There are no facts upon which to find it Islamophobic.