



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 101**

Monday, May 27, 2024

---

Chair: Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal





## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Monday, May 27, 2024

• (1105)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.)):** Good morning, I call this meeting to order.

We are meeting in public.

Welcome to meeting number 101 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

I would like to ask all members and other in-person participants to consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents. Please take note of the following preventive measures that are in place to protect the health and safety of all participants, including interpreters.

Only use the black approved earpiece. The former grey earpiece must no longer be used. Keep your earpiece away from all microphones at all times. When you are not using your earpiece, place it face down on the sticker placed on the table for this purpose. Thank you for your co-operation.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and Mr. El-Khoury are online.

I would also like to welcome Mr. Khanna and Mr. Morrice to the meeting. Welcome to both of you.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For members in the room, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function.

The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We appreciate your understanding in this regard.

All comments should be addressed through the chair.

Today, we continue the briefing on temporary immigration measures initiated in response to the ongoing conflicts in Sudan and Gaza.

We have with us the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Honourable Marc Miller, along with officials Dr. Harpreet Singh Kochhar, deputy minister; Jennifer MacIntyre, assistant deputy minister, international affairs and crisis response; and Mr. Karim Virani, director general, international crises response.

Minister and officials, welcome to the meeting.

I will go now to Minister Miller.

Please proceed with your opening statement.

• (1110)

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship):** Thank you, Chair.

I would like to start by acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people here in Ottawa.

Thank you for inviting me back to discuss the immigration measures my department has introduced in response to the humanitarian crises in both Gaza and Sudan.

Let me start by speaking on the devastating situation in Gaza.

As you're aware, conditions there are changing drastically day by day, making our efforts both more urgent and more challenging. The biggest challenge continues to be what Canada does not control, which is in particular who can exit the Gaza Strip and when.

Under the special immigration measures we implemented in January for extended family in Gaza, once an applicant exits Gaza, they will complete their biometrics screening in Egypt before being issued a temporary resident visa.

There is no questioning the anguish and frustration that Palestinians in Canada and indeed around the world are feeling as they wait tirelessly for their family members and families to be safe. I want to make it clear to family members that Canada continues to put in every effort on every level to facilitate the safe exit of their loved ones.

While we have been limited in our success, it is certainly not for lack of trying. We won't give up on bringing family members to safety.

[*Translation*]

Canada continues to put forward the names of applicants who passed our preliminary screening to local authorities. Israel and Egypt are both important partners in implementing these temporary humanitarian measures. We are working closely with both governments to facilitate the exit of extended family members and advocate for their safety. We are also continuing to process applications from those who were able to leave without our assistance.

Given the many Canadians and permanent residents seeking to help their extended family in Gaza, I would like to announce that we have increased the number of temporary resident visa applications that will be accepted into processing—from 1,000 to 5,000.

[English]

The work has been done and continues to be done, but has been done over the past few weeks to that end. We've been issuing more client codes in anticipation of this so that people can apply for those temporary resident visas.

As the border is currently closed, movement out of Gaza is not possible. However, the situation may change at any time, and with this cap increase we'll be ready to help more people.

We have also confirmed that those in Gaza who already possess a valid temporary resident or super visa can identify themselves to us through our crisis web form if they need our help to exit. This process can also be used by those outside Gaza to get our help in finalizing their applications to come to Canada, whether it's part of our special measures or on a regular visa.

Regarding Sudan, we've been working to welcome those impacted by the conflict when it first broke out a year ago. These efforts include Sudanese and non-Sudanese nationals alike in all immigration categories.

[Translation]

Over the past year, we've welcomed more than 4,000 people from Sudan as permanent residents and 1,500 as temporary residents.

In February, we introduced a new, temporary family-based humanitarian pathway to permanent residence for those who fled the conflict and may now come to Canada to be with their extended family. This program will enable Canada to help even more people from Sudan. We may well have filled the spaces currently available.

[English]

For those already in Canada, we are waiving fees and extending certain exemptions to support them in applying for new study or work permits, extending their existing temporary status or becoming a permanent resident under the family class. These measures are available until October 27, 2024 to align with the expiry of similar measures for Sudanese nationals in Canada as temporary residents.

• (1115)

[Translation]

In keeping with our long-standing tradition, Canada is also welcoming people from Sudan as government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees. Almost one thousand refugees were approved to come to Canada in the past year. We're working with our partners to expedite all arrivals to Canada under our special measures.

[English]

We will continue to focus on keeping families together and bringing them to safety as quickly as we can.

Thank you, Chair.

I'm happy to take any and all questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

We will now proceed to the questions.

I will go to Mr. Kmiec for six minutes.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Off the start, I'm going to split my time with Mr. Redekopp.

**The Chair:** Any time.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Minister, on the Sudan program, it closed as of May 6, 2024. How many applications did the department receive?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The number of applications submitted, Mr. Kmiec, ranges in the 3,600 number. Applications accepted into processing are 2,542. That includes 5,814 individuals, excluding non-accompanying dependants. We expect that number of expected arrivals to merge into about 7,000 individuals.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** You've announced special programs, a humanitarian program for Gaza. The numbers are increasing. Will you be doing the same with Sudan?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Currently, the programs are different in their nature, one being, in the case of Sudan, aimed towards permanent residency, the other temporary. We'll look at the situation as it evolves. Again, there are challenges within my own department, security partners and actual logistics in getting this done. These, I believe, are the ones that we have the capacity for in the context, but we have to obviously remain flexible given the conditions on the ground.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** How many of those from Sudan have actually made it to Canada, are physically present in Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Other than the ones that have come as refugees over the course of the past year, which I spoke to in French, under this particular program there have not been any. We're doing our best to hopefully secure some of the landings towards the end of this year.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Out of Sudan, millions have fled the country or are internally displaced. On the applications that have been approved by the department, where are these people physically located right now?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** They can be located anywhere. They could be in Sudan itself. They could be in Egypt. They could have, as you mentioned, fled to third party countries.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Does the department not know where these people are located physically right now?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** When we have the applications, we have their location, yes.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** You have the information then?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'm not going through every location with you, like every application.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Can the department provide it to the committee?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We could probably provide a breakdown of where those locations are generally by percentage.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** By percentage or by totals?

I would like to know the totals by country.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I gave you the total of applications.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, one person at a time. I was giving you the opportunity to talk directly. I would intervene now. One person at a time, because it's very hard for interpreters to interpret.

Mr. Kmiec, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I just want to know if the minister will definitely provide the totals to the committee.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Tell us what you want and we can tell you what we'll give you.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I would like to know the applications that have been received and approved for the Sudan program, and which country they are in physically right now when their application was approved.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We can certainly give you a breakdown for that.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I'll hand over the rest of my time to Mr. Redekopp.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, section 35(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act says that a foreigner is inadmissible to Canada if they have violated human or international rights, things like genocide, war crimes, etc.

The lead prosecutor for the International Criminal Court has requested that arrest warrants be issued for both the Minister of Defense and Prime Minister of Israel for war crimes.

Justin Trudeau was asked on Friday last week if the government would support the International Criminal Court. His answer was, "The ICJ's proposals are binding and we expect everyone to follow them as a matter of international law."

Therefore, since the ICJ considers Benjamin Netanyahu a wanted war criminal, can you confirm that he would be arrested in Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think you know, MP Redekopp, that he is not in Canada.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** You are the decision-maker in this, and I think there are a lot of people who want to know that answer, what Canada considers him to be. The Prime Minister has been very clear that the ICJ's proposals are binding, and so I'd like to know what Canada's position is on that.

• (1120)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'm not answering a hypothetical question about someone who isn't in Canada, nor should a minister comment on who will or will not be arrested. It's up to the authorities in Canada to apply the law. I don't think you want ministers arresting people.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** In the U.S., they've made this determination. They've said no, he would not be arrested, that Israel has a

right to defend itself. France, on the other hand, has said yes, that he is a war criminal.

Are you saying that this has not been discussed, that there's been no thought put into this, that you haven't been privy to those conversations?

Is Canada not on the ball with this? Are we not asking this question? Are we not preparing for this?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I have not been privy to a conversation as to whether Mr. Netanyahu, in the event he comes to Canada, would or would not be arrested. That's correct.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** This issue is in the news every day and people are talking about it all around the world, including in Canada. People are asking about it. This is leading the news in terms of what's going on right now in the war in Israel and the Palestinian war. Are you saying there have been no discussions in cabinet, in your circles, with the Prime Minister, with anybody about this issue and how Canada would deal with this ruling from the International Court of Justice?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The ruling was issued a couple of days ago. There hasn't been a cabinet meeting since then.

I told you I haven't been privy to a discussion specifically about your highly hypothetical question.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** How is it that the U.S. has already determined this and France has already determined this?

Canada used to be a leader in the world, but apparently now we're not. We always seem to wait until the last minute to make decisions on just about anything. There was a time before this government when Canada was respected in the world with the way that we led, the way that we would show our leadership in the world, and yet this government seems to wait until the last minute to do everything.

This, to me, is another example of a case where there has been no thought put into this. Is that true?

**The Chair:** Honourable Minister, the time is up. You can respond briefly, please.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think the implications that you're suggesting are true, but that was a bit of a rambling statement with the question, is it true, so I don't think I can qualify it anymore.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Redekopp.

I will go to Madam Zahid for six minutes.

Please, go ahead.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing before the committee on this important issue.

Minister, how many extended family members of Canadians or permanent residents have left Gaza through the special measures program?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Thank you, MP Zahid, for the question.

This is an important answer, so I would ask that you bear with me. I'm going to give you a number of facts and statistics that I think are very important.

The first one is for the number of TRV applications from Palestinian nationals approved between October 8, 2023 and May 10, 2024. It excludes the Gaza public policy and assisted departure applications. That is 448. The number of visas issued as part of the Gaza public policy—going directly to your question—is 250. As you know, because the figure has been quite public, there have been 870 people assisted as part of the assisted departure applications.

The question may come up regarding those who are presumed to have come here. We have, as a number, 987 individuals with Palestinian authority travel documents presumed to have travelled to Canada between October 15, 2023 and April 30, 2024. That in itself, obviously, would exclude people travelling on Canadian documents.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Minister, I've been hearing reports of long delays in Egypt for people who left Gaza not through the program but by bribing a border guard or exiting Gaza through means other than the official list.

Could you please explain the reason for the delays in reuniting these people with their families here in Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Yes. As you know, my team has been working intensely on this question since I last appeared in order to deal specifically with some challenges among those who took matters into their own hands to guarantee their own safety and exit through the Rafah crossing. In all cases, I believe, they had to pay exorbitant sums to leave, which I believe is unacceptable. It is obviously highly frustrating for people who are fleeing war and looking simply to stay alive.

We designed the public policy assuming there would be co-operation with COGAT—not presuming but assuming—to exit, in a structured way, through Rafah gates. Up until very recently, that was not possible. There were a number of questions as to whether this program was going to be recognized or not. I would say that, very recently—up to the closing of the Rafah crossing again on May 7—we had some positive signals from the Israeli government that this program would be recognized and that the processing through COGAT would be done in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, as you know, a number of events happened, including a more intense ground offensive in Rafah.

All that said, for those people who exited Gaza on their own terms, we have done one of two things. We included them under the current policy, or, for those who didn't have codes or applications submitted, taken another way through a temporary resident visa. We've issued all categories together. It's close to 500 in those particular categories. We had to make some adjustments. I believe that is something that had to be done.

Again, the public policy program.... Perhaps some of those who faced delays by taking matters into their own hands and leaving through the Rafah crossing on their own had to wait some time as we looked to carve them in and get them safely to Canada—again, after having gone through the biometrics and security processes.

• (1125)

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Minister, are you confident that those who are able to leave Gaza will be allowed to return to Gaza following the conflict? Will you assure them Canada will do all it can to ensure their right to return to Gaza?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think it would be naive to express full confidence that Canada could guarantee that return. I think we will do everything possible to make sure that is the case, including through diplomatic means. We certainly will not keep people in Canada.

However, with the current war going on and the massive destruction that has occurred in Gaza, we would obviously want the conditions to be such that we can make sure people are safe. That is not something I can predict right now with any sort of reliability, so I don't want to give anyone that naive assurance.

From a diplomatic perspective, I can certainly say we will make sure we advocate that people who have come here have the right to go back to Gaza.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** I've heard from many constituents with family members who have been given a code but have been told they will not be able to be put on the list to leave Gaza. Could you please clear up this confusion? Will they be put on the list, or will they have to cross on their own?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** As you know, being issued a code means that you go to the next step and are dealt with as part of the application process. I do want to hasten to add that this is not dealing with Canadian residents, Canadian nationals or permanent residents. They're families of those members, so there does need to be a process that is applied. However, to the extent—and we are working on this—that we can ensure that the assisted departure process is respected, we do our utmost to get them on the list that is to be submitted subsequently to COGAT. Obviously, we don't have discretion as to which ones COGAT then decides are able to leave, but we do all that we can to make sure that the information is gathered and submitted, and then the triage occurs by the Israeli Minister of Defense.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madam Zahid.

Now we will go to my dear friend, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Please go ahead for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, minister, for being with us today. I'd like to begin by commending this morning's announcement of the special measures for people in Gaza, which increased the ceiling on temporary resident visa applications from 1,000 to 5,000. We thank you for having made this decision, and want to acknowledge it.

The last time you appeared before the committee, we did indeed discuss what was happening in Gaza. I had also spoken to you about the Bloc Québécois proposal—I was the one who made it—approximately two years ago now, with respect to the IRCC's permanent urgent processing mechanism. You told me at the time that it was in progress, and that a crisis unit was being established, but that parameters had not yet been determined.

That was two years ago. Two deputy ministers have already told me that it was in fact an excellent idea and that people were working on it. And yet I have not seen any outcome or announcements. All I've heard from people is that they are working on it.

Is this work on it going to continue forever, or is it really going to happen?

• (1130)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, thank you for the work you did in raising this very important aspect of how Canada response to crises. Needless to say, taking action at the right time is absolutely essential when there's an emergency and lives are in danger.

Your assumption that no work had been done on it is wrong. I spoke with my colleagues in the provinces two weeks ago about the process of coordination with the provinces and its importance. We discussed it at length, because we have to make sure that the welcoming process is done properly and that these newcomers are appropriately located, particularly in those provinces with a high population density. We need to ensure that the manner in which they are welcomed meets the expectations of Canadians.

The assistant deputy minister responsible for this crisis unit is here with us. She suggested that she could go and meet you to talk about it if you wished. We could go into the matter in further detail. We haven't yet publicly announced the definitive framework, but I can assure you that it is being worked on and approaching completion.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I'd be happy to give you my work plan again, minister, so that your department can get going on it.

I believe that there's a lot of diplomacy going on behind the scenes in Gaza. Is Canada's diplomatic pressure currently strong enough in terms of humanitarian aid? According to our NGOs, it's not visible and they can no longer do their work. They don't have the impression that the Government of Canada is providing assistance to the on-site humanitarian organizations.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You have numbers showing that Canada is doing an enormous amount of work. I don't think there's anything to be cheerful about, of course, given the devastation occurring in Gaza. But we're not going to stop working.

You know, Canada is important; people pay attention to what it has to say, and Israel, among other countries, listens. We use this power to good effect. But then even superpowers like the United States have been unsuccessful in spite of all their efforts. So I also think that it's important to be realistic.

That doesn't mean that we're going to stop trying. There are several things we can do to contribute, whether in terms of funding for

NGOs or ongoing diplomatic efforts by Minister Joly or Minister Hussien.

It's clear that we have to continue our efforts given the disastrous situation in Gaza.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** You may or may not agree with me, but some of those concrete things Canada can do pertain to weapons sales. When new hostilities broke out recently between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Canada suspended its weapons and technology sales to Turkey. Over the past few months, the Bloc Québécois has been requesting that, in compliance with Canadian legislation on weapons sales, evidence be provided that Canadian weapons and technology are not being used by Israeli military forces against Palestinian civilians. In the meantime, all such sales should be suspended.

The announcement that non-lethal equipment, but not lethal equipment, would continue to be sold, was favourably received. But the fact is that equipment like night-vision goggles and guided observation drones could become lethal.

Can you confirm that sales of all such indirect weapons that could end up killing civilians will be suspended for as long as this conflict lasts, assuming that it will end one day, of course?

• (1135)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** As you know, the Wassenaar Arrangement is an international protocol. For all dual-use goods and technologies, there has to be an assurance that they will not be used for military purposes.

You are of course aware of the fact that the sale of weapons has been suspended. The question could be raised once again with Minister Joly, but if I'm not mistaken, since January—

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Various items of equipment that are not on this list of prohibited weapons could be used indirectly to kill people. From what I understand, we interpret an international agreement, but Canada does not wish to play a leading role in this area.

You are well aware, minister, that Canada is neither a military nor an economic powerhouse, but it has nevertheless played a leading role in human rights—it's a Quebec sovereigntist who's telling you.

When we were told that Canada was back—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The time is up, and I would ask the minister to respond briefly.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** The only real question, minister, is whether in terms of human rights, Canada is actually doing something?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Mr. Chair, that's more a statement in the form of a question.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now I will go to MP Kwan for six minutes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the minister and officials for finally coming back to this committee.

Just to be very clear, Netanyahu is committing a war crime. As we know from what we're seeing in the news with what's happening, civilians are being targeted. There's an act of genocide taking place right now, and Canada should be doing everything that it can to support the Palestinian community and be more precise to hold Netanyahu to account in accordance with the International Criminal Court.

I want to turn to the immigration issue for a second.

On the last appearance on March 20, we were informed that 986 applications have been processed. The NDP has also submitted an order paper question that indicates that, as of April 24, that number remains the same.

Between April 24 and May 26, has that number changed? If so, what is that number now?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** This is for Gaza. The number of TRV applications that have been accepted into processing is 2,903. That is the stretch of time between when the pathway was launched on January 9 and May 24, 2024.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Is this under the special immigration measure and not outside of the special immigration measure?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Outside that, there would be more, but this is within this particular measure.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Out of that, how many have crossed the border with the government's help?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** As you know, the program was designed, and I mentioned it to MP Zahid, to work with COGAT to get them out. People who have exited have had to do it themselves.

On a very individual and ad hoc basis, we have used our advocacy to get individuals out for medical reasons or other consular reasons, but that is not as part of the policy.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Is the answer then none?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Under this policy, the answer is none.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay.

As of March 20, 287 names have been submitted to COGAT and no one has been approved to date. Has that number changed? How many names have been submitted?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think there's an important clarification to that number, and we can give it to you in more detail, because I don't want to eat up all the time. We do list and relist, based on our knowledge of people who have exited or not, who are no longer part of that. We continue on a routine basis to submit that list, updated, and it hasn't changed from those numbers really in a material way, but it may comprise different people as part of it.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** It's just at 287?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Right, but those—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Hang on. Let's not presume that those persons—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** No, I understand what you're saying. I understood that.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Half of those have left, or a third of those—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I understood that—

**The Chair:** Excuse me. One person at a time, please.

If you want to interrupt the minister, please raise your hand, honourable member, and I will make sure I stop the clock and get back to you.

I will give the floor to the honourable MP Kwan.

• (1140)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** What are the criteria to determine which name is added to the list?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Just a clarification to your earlier point: the number currently, to be precise, is 356. For the actual detailed criteria, I would pass it over to ADM MacIntyre.

**The Chair:** Madam MacIntyre, please go ahead.

**Ms. Jennifer MacIntyre (Assistant Deputy Minister, International Affairs and Crisis Response, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you very much.

In terms of the process, before we provide a name to the Government of Israel, to COGAT, as the committee is aware, we are not able to do biometric screening inside of Gaza. However, in order to jump-start the security screening process, we are using an enhanced biographic form for applicants inside of Gaza.

As soon as applicants have passed the preliminary security admissibility screening, we provide those names to the Government of Israel and the Government of Egypt for exit. However, we are keeping families together, so once an entire family has passed through that initial stage, we provide those names to both governments.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Let's just say that of all the applications that have gone through the process, even the ones that have gotten the TRV, only 356 names have been submitted to COGAT. I get there's a rolling number because some of them have already exited, etc.

That number is really low—I would just say that—so there is a holdup with respect to the security screening processing, which is what I'm hearing from families as well. This is not necessarily to get a biometric. It's the pre-screening in order to get them onto that list. What is the holdup with the pre-screening from IRCC's side?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, we're dealing with complete families. Indeed, these are numbers that reflect the current status of the screening and the submission to COGAT, but again, very recently we received indications from COGAT that they would accept this program, and we were hopeful, but obviously events have changed since then.



**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** You didn't answer my question, but I'm going to move on because I have limited time.

The Order Paper question the NDP has put in indicates that as of April 24, 4,467 codes have been issued. On the announcement today of changing the cap from 1,000 to 5,000, how many more codes will be issued from the 4,467 as a result of today's announcement?

**The Chair:** Honourable minister, you have 10 seconds to respond.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'll leave you to do the math, MP Kwan, but that number from January 9 to May 20 is 5,250.

**The Chair:** The time is up, honourable member. I'll come back to you.

Now I will go to MP Khanna for five minutes.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we're discussing the special program for the Gaza and Sudan situations, my first line of questioning will be around the temporary resident program in general.

Minister, are all temporary residents who are entering Canada, including international students, required to submit police clearance certificates and criminal background checks from the country of origin before they're allowed to enter Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Just to be clear, we are talking about Gaza and Sudan—

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** Of course, that's my line of questioning—

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Hang on. Just to be clear, you want to now talk about international students?

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** I—

**The Chair:** To the honourable member and the minister, please, one person at a time.

Honourable MP Khanna, if you want to interrupt the minister if he's still speaking, please raise your hand. I will stop the clock, and I will not take it out of your time.

I will give the floor to Mr. Khanna.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** Minister, of course, it's relevant. It's a simple question, and I need a yes or no answer.

Are all temporary residents who come to our country, including international students, required to submit a police clearance certificate and criminal background checks before they enter Canada? It's a very simple yes or no question. It's black and white. Yes or no?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** First, let's make a couple of things clear. I don't tell you what questions to ask. Don't tell me how to answer those questions.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** It's a yes or no question, Minister.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Don't tell me how to answer those questions.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** Let's hear your answer to the question.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Thank you.

First of all, we do criminal verification by doing biometrics on people. That means taking their fingerprints. We search partner

databases, including security partner databases, as well as the RCMP's. We have a number of cascading questions for anyone who wants to come into Canada to assess whether they go to secondary screening.

On the issue of police certificates, we do not as a routine matter require those for our temporary residents.

The next question you should probably pose is how reliable those police certificates are. I think you would agree with me—

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Please go ahead. I have started the clock.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** I understand how the program works and my question is for you. You made a statement a few weeks ago to the media when the media clearly asked you if criminal background checks are done and you said, yes. When the media asked how that works, you said if they have a criminal background they are not allowed into the country.

Now you are telling me that police clearance certificates and background checks at the country of origin are not completed. Is that true?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think your premise is that police certificates are the starting point and the be-all and end-all of a comprehensive security check, which they are not. I think you would agree with me that a Hamas-issued security certificate or police certificate would not be acceptable for someone exiting Gaza.

Do you agree with me?

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** You will have your chance, Minister, to ask those questions when you're on the other side of the bench. My question for you is simple. It's about how you misled the media and you misled Canadians when they were asking you a point blank question.

The question is very simple. Did you purposely mislead Canadians or were you not confident enough to say that during the time the media asked you that? Which one is it? Are you misleading Canadians or were you incompetent and you didn't know your process for your old file?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You are new to this place, MP Khanna. You are making a lot of assumptions. I think perhaps you have fallen victim to the algorithms of your chief. The reality is I did not mislead anyone.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** I have a point of order on this, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I have stopped the clock. There's a point of order.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** I have been elected to this House for about a year now. Regardless if I have been here for a year, 10 years or 15 years, the minister should not be questioning my competence on the file. Clearly, he didn't have the answer when the media asked him these questions. He clearly misled Canadians. Now he's throwing accusations back at me saying I'm not informed.

I think he should go back and read his ministerial department notes and maybe listen to the predecessor who said that they were not done earlier.

Minister, before you start throwing accusations, please read your own documents.

**The Chair:** I would say to the honourable minister that we should not refer to how long a member has been in this House and we should respect that.

I agree with Mr. Khanna. I think those comments are not appropriate.

I will give the floor to you, Mr. Khanna.

Go ahead with the question.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** Minister, on the website it clearly states that police clearance certificates are not mandatory. Your predecessor, Sean Fraser, the former minister of immigration, now the Minister of Housing, who caused this housing crisis because of his reckless policies at the time when he was minister, has said that police clearance certificates and criminal background checks at the country of origin are not mandatory. Why did you tell the media that when they asked you point blank?

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Madam Kayabaga, please go ahead.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you.

I appreciate that we have a visiting member today. All of us want to get through the Sudan and Gaza questions. Can we stay relevant, please, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will go to Mr. Khanna.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** Absolutely. I think it's relevant because of the integrity of our system so it's a very general question I'm asking for this program.

Can the minister let me know how many Canadians have been let into Canada who have submitted police clearance certificates and criminal background checks before entering Canada?

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Honourable Minister, just a minute.

I will go to Madam Kayabaga.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you.

To clarify, can you tell us what the subject of the conversation today is so that we can stay on that? We want to get to our questions as well.

**The Chair:** That's fine, Ms. Kayabaga.

Minister Miller, please respond to the question put by Mr. Khanna.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** When you become a resident, you obviously have to provide those types of checks, but for temporary residents, I never said police certificates were required. This is where you, Mr. Khanna, and your colleagues, are misleading people. I said we did verifications. That's what we do. That is true. If you assume the contrary, you assume all the responsibility and liability with respect to that if you make those statements outside of here.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** Minister, are you confirming that police clearance certificates and criminal background checks are not done for temporary residents entering this country?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I have never said that certificates are required for temporary residents. They may be required if an officer decides to do so as part of a cascading security screening. None of your colleagues should pretend that I ever made that claim, and if they do so outside this place, there are consequences.

• (1150)

**Mr. Arpan Khanna:** How many temporary residents who have been let into Canada have had to submit police clearance certificates? How many?

**The Chair:** Minister, the time is up. Please respond briefly.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You would have to ask over what time period. You would have to ask which categories and which officers have asked for police certificates. You're assuming that police certificates are the be-all and end-all. In the case of the individuals in question, and in the context of a police investigation, I'm not going to speak further, but you could imagine how unreliable those certificates would be where they have been required.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Khanna.

I will go to Mr. El-Khoury for five minutes.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being with us for this important subject.

Minister, Canada is known as a peaceful country. As a matter of fact, Canada created the peacekeeping force under Lester B. Pearson. I believe it should be respected in all countries during international conflicts.

I have several cases in my riding that broke my heart. There are family members who are registered with our Canadian embassy in Egypt, but they cannot cross the border due to smugglers. They're being asked to pay \$5,000 per person.

Can Canada intervene with both sides, Israel and Egypt, in order to put an end to those smugglers and facilitate the access of those people who are in need?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** MP El-Khoury, you hit on a very important point.

Canada does not control the situation on the ground. The exits from Rafah are a particular example of that. We do our utmost under the circumstances. I have never and will never advise anyone to pay bribes or pay these types of exorbitant amounts to flee a war. I think it's unfair and unjust, but I'm not going to judge someone who actually decides to do it as a result.

We can do things we have within our power. This visa program, while it has not been as successful as we would have liked it to be, we still have hope for it. We have to preserve that hope. This is one area where we can act. We're going to help people that exit Rafah through their own means. Once they pass the screening process in Cairo, do the biometrics and are issued a visa, we will offer them a suite of supports inside Canada. Once they reach Canada, it will include interim health benefits for a period of three months until such point as the provinces take over settlement services. These are all the things you would expect for people fleeing war.

I spoke to both the Israeli and Egyptian ambassadors as late as last week. We continue our advocacy to make sure that this program continues to have some level of results, and that won't end. That is also coupled with all the initiatives that ministers Joly and Hussen are deploying on the international stage. In one case, there is international aid to make sure that people get the food and supplies they need to stay safe and alive, and in the other case, to put an end to this war through a comprehensive ceasefire.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury:** Thank you, Minister.

According to your knowledge, do you know if in this particular case Canada has raised the smuggler problem through diplomatic means? Have Minister Joly or Minister Hussen discussed that at all with both Israel and Egypt?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I've raised it directly, for example, with the Egyptian ambassador in my discussions with him.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury:** Thank you, Minister.

As part of our government's support for extended families affected by the crisis in Gaza, our government has announced that they will have access to health care, which is good news. They will have access to health care coverage under the interim federal health program.

Can you explain the purpose of this program and how it will help those who come to Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** What it does is bridge a very important gap between the time when people arrive here and when people have access to provincial health care. We have typically bridged that three-month period with interim health benefits, at which point the provinces take over. In some exceptional circumstances, Ukraine being one of them, they have been covered by provinces from the get-go, which is something we encourage, but to the extent that it doesn't happen, we step up and provide those benefits.

It's an important step coupled with the settlement services and supports that people would need. For instance, for anyone coming here needing that type of service, we would provide it for them for the period of their stay, which is three years.

Again, I'd stress how unique this program is. Many countries are looking to adopt similar style supports, and they've looked at our

program to do it. This is something that, while it hasn't, again, had the success that we had anticipated, it is very important, even more so now that this cap has been increased from 1,000 to 5,000 people.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. El-Khoury.

We will now go to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, since December 22, I've been dealing with a case of Gazan nationals who have an acquaintance in Ontario. I spoke with a Conservative MLA who represented the riding there, but nothing has changed. I even spoke to an Ontario Liberal MLA who is more pro-Palestinian than not, but nothing is moving. This morning, your office called me. Perhaps that has something to do with your presence here today.

I'm working on a case that you have been aware of since December 22. We are now in the month of May and have only just received the unique reference codes under the special measures program for extended family members in Gaza.

Why has it been taking so long? It's all very well to raise the ceiling, but things need to move much more quickly. People are being bombed right now.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** A distinction has to be made between people being safe and sound and their having received a code enabling them to move on to the next step. The priority is clearly to keep people safe and sound. The one does not necessarily have an impact on the other.

As for the details of a particular case, I think it would be disrespectful to speak about it publicly. I would encourage you to contact my office.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Absolutely. That's precisely why I'm not publicly talking about the details. But there has been a five-month delay. That's what my question is about. Why should it take five months to get a code? Is that the average amount of time it takes or were these people just unlucky?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Are you saying that it takes five months to get a code? Are they trapped in Gaza?

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** It took them five months to get a code. They're in Egypt.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** They're in Egypt.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Yes.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'll have to look into that as well. Details are extremely important in cases like that. It's hard to generalize.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay.

Are you at least prioritizing people who are currently in Egypt? A lot of people managed to make their way into Egypt, and it is certainly very difficult to get out of Gaza at the moment.

Are those who are in Egypt a priority under the special measures program for extended family members in Gaza?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We give priority to those who have completed the visa application process, whether they're in Egypt, Rafah or Gaza.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** All right.

Am I to understand—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We will now go to Madam Kwan.

Madam Kwan, you have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Could the Minister tell us how many more applications will be processed as a result of the announcement today?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I gave you that number leading up until May 20. I would have to check how many individuals that translates into.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** By my calculation, based on your numbers, there's a difference of 583 codes. Based on the application numbers that were approved, by my calculations, it was 2,197. Maybe officials can confirm that at a later time so that we know how many more applications will be processed.

Could the minister explain if you need to have a code to be issued a TRV?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** No, not necessarily. Again, I broke down for colleagues at this committee the humanitarian visas for those who didn't have codes or others. That adds up to something that is different, so you don't necessarily, but you still have to go through the process of screening.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** You don't have to have the codes, yet people were told that they have to have the code. People were desperate to get onto the portal to apply to get the code, but as it turns out, if people can manage to find a way, however they can, to cross the border, they don't need the code and then they can get a TRV.

Officials have been telling.... Some families were told that they should apply for a TRV outside of the special immigration measure, and the minister just confirmed that they don't need a code, so families feel betrayed. I hope the minister understands that. Precious time was lost as people waited to go through this process, but this process got them nowhere because not one person under this process was able to get to safety. However, people who managed to get outside of the process are now able to move along.

How many duplications of applications are there and, because of the wasted time, how many lives have been lost?

• (1200)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think you're presuming a lot of things to come to that conclusion.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Actually I'm not. I've talked to family members who have lost lives.

**The Chair:** One person speak at a time, please.

I will go to the minister.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** It's not all as a result of this process. As you know, there is a war in place. We are doing our utmost to bring people to safety.

If people left with a code, then we are able to process them. If they left without a code and they're eligible under the program, we are doing our best to process them. If they are still stuck in Rafah or elsewhere, we are doing our utmost to advocate for their safe exit.

To the best of my knowledge, I don't believe people were told to stay until they got a code. We don't have the appreciation that people would have there about how their lives are threatened, and we don't judge them when they pay an exorbitant fee to leave to keep themselves alive.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Madam Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** If I could make a final comment, the truth of the matter, then, is people actually didn't need the code. That is the truth, and that should have been told to them right from the beginning.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I go to Mr. McLean for five minutes.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will quote:

There is no doubt that Canadian citizenship is highly valued and recognized around the world. We want...citizenship...to be fair, accessible, with clear and transparent rules.

Minister, for all we've seen in the immigration process programming announced to aid with the emergencies in Sudan and Gaza, it's safe to say that announcements made here in Canada by your government don't mesh with the operational realities that would enable migrants from these two conflict areas. Operationally, you don't have solutions, not for lack of trying, you say.

We know that any government faces resource constraints and that you have to make choices, so the contrast of your inaction on these humanitarian files is stark compared to when you have chosen to take action. You personally, as minister, intervened with Canada Border Services Agency and chose to stay the deportation of Zain Haq. Minister, can you tell us why you dedicated your scarce resources to this intervention?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** There's a lot to unpack there.

First, I will note for this committee that we are not talking, again, about the devastating situations in Gaza and Sudan, and I do not comment on individual cases.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** This is about allocation resources, including the ones you're not allocating—

**The Chair:** Wait just a minute. There's a point of order.

Madam Kayabaga, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Chair.

I hate to be the bad guy in doing this, but we want to get through these questions. There are so many people who are watching, in the room and online, who want to get answers on Gaza and Sudan. Can we please get to the relevance of the questions from our colleague?

**The Chair:** Thank you, honourable member.

It's the honourable member's time, five minutes, and it's up to him how he utilizes it, so I will give the floor to him.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you.

This is about allocation of resources, which include the resources that aren't being allocated to Gaza and Sudan. It's about accountability, Minister. In your own words, "clear and transparent rules", the quote I read, you're responsible to Parliament. Your intervention under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is answerable to Parliament, yet here is your response to the question asked of you on this matter on the floor of the House of Commons. You said, "These are not matters we talk about publicly, much less on the floor of the House of Commons."

Parliamentarians disagree. Your responsibility under section 50 of the IRPA is not a personal right. Maybe you were caught off guard when the question was asked of you in the House of Commons. This is your opportunity today to correct that. Why did you intervene in the deportation order of Mr. Zain Haq?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I would highlight for this committee the patent disregard for those two humanitarian situations in Gaza and Sudan exemplified by the line of questioning posed by Conservative members. This has nothing to do with the matter at hand. Using those as a hook to answer a question for their own sound bites is, I think, typical of what we are facing with Conservative—

• (1205)

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you, Minister.

Let me ask the question in a different way.

You aren't allocating the proper resources, because you're misallocating them. Mr. Zain Haq is in Canada on a student visa. The rules for maintaining status with a student visa require abiding by Canadian law—clear and transparent rules that aren't available for Gazans and Sudanese.

Mr. Haq broke Canadian law 10 times, plus a contempt of court order. Do you think this case warrants your intervention more than intervening for Gazans or Sudanese refugees?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, these two parallels are disgraceful. If you have a question to ask me about a particular case, you have

plenty of opportunities to ask me outside a committee meeting that is dedicated to saving the lives of Gazans and Sudanese.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** You've had months now to save lives, and you've sat on your hands in many respects. You're allocating resources badly.

Let me quote the court ruling against Zain Haq:

Mr. Haq has shown disdain for the rule of law and he has publicly encouraged others to break the law while publicly celebrating his arrest.

Minister, I only get so many chances to ask these questions of you—

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Hold on, Mr. McLean.

I will go to Madam Zahid.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you, Chair.

I have a point of order on relevance.

We are here to talk about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Sudan. The Conservatives seem not to care about them because they want to talk about something else. It's very important that we keep this meeting to relevant subject.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madam Zahid.

As I said, the honourable member has five minutes and he has only exhausted three minutes and 47 seconds.

Mr. McLean, please go ahead.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Well, I'll check that in the time, but I have questions to ask the minister about his allocation of resources here.

Clear and transparent rules, Minister.... Zain Haq is a temporary resident in Canada on a student visa and a repeat offender if he doesn't even attend his designated learning institution.

How many criminal offences does it take to make a non-studying foreign student eligible for a legitimate deportation order?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, the decision whether to deport or not is not mine to take, nor should it be. The individual circumstances of a case are not ones I would comment on publicly.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Minister, you're intervening on behalf of a criminal who has been convicted in Canada, but you won't intervene to make the process better for Sudanese or Gazan refugees. This is a choice you are making. Canadians and people who are waiting to get into Canada want to understand why you're making these choices.

Can you please explain to Parliament, to Canadians and to this committee why you've allocated resources to keeping criminals in Canada rather than to getting refugees into Canada?

**The Chair:** Minister, the time is up. You can respond briefly.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I would say in response that you are weaponizing the situation in Gaza and Sudan—and indeed the families behind us—to make a petty political point.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. McLean.

We will go to Mr. Ali.

Mr. Ali, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister and officials, for being here.

Minister, as you know, innocent lives are being lost in Gaza, Rafah and Sudan. Unfortunately, our Conservative colleagues are more concerned about Netanyahu's hypothetical arrest than calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and Rafah. Sadly, Conservatives are using this human tragedy for their political advantage, which is very painful. This meeting was dedicated to Gaza and Sudan, and they're coming with different questions and diverting. Conservatives have not once called for a ceasefire since this tragedy started, and this is the tragedy of the century.

I want to ask you what challenges you're facing in bringing people from Gaza or Sudan here under the measures you announced.

• (1210)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I agree with the point that you're making, MP Ali.

There are people dying, whether it's Sudan or Gaza, and Canada is expected to act. It has acted decisively within its ability to act on international aid, both for Sudan and Gaza. We have landed hundreds if not thousands of refugees from Sudan since the offence broke out. We continue to make sure that up to 7,000 people will be able to come here.

This is about saving lives. It should not be a partisan activity. As you know, the war with Hamas, the devastation in Gaza, has grasped the attention of the world, with cause, and it has polarized many people who used to talk to each other, who used to get along. It has been devastating not only in Gaza and Israel with the dreadful terrorist attack on October 7—an attempt to exterminate a people—but also here in Canada with Islamophobia and anti-Semitism running rampant.

I think we need to estimate—because perhaps we've underestimated—the damage that this has caused us as a country and the divisive politics that come out of it. I don't need votes from this; I just need people to stay alive. I don't want the vote of someone who thinks that legitimate criticism of the Netanyahu government, which I share, equates to picking on Jews in this country and targeting them. If those people have that type of thinking, I don't want their vote.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you, Minister.

Along with our colleague Salma Zahid, we had an opportunity to visit Palestine. We heard the stories on the ground of what the people are going through. It's from both sides. Human lives are being lost. It's a human tragedy. Here at home, Islamophobia, as you rightly said, and anti-Semitism are on the rise. Our Conservative friends are exploiting the situation rather than bringing people together. I agree with you that we should not be using this as a politi-

cal issue. This is a human tragedy. We should, first of all, all come together to call for a ceasefire and try to make every effort to save lives in Gaza, Rafah and Sudan.

I want to change the topic towards the processing centre under the Indo-Pacific strategy. We announced in 2022 that funds were allocated. Three other locations are up and running, but Islamabad is still in.... We don't have updates.

If you could submit that in writing to the committee, that would be appreciated.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Honourable Minister, the time is up, unless you want to respond.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I know he cares about the issues that are happening in Islamabad. We've doubled our capacity there. We're looking to secure those visas, and we'll get to it. However, it's high time that we see that increase happen on the ground.

We can give you all those details at a later date.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I will go to my dear friend, Mr. Maguire, for six minutes.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, you may have given us some of these numbers already, but how many Sudanese have applied for that family-based permanent residency pathway for people affected by the conflict in Sudan?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Bear with me, Larry. I gave that to my colleague, but I think the numbers and the programs do differ. In the short period between the launch, which was February 27, 2024, and now, May 20, there have been 2,542 applications accepted, which translates into about just short of 6,000 individuals, excluding non-accompanying dependents.

• (1215)

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** How many are in Canada now?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Of those, since the program opened, there are none. As was always the case, as we work with partner organizations, we're looking to land some as early as later this year.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thanks.

There was a gap between the time the conflict began on April 15, 2023 and the introduction of the family-based permanent residency pathways about eight months later in December.

Given the similarity of the program to some of the previous IR-CC plans—they're pretty much the same—what was the reason for this long lag?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** In the context of a humanitarian catastrophe, I'm not going to offer any excuses for that. I don't think, by that same brushstroke, we should presume that nothing's been done.

During that same period, there have been 3,622 protected persons and resettled refugees of various categories, so it's not as if everyone was waiting for this program to get into place. It is very much an accompanying program for our response to Sudan.

I just don't want to leave people with that impression.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** With respect to your family-based permanent residency pathway, can you explain how you arrived at the figure of 3,250 for the cap on the applications?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** It's a rough estimate based on how many family members per application.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** The president of the Sudanese Canadian Communities Association told the CBC that he doesn't understand the rationale for the cap.

Have you been in touch with that association in regard to its concerns?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The entirety of the program was devised and worked with and through umbrella organizations. I believe that includes that organization.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Have you spoken to them? If so, what was their...?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** In fact, we worked pretty closely with a number of those organizations to devise the policy in the first place.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** What I'll take from that is that you haven't.

Given the tragic reality that Sudan has become the world's biggest displacement crisis, what's the IRCC's projection for the uptake of the family-based permanent residence pathway for people affected by this conflict?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** As you know and as I mentioned, the program filled up very quickly within the last three months.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I'm going to turn it over to my colleague for one question.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Mr. Chair, how much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You have three minutes.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Minister, in an exchange with one of the Liberal MPs, the question was asked about the paying of smugglers and bribes by certain people to get across the border.

You said in your response that you won't condone it, but you understand.

Are you aware that under the IRPA, paragraph 36(2)(c), committing an offence overseas that would be an offence in Canada makes a person ineligible to obtain a visa? It's an offence in Canada to pay human traffickers under Criminal Code section 279. Would those people then be denied a visa to come to Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** That isn't the case, no.

We would perhaps ask additional questions, but you're again asking us to hold in judgment people who are trying to stay alive and safe.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Are you saying that paragraph 36(2)(c) will not apply to anyone who is paying a human smuggling network—a

criminal network—to come to Canada, whether from Sudan, Gaza or anywhere else?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You make a lot of presumptions about the paying of these amounts and who they went to in various shapes or forms.

This organization has been described as executive travel services or, in the context of this, quite usurious extortion of people looking to leave a desperate situation. I think that would depend on the circumstances at hand.

Again, would you deny them that right simply because they tried to save their lives by paying some money?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Minister, you're speaking of a specific organization.

Are you speaking of Hala Consulting and Tourism?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Yes.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I'm speaking more broadly, beyond just this particular organization, because I don't know exactly who they are.

They were mentioned in a Toronto Star article that has the title "King of the Crossing", on the man selling a way out of Gaza. I'm talking more broadly of all criminal networks.

Are you saying that paragraph 36(2)(c) of the IRPA is in abeyance? Like, the department will not apply it? You're the minister. Are you saying you will not apply this particular section?

● (1220)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'm not saying that at all.

What I said is...I took a particular set of facts that you presented to me, refuted them and then you started to generalize about something that has nothing to do necessarily with the case at hand, so I'm asking you the question.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Minister, you're issuing visas. That is literally your job. You have a department to help you with that.

The IRPA, which was passed by Parliament, tells you that you cannot issue a visa to someone who has committed a criminal act outside of Canada—just committed the act, not convicted of the act. You're saying you're not going to apply the law.

I'm asking you a legal question. You are the minister responsible for the file. You've shown before in other questioning that you either don't know your file or you're not caught up on your file.

I'm asking you, will this particular section of the act apply, yes or no?

**The Chair:** Honourable Minister, the time is up. You can respond briefly.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The legal answer is that we follow the IRPA.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I will now go to Madam Kayabaga.

Madam Kayabaga, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would just like to put on the record that as we are talking about the crossing at Rafah, it's really important to mention that today the news is that there is burning everywhere. Gazans are under fire. They're burning. They're dying. There are babies beheaded. The images are horrendous. I don't wish this upon anyone. I would hope that, in the right conscience, if the minister had to save a life, he would choose to save a life versus using some legal jargon that we are talking about here today.

Minister, you increased the cap from 1,000 to 5,000 today. Can you talk about whether this cap is per application or per person?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** In this case, it's per person.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Can you explain to us what the desired success is of this new 1,000 limit that you've set?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The 5,000 limit? Well, we want to get those people out. We want them to be safe. We want them to take temporary refuge for the period in time covered by the policy, which is three years. Obviously, being flexible, the priority now is just to get them to safety.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Can you help us understand the relationship between the governments? Other colleagues have asked this. I have not heard the number of people who have been able to cross through the Rafah border. Now we're seeing that people are literally burning in these refugee camps. What is our relationship to be able to get things moving on this border?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Regardless of the views of the two governments that control the exit from Rafah in various situations, we owe it to the people we are trying to save to maintain diplomatic relationships and maintain lines of communication. Even when we disagree vehemently with some of the actions being taken, there's an understanding that our public statements do have an impact on the ability to deploy a policy like this at times. That's the reality of trying to save people in a war. That's the reality that we have to compose with.

Yes, I am in contact with the Israeli ambassador and with the Egyptian ambassador in particular. Our teams work together to coordinate this policy to the extent that it's accepted, and, when it is, to get people issued visas in a prompt fashion. For those who are in Cairo, we have a good working relationship with the Egyptian government to make sure that we can have visas for the people coming in to process visas, and then their co-operation to make sure that we can keep tracking people so that they can actually get to Canada once the visas are issued.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** This current special measure right now is for temporary residents. I heard previously that for other people, when it's permanent, it's permanent. They can stay. If it's temporary, I think someone in the room asked—it might have been my colleague Ms. Zahid—what the plan is for the people who come here through the TRV. If Canada's not playing a role in, or maybe doesn't

have a future in playing a role in, bringing Gazans back to Gaza when they want to go back, what is the plan after? Is there a plan to extend as we have done for other measures—for Ukraine, for example?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You're speaking specifically about the Gaza program. The Sudanese program is a permanent resident program.

The Gaza program was designed specifically as a temporary resident program for three years, not knowing what the outcome of this would be for a number of reasons. I think there are very important geopolitical considerations, particularly with some of the rhetoric around the emptying of Gaza and the perception that Canada would be participating in that. It's quite the contrary. We're participating in trying to save lives.

That is the reason principally that we did not make it permanent. Obviously, we're not sending anyone back to a war zone. Canadians would judge us quite severely if we even purported to do so.

• (1225)

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I just wanted to make sure, because—

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'll just say that given the geopolitical considerations, let's assume that at some point this will come to an end. We will do our utmost to make sure that people can repatriate, if they so choose.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I just had to ask, because I think the confusion is there when it's a temporary measure.

I'll go back to the Sudan question. I won't ask any of the questions you've already been asked, because I've already picked up on those answers.

Under what circumstances would the department consider increasing the cap that we have right now?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** First and foremost, I think it's the situation on the ground.

Second, an important consideration because of limited resources, which are always a consideration in the logistics of trying to make these programs effective and implement them so that they have a measure of success, is largely looking at our humanitarian commitments—everyone knows that the catastrophe that's going on in Sudan is largely a forgotten war by the international community—and watching that quite closely, probably more closely than it has been to date.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Has this measure been effective? Is it meeting your targets or desired goal?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I don't think anyone should be happy until people are here and we've ironed out some of the challenges with logistics in getting people here.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Would you mind mentioning those, Minister?



**Hon. Marc Miller:** There are challenges with respect to keeping track of where people are, making sure they're safe and making sure the application process is fully performed. It's very challenging to get biometrics done in an area that is still under constant attack or threat to populations. We're making sure we are being flexible in the context, as well as taking all the other measures we have up to now to ensure that thousands of Sudanese have been welcomed in Canada since the war broke out.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madam Kayabaga.

We will go to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for six minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, when you were speaking with my colleague Mr. Ali, you spoke about the impact of the conflict between Israel and Gaza here in Quebec and Canada, where quite a few serious anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents have occurred. It was mainly anti-Semitism.

As you said earlier that you wouldn't want their votes. You're right. No one wants people like that to vote for them.

Something unfortunate happened recently at a demonstration, when a well-known preacher openly called for the murder of Jews. According to the Criminal Code, fomenting hate against an identifiable group is a criminal offence, but there is unfortunately an exemption when it's based on religion. The wording is: "No person shall be convicted...if, in good faith, he expressed or attempted to establish by argument and opinion upon a religious subject...".

The Bloc Québécois introduced a bill which explicitly addresses this. We simply want to amend the Criminal Code to remove this exemption. As you are the person who raised this matter in committee, I'd like to know what you think about the idea of removing the religious exemption from the Criminal Code.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'm dismayed and disgusted to see someone say things like that against Jews. You are alluding to Mr. Adil Charkaoui—

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I am.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** —for whom there was no punishment or consequences. But then I don't want to make any assumptions about why the prosecutor decided not to lay criminal charges.

We need to see how it would work in the Bloc's bill, but generally speaking, even if the Bible can be used as an excuse for hate, it ought not to be allowed. It's only common sense.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Look at this slogan.

The bill is very straightforward and its intent is to amend the Criminal Code by just removing the religious exemption. I think we agree on that. Thank you for your reply, minister. We too found it disgusting.

Minister, you stated publicly that you would review the program from the humanitarian standpoint in order to find ways of getting Canadian families out of Gaza as quickly as possible.

Could certain parameters be made more flexible to speed up the reunification of these families, or at least shorten the time required?

Are you monitoring this in real time or has there already been a decision not to change the parameters?

• (1230)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I have something very important to add. It's not Canadian families, but the relatives of Canadian families. In other words, close relatives.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Yes, of course.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The reason for the security checks is that we don't know these people. Clearly, they are fleeing from the war. As you know, a mechanism is forthcoming, including a biometric analysis. People need to get out of Rafah.

We would naturally like things to move more quickly, but there are factors we don't control. For example, there's an operation under way in Rafah. We hope it will end; it's what we're asking for. Nevertheless, I think we've shown that we've managed to eliminate quite a few glitches in the program. My team is also in direct contact with many families, including those here today.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Some have already been granted permanent or temporary residence; they have therefore already provided their biometric data.

As they have already gone through the biometric authentication process, could the requirement for them to undergo it again not be waived? Or is the current way of doing it preferred?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I believe that previously provided biometric data is valid for five to 10 years. So the answer is that they shouldn't have to do it over again.

I know that you're not doing it on purpose, but you are in fact confusing the program that we introduced, which is not for permanent residents. These people—

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** No, that's not what I want to say. I'm not confusing anything. What I want to say is that some people have submitted an application under the program, even though they had received permanent resident status in the past, even though it's no longer valid today. This means that the biometric data has already been recorded.

You're saying that biometric data is valid for five to 10 years. Yet I understand that at the moment, even those whose biometric data is still valid need to provide the data once again. That's what people are telling me.

I'm simply suggesting that this step could be eliminated for people who already have valid biometrics.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I believe that the validity period remains the same and that they would not necessarily have to do it again.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay, I'm going to mention some cases in which, unfortunately, it all had to be redone.

It's not serious. If it can be sorted out, we'll sort it out.

I'd like to talk about Sudan. Since April 30, 2023, the Canadian government has prioritized temporary and permanent residence applications from everyone living in Sudan.

[English]

**The Chair:** The time is up, honourable member.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** How many applicants have received this priority processing since April 30, 2023?

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, your time is up.

Honourable Minister, briefly respond, please.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I didn't hear the question properly, Mr. Chair, because you interrupted him to say that his speaking time was up. We could provide him with full information about all the people in question.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Great. Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll come back. Thank you.

I'll go to MP Kwan for six minutes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

I'm going to ask a few more questions on Gaza, and then I'm going to move on to Sudan.

Could the minister advise us of the number of people who have crossed to Egypt for Canada, and who have managed to cross from January until now? In the U.S., we know there are at least 435. In Italy, there are 317. In Australia, there are 300. What's the number for Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The number of individuals who have departed Gaza independently is at about 1,214. As for the assisted departures, which I think you were alluding to, since the beginning, it's 2,588. Again, though, you'd have to ask me a more precise question.

• (1235)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay. I'm going to pause this question then.

What work is being done to look at other borders and options for people to cross outside of Rafah?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Currently, we continue to advocate for a managed exit at any border that is available, but as you know, there are none that are open at this time. This is a continued diplomatic effort as part of the advocacy for a ceasefire and access to humanitarian aid.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Perhaps we can get something in writing, or perhaps when the officials are up, we can get a more detailed answer than, "Hey, we're trying, but nothing is happening."

There are people in Egypt who managed to cross the border on their own, but they're stuck. Their applications have not been processed, so no TRVs have been issued, and this is supposed to be a first in, first out process.

Why have these people not been issued TRVs? How many people are stuck?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I can't tell you that or presume that's an accurate statement. People have to go through the eligibility in the program. If they have crossed over from Gaza into Egypt, they are safe, thank heavens. They are eligible for the program. We are doing our utmost to get them to Canada.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Based on the survey of families, we have 914 applications that are in Egypt. Of those, 121 got visas, and they've been there for a very long time. The rest of them are just stuck in the system.

I'm going to come back to that with the officials later.

On Sudan, what we know is that the quota of 3,250 has now been reached. How many of those have been issued visas?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** That work is still ongoing at this time, so I don't believe any in the context of this program.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay. The conflict has been occurring since last year, and it took the government eight months to announce this program. To date, we're expecting, based on the answers, it will be almost two years before anybody can get to safety. What is the holdup?

**The Chair:** The bells are ringing. Do we have unanimous consent to carry on with the meeting?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Normally, my colleague doesn't want to do that, but we would be willing to let the NDP finish their round and then suspend the meeting.

**The Chair:** I have stopped the clock.

I need to know if I have unanimous consent to carry on with the meeting or if we will stop the meeting.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Until the end of the—

**The Chair:** I cannot have—

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe has a point of order.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** The committee is sovereign. If Mr. Redekopp's proposal is that we allow Ms. Kwan to finish her comments, and then suspend the meeting, we are entitled to do that. If the Conservatives wish to allow Ms. Kwan to finish her round, I am definitely in favour of that.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. I will carry on with Madam Kwan.

Madam Kwan, you have three minutes left.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** There was a question for me. Do you want me to take it?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Yes. How many visas have been issued? I think you said none.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Let's not presume that nothing has happened. We have evacuated 846 people.

Under other programs, we have about 4,200 people who are here, but under this program, which was launched earlier this year, the process is still ongoing. The intake cap has been recently achieved, as of May 6, so no visas been issued in this context.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** The issue here is why it is taking so long. Is it a problem with issuing visas and getting people to safety because of staffing resources, or is it because of the immigration level numbers that are actually limiting the ability for the government to move people to safety in a much more expeditious way?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** In this case, it certainly isn't the immigration level numbers.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Then what's the problem?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We launched the program a few months ago. It is at the intake cap as of May 6, and we continue the security processing and the landing of people, which was always planned to be around early 2025. We are moving that up to 2024. We're working as hard as we can.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay. Then it will be almost two years before people get to safety. It took the government eight months to actually announce the program back in December and then another two months to actually move forward with the application process.

With the 3,250 cap, is that to do with the immigration levels plan?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, let's not presume that no work has been done in the interim. This is a family reunification program of people from different locations who have been affected by this devastating reality.

The number we have set is one that we do to manage our ability to properly process people within the programs, and all of these programs, with very few exceptions, have caps.

● (1240)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Well, the immigration levels plan for 2024 for H and C is 13,750; for 2025, 8,000; and for 2026, 8,000. You can see how tight those numbers are.

If the minister says it has nothing to do with the immigration levels plan, can he provide the committee with a list of all the countries that are supposed to fit into these tight numbers that are needing special immigration measures or H and C applications to get to safety? As well, what are the allocations for those countries?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** To the extent that we have them, I'm sure we could provide a rough estimate of what will be comprised in those. As you know, there are many events that happen around the world, and we have to open our arms to people who are fleeing war and devastation. We do that, and we will continue to do that. Often that does put pressure on some of these things we try to predict years before but that don't necessarily turn out to be true. Take, for example, the situation in Ukraine.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Maybe we can get the breakdown of those numbers. How many are targeted for Ukraine? How many are targeted for the Americas with the government's special deal, the se-

cret deal, for the safe third country agreement, for Sudan, for Hong Kong, for Gaza, etc.? Can we get those numbers, please?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I just take issue with the 15,000 in the Americas program. It's far from secret. It's quite open.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** It was negotiated in secret.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Well, we don't negotiate things with Biden in front of a press gallery, that's for sure. However, we certainly talk to them and come up with a plan to make sure there's a safe way to migrate through the Americas, which, as you know, is exceedingly dangerous, especially through the Darien Gap.

**The Chair:** The time is up, Madam Kwan, so I will—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** He just rambled on.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Morrice, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Mr. Chair, we have 25 minutes until our next vote. I request from the committee two minutes to ask a question of the minister on this topic.

**The Chair:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** Is there unanimous consent to continue the meeting?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** No.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec said there's no consent, so I'm going to suspend the meeting.

● (1240)

(Pause)

● (1330)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting to order.

We will have one round of four minutes for each party.

Without further ado, we will start with Mr. McLean.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the officials for being here today.

I do have some questions. I'm going to start with some of the clear issues around Sudan.

The program you've designed for Sudanese refugees to come to Canada allows for 3,250 applicants. I think this is the number of spaces. Delineate for us how 3,250 is the right number and how many you think it will actually be, because most of these people will have to bring their families as well. It's 3,250 spaces, which will probably be fewer than 1,000 applicants if they bring in their families. Why is it so low?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar (Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Chair, just to clarify, the program, which is designed for permanent residents, is for 3,250 applications, and each application can include dependants. If there were a family, that family would be included as a part of that application. Roughly calculated, our assessment—and this is a little bit of an extrapolation based on family sizes—is that somewhere in the range of 6,000 to 8,000 people will come on the 3,250 applications that are made.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Doing some quick math, that's two people per each of the 3,250 applications, effectively, and you're saying there will be 6,000 people. That's an applicant and their spouse only, but most of these people will have family with them. Was there no consideration of that whatsoever?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Chair, what I am trying to say is this is an extrapolation. If the applicant includes family members on their application, we will process all of those members, so 3,250 applications will be processed, and spouses, kids and family members will comprise the number of people who come.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Deputy Minister, the root of the question was why the number of applications is 3,250 when, seven years ago, we accommodated 30,000 people from Syria within four months. We had 40,000 from Afghanistan, although it took much longer, and a year later we're setting application spaces at 3,250 for what is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world right now. Why is the number 3,250?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Chair, the 3,250 applications are part of a special program that we have instituted for Sudan, but before we rolled out this program, we had already done much more in terms of bringing Sudanese people here.

If I may, 4,202 is the exact number of total permanent resident admissions since the conflict began. This is supplemented by another number—around 3,622—that includes protected persons such as government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees, for example.

• (1335)

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you.

There also seems to be some discrepancy in the way we've treated our locally engaged staff in Sudan versus locally engaged staff in other Canadian consular activities around the world.

Our locally engaged staff were not brought here after the conflict in Sudan the way they were in other conflicts like those in Ukraine and Afghanistan. We have not treated these people according to the same standard.

Can you tell me why we've performed differently in this respect?

**The Chair:** Deputy Minister, the time is up. You may give a brief response.

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Every program is tailor-made to get the most vulnerable people out, and this program, in addition to what we have done for protected persons, permanent residents and assisted departures, has actually helped the Sudanese to come here as permanent residents.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will now go to Parliamentary Secretary Chiang.

Mr. Chiang, you have four minutes.

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the officials for coming to speak to us.

I've heard from many people in my riding that the traditional definition of family that is often used by the government simply does not reflect the needs of the community or the reality on the ground in Gaza. Regarding the special measure that you put in for Gazans to apply to these with extended family here in Canada, can you explain why it is that way?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** For the purpose of this particular special program, we designed a program that has extended family members, which we are calling eligible family members. These family members, if I may, include children, spouses, parents and other close relatives.

There's a definition that we have provided in terms of eligible members, which is more than the classic definition that is captured in IRPA about extended family members. We have worked on that in such a way that we can have a bigger net cast on bringing more people and uniting the families.

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** Thank you, Deputy Minister.

I have constituents in my riding who are coming to me and saying that their family is stuck in Cairo. They cannot come out, and they have done the bio and everything like that, and they still haven't heard anything from IRCC.

What kind of timeline should I tell constituents in regard to getting the bio and getting safely to Canada?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** What we try to do in terms of the ability to process their application is that, if somebody is in Cairo, they can connect through submitting a web form or connect with us through IRCC and our presence in Cairo at the Canadian embassy. We obviously are processing those applicants in terms of priority processing, and, if your biometrics are done, we will go through to the next step and process them accordingly.

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I would like to share my time with my colleague.

**The Chair:** Madam Kayabaga, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you so much to my colleague for sharing his time with me.

Quickly, through you, Chair, in the last meeting, I requested the submission of some documents by the department where there's proof of other instances when we've requested people to show social media...physical signs as to why they have to provide them their application. I have not received that. I've not seen it, so, if that's been submitted, please let me know. If not, I will ask again that you submit that.

• (1340)

**The Chair:** I have stopped the clock.

I just want to tell the honourable members, regarding the question that Madam Kayabaga asked, that the clerk has received some documents, and he will be circulating them to the committee soon.

Mr. Deputy Minister, please go ahead.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** No, I—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Madam Kayabaga.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you so much, Chair; you're very efficient.

I have a question around the fee that people have to pay for processing. If people are in a situation like what Sudanese and Gazans find themselves in, is there a possibility of waiving the fee? Right now, I think an adult pays about \$635 and children cost \$175.

This fee has been waived for Ukrainians. Is it possible for us to waive it for Sudanese community members and Gazans as well? They're also fleeing a very tough situation.

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Mr. Chair, the minister has been able to waive the fees on biometric collection as well as some other fees. We can get you some information about how this compares in both the Sudanese and—

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Can we have that submitted?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Yes.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Madam Kayabaga, time is up.

We will go to my dear friend Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Go ahead for four minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to share my speaking time with Mr. Mike Morrice, of the Green Party of Canada.

Since April 30, 2023, the Canadian government has been prioritizing temporary and permanent residence applications from everyone living in Sudan.

Is that correct?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Deputy Minister, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Jennifer MacIntyre:** Yes.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Right. Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, but—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Why—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** —Madam MacIntyre is going to respond to your question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Yes, she answered me.

**Ms. Jennifer MacIntyre:** Yes, it's true that since the start of the crisis, we've been assigning priority to processing applications from Sudan residents.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Why does this not apply to the 1.8 million refugees who were living in Sudan on April 15, 2023, but who have since been forced to flee from Sudan and take refuge in a neighbouring country?

**Ms. Jennifer MacIntyre:** At the beginning of the crisis, Canada was very successful with Sudan nationals. Last year, we were one of the leaders among our allies. More than 3,000 Sudanese refugees came to Canada. We co-operated with the International Organization for Migration in Port Sudan, where we processed applications from more than 400 refugees.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** My question is pretty straightforward. Why don't we also set a priority on the 1.8 million Sudanese who were in Sudan on April 15, 2023 and who then took refuge in a neighbouring country?

**Ms. Jennifer MacIntyre:** We are in fact processing all applications from Sudanese nationals, even those who are currently in a neighbouring country, including those who were in Sudan at the start of the crisis.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** So those who are in neighbouring countries are also being prioritized—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Morrice, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Thank you once again, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*English*]

Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the officials for being here.

I would like to follow up with concerns among the Sudanese community in the Waterloo region.

At a time when we know there have been 15,000 or more people killed and four million children displaced, leaders in my community are saying that they just want to see treatment similar to what they've seen for other countries. I'll share one example. The president of the Sudanese Canadian Association of Waterloo Region and Wellington County, whose name is El Bagir Abdulkarim, submitted applications for his brother and mother on March 2 and 6. There has been no response yet.

I've spoken with the minister about it. He shared with me what he shared with this committee, as well, which is that the standard processing time would be early 2025 and that we should be grateful things are being moved faster, to potentially fall of 2024. We know that other countries, like Ukraine, for example, have had processing times of 14 days.

Why is it that processing times for family members of Sudanese Canadians seem so much slower than for other countries?

• (1345)

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds to respond, Deputy Minister. Please go ahead.

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Thank you for the question.

The comparison for that one is that the Ukrainian program was meant to be a temporary residency program. The Sudanese program is a permanent residency program. This means we will be welcoming Sudanese permanently to the country. The processing is obviously going to take into consideration eligibility and admissibility. On the other hand, it was an eTA country, which is not a visa-required country, Ukraine, and we had to process them faster.

This is a norm in any comparison between permanent residency and temporary residency.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Morrice. Your time is up.

We'll go to Madam Kwan.

Madam Kwan, please go ahead for four minutes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** On the issue of differential treatment, the government could have brought in a temporary program for Sudanese to get to safety, and then, as they are doing for the Ukrainians, provide a PR program subsequently. The government could have done that, but they chose not to. It's going to take at least two years now for people to get to safety.

Now, I think the block here is on the immigration levels plan numbers. The deputy minister just said that out of the 3,250 special immigration measures for Sudanese, we'll be expecting 6,000 to 8,000 people from those applications.

Would that be coming out of 2024 immigration levels plan numbers or is that going to be coming out of the 2025 planned immigration levels for the H and C category?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** As we continue to process, Chair, some of them will probably be landed in 2024, so they will be in the 2024 levels. The rest, as they are processed, will be in the other levels, which are subsequent years.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Could the officials provide the committee the list of countries of PR applications under the H and C program that have been approved so that we can see how many of the spaces are allotted for 2024, which is 13,750, and how many they expect for 2025, for which the allotted space is 8,000?

If you look at the numbers accordingly, 6,000 to 8,000 coming out of the 3,250 applications for 2025, let's say not all of them; let's just say even 5,000. That's the bulk of the numbers. You then have only 300 left. That's supposed to cover Ukraine; that's supposed to cover Gaza and that's supposed to cover Hong Kong. It's supposed to cover all the other categories, including protected persons. How is the government going to make those numbers work? Is that the real reason there is such a delay?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** First of all, Chair, we will provide you with our estimates as requested in terms of the numbers.

Second, we continue to process the applications as quickly as we can and actually find the spaces in the current program. However, if there is an opportunity, there might be other ways which we can explore in terms of adding more numbers.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'd love to hear from the deputy minister and, if we don't have time, perhaps have him submit to the committee what other streams they are going to raid to make these numbers work. Unless the government actually increases the immigration levels numbers, the numbers are not going to add up, so which stream are they going to raid?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** As I mentioned earlier, my intent, Chair, was to say that there is a yearly renewal of the multi-year levels plan. Those are the ways in which the adjustments are done for the purpose of all those pending.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** On the yearly renewal, we're already talking about 2024-25, so now we're talking about 2026 and beyond. The numbers just don't add up. In any event, I'll wait for the breakdown so that we can see, because this has implications not just for the Sudanese community but for all the other communities that are in desperate need of the PR numbers and the processing delay that is jammed up in the system.

I want to just touch on the issue of finances and financial barriers. If the deputy can also provide the exact breakdown of why some communities have had their fees waived and others have not, we have a fulsome comparison using Ukraine as the gold standard and then comparing that to all the other communities that are in need of support.

• (1350)

**The Chair:** The time is up, Deputy Minister.

Do you want to respond?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Chair, I've already mentioned that we will provide that information, which was requested in terms of what exactly is the breakdown of different categories of people who would be coming in, over the previous years.

**The Chair:** The time is up. We agreed on four minutes each. I'm going to adjourn the meeting on behalf of the committee members.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Mr. Chair, before you adjourn, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes, but let me thank the officials first. I want to thank the officials.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Chair, we have 10 minutes. We can still have—

**The Chair:** It's agreed.

On behalf of the committee members, I want to thank the deputy minister, assistant deputy minister and the director for coming here and sharing their time with us.

I also want to thank the interpreters, the support staff and of course the public that has come to this meeting.

With that, I will let the officials leave.

I have two points of order. One I think I've already dealt with.

Madam Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Mr. Chair, I just want to make sure that the committee would be able to get the information that was requested of the minister. He was not able to provide the data for the committee members. I want to be clear that this is not missed. I asked the minister for the numbers of TRV applications that are in the system for those in Egypt—this is related to Gaza—and to indicate if they are part of the SIM, the special immigration measure, and whether or not they issue a code, and of those, how many TRVs have been issued to them.

The minister said that he actually didn't know. I said that I was going to bring that to officials, so I want to make sure that the officials will provide that data to us as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madam Kayabaga.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Chair, I also wanted to reiterate that with the submissions, we didn't have time. The votes really cut into the time. If we could get submissions from the department on the—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That is not a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. McLean.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Along the same lines, Mr. Chair, some meetings ago we had officials here, and we asked for some information from them that hasn't been provided.

**The Chair:** I already said that the clerk has received the information, and it will be given to you.

I'm going to adjourn the meeting right now, as agreed to by all parties.

The meeting is adjourned.

---







Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>