



BVOR NEWS

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

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Brantford Muslim community supports BVOR refugees and their sponsors



Imam Abu Noman Tarek is so popular, it's hard to get him to sit down for an interview. On this Saturday afternoon he has just finished hosting a community event at the Brantford Mosque. Christian church members and priests, mosque members, local dignitaries and politicians, political party members, young people, refugee sponsors and newcomers were greeted with abundant food and welcome by the mosque. Now that most people have left, the local Anglican priest has dropped by to invite him to dinner.

"In the last few years I am very encouraged to see that the Muslim community has come forward to keep sponsoring families," Tarek says, once he's finally seated.

He links this generosity to the origins of the Muslim religion. "Muslim refugees ... were recipients of religious **persecution** in the city of Makkah [Mecca]," he says.

"Our prophet Mohammed ... advised them to migrate ... to a place where the land and king both were known for justice." There, both they and Islam thrived. Imam Tarek adds that Islam emphasizes support for people who have nothing.

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program

The BVOR Program helps resettle refugees identified by United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as the most vulnerable in need of resettlement. It is called blended because it is a cost sharing arrangement. Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides up to six months of income support for the newcomers, while private sponsors provide another six months of financial support, start-up costs and up to one year of social and emotional support.

During the 2015 Syrian crisis, Tarek and the Brantford Mosque called a public meeting for all local people interested in sponsoring BVOR refugees. The response was heartening, and the mosque offered follow-up training and support to the many new sponsor groups created that evening. Today, the mosque continues to work collaboratively with local BVOR refugee sponsors. "We believe that humanitarian work cannot be done alone," says Tarek. "I have found that there are many good hearts regardless of faith, background, language, colour, ethnicity, identity."

In Tarek's experience, BVOR sponsorship benefits sponsors as well as newcomers. "Refugee sponsorship empowers people," says Tarek. "It gives them an opportunity to show their best." The largest impact is, of course, on the newcomers. "From hopelessness," says Tarek, "you give them hope."

These RSTP videos feature Imam Tarek, the Brantford Mosque and local BVOR sponsors:

[Good Hearts: Canada's Muslims sponsor BVOR Refugees. 2 minutes.](#)

[Under One Roof: Brantford Mosque Unites Sponsors. 5 minutes.](#)

The needs are still great. There are many refugees waiting to be sponsored through the BVOR program. Here is a sample profile of an Iraqi BVOR refugee, and some of the reasons people like them need to be sponsored.

An Iraqi family of four, currently in Jordan, is awaiting resettlement. The father, 48, has 14 years of education, and experience managing several stores. His wife, 45, has 12 years of education, and experience as a teacher. Their son is 14 and their daughter 18. Both attend school. All have some English. They cannot return to their country of origin due to fear of persecution based on religion. The father is a survivor of violence.

Jordan

Iraqi refugees in Jordan are considered “guests” and do not receive refugee protection. Full residency is often tied to wealth. Local integration is generally not possible. The large influx of Syrian refugees, added to other refugee populations, has put pressure on Jordan’s scarce resources.

Restricted access to services and employment

Healthcare is unaffordable for Iraqi refugees. Their legal status is unclear, making it difficult for them to work.

Social factors

Refugee communities have high rates of early marriage and child labour.

Domestic violence is increasing, and refugee children experience violence in school. Women-at-risk, LGBTI individuals, persons with disabilities and those with serious medical conditions need protection. Resettlement is the best option for these individuals.

How can you help?

Contact the Refugee Sponsorship Training program and ask us about the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVOR).

RSTP will match you with a suitable refugee or refugee family and help you through the application process!

For more information, please visit:

[RSTP’s 4-steps to BVOR sponsorship video](#)
[RSTP’s webpage on BVOR sponsorship](#)

Upcoming Webinar

BVOR Champion Series!

Join the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) for an inspiring webinar on how you, your friends and even your colleagues can sponsor refugees through the BVOR program. Karina Reid, a Richmond BC Group of Five member will talk about how the group was formed to sponsor refugees, and the joys and challenges of BVOR sponsorship.

When:

Tuesday, February 11, 2020
10:00 am - 11:00 am PST

Please register for the Webinar using the link below:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2114971493703730187>

BLENDING VISA OFFICE-REFERRED (BVOR) PROGRAM

For more information, visit www.rstp.ca or email bvor@rstp.ca

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