

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Australian Christians recognizes that those who have already had their refugee status determined by UNHCR and fall within Australia's refuge intake quota should be resettled as soon as possible. We also recognise our obligation to provide temporary refuge (asylum) to those needing it.

Australian Christians notes that all things being equal, most people would prefer to remain in their homeland. We therefore support policies that provide relief and intervention in foreign countries to avert refugee movements, loss of life and family upheavals. We recommend providing Temporary Protection Visa's (TPV's) for those in need of them with the right to work in and contribute to Australia until it is safe to return and rebuild their homeland. We shouldn't aim to deprive other nations of the human resource they need to rebuild post conflict.

We are concerned about spiralling and extreme persecution and religious cleansing in many nations. In Iraq and Syria for example, Christians, Yazidis and Shia Muslims seek refuge from the terror of ISIS and we should do all we can to extend TPV's and increase our Special Humanitarian Program to include internally displaced peoples who fear for their very existence. We in principle support the adoption of a similar policy to the 1999 response to the Kosovo crisis which enabled 4,000 Kosovo Albanians to find temporary refuge in Australia.

Daily life in Pakistan also continues to deteriorate for Christians and other minorities suffering systematic discrimination and living in fear of the state's Blasphemy Law.

Australian Christians would seek a Special Assistance Visa Category for Pakistani Christians in the same way Australia extended a Special Assistance Visa to Pakistan's persecuted Ahmadis during the period 1974-2003.

Australian Christians aims to address both the symptoms and causes with the following recommendations.

Addressing the symptom:

We believe our first response should be humanitarian and recommend:

Special Assistance Visa category for persecuted Christian and other minorities (World Watch List identifies 50 countries where Christians face intense persecution because of their faith. The recent 2015 list notes that Islamic extremism is the source of persecution in 40 out of 50 of those countries).

Improving the determination process for those seeking asylum to remove people from detention immediately when identity, health and security checks are completed

Introduction of a Pilot Homestay Transition Program for asylum seekers who have completed identity, health and security checks and for refugees wishing to take advantage of this transition option into Australian life. This is designed to offer a safe, humane, cost effective and personal introduction to Australian life that will engage individual community members and break down barriers for a better Australia. It is also intended to reduce time spent in detention, offer affordable housing and supplement the income of Australian families while giving genuine refugees a fair go and a softer introduction to Australia.

Addressing the source:

Increase Foreign Aid to 0.5% to assist those most in need through investment in health, education, business, microfinance projects.

‘Radical change in developing countries towards the rule of law, liberty, democracy and economic openness is the only long-term solution, for this will ultimately raise living standards to the point where no-one will be forced by poverty to leave their home country.’

Greg Lindsay, Executive Director, The Centre for Independent Studies

Strengthen diplomatic relationships and programs to advance political and economic stability, promote religious freedom and human rights for all. To this end Australian Christians recommends the reinstatement of an Australian Envoy to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to lobby for equal opportunity and human rights for minorities in all OIC nations. We must see some action from this international umbrella organisation.

Increase intelligence through operatives/workers in source countries to assist with fast-tracking refugee determinations.