

Canada's Gaza Visa Program Designed to Fail

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

Global Research, September 24, 2024

CJPME

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A [new report](#) by *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)* highlights that the failures of Canada's temporary resident visa program for Gazans (TRV) are rooted in systemic anti-Palestinian racism. Unlike a similar program helping Ukrainians flee Russia's invasion in 2022, the Gaza TRV was designed with significant restrictions that fatally undermined its ability to help people escape Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. CJPME's report, titled "[Intended to Fail](#)," asserts that the TRV program was intentionally designed to limit the number of Palestinians who could find safety in Canada, based on racist assumptions about Palestinians as potential security threats and/or as "terrorists."

"Losing your loved ones is the worst life-changing event but imagine witnessing them die slowly from starvation stuck inside besieged Gaza because Canada won't force Israel to let them out, it is completely shattering," said Israa Alsaafin, of the Gazan Canadian Family Reunification League. "Canada is showing no urgency in this emergency to save my family. Ukrainians were welcomed with open arms, but I feel like my family, and I are second-class citizens."

The TRV was introduced in early 2024 by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to help reunite Canadians with their Palestinian family members stuck in Gaza. However, to date, not a single Palestinian has left Gaza under the program. CJPME's report evaluates how the TRV program and public discourse were dominated by the racist trope of Palestinians as security threats (and/or 'all Muslims are terrorists'), asserting that systemic racism influenced the design and execution of the program to reduce its humanitarian potential.

CJPME's report provides significant recommendations for the Ministers of Immigration, Foreign Affairs, and Heritage, to ensure that Canadian policy better aligns with the needs of Palestinians fleeing genocide, the recommendations include:

1. The Minister of Immigration must immediately reform systemic barriers in Canada's Gaza TRV program as identified by the families of Palestinians trying to flee Gaza;
2. The Minister of Foreign Affairs must immediately use all diplomatic levers available to pressure Israel and Egypt to stop blocking the release of Palestinians on Canada's Gaza TRV list

"Minister Miller has overseen an epic failure. If my goal was to save Palestinians from genocide and reunite them with their families in Canada - I could not have designed and implemented a worse program if I tried," said Alex Paterson, Senior Director of Parliamentary Affairs for CJPME. "It is clear from listening to the stories of the families,

analyzing the differences with the Ukrainian program, and analyzing the case law – that Minister Miller capitulated to racists inside and outside government that believe that one Palestinian is too many for Canada. This is a stain on our reputation,” added Paterson.

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