

# Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support

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Dear Friends,

As someone who is concerned about the well-being of the refugees who come to our community to seek a place of safety and security, it is important to understand how the laws of Canada could impact future people coming to find protection in Canada. The re-introduction of **Bill C-4** the *“Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada’s Immigration System Act”* (previously Bill C-49) is a law that would endanger the families of refugees left behind, and deprive them of rights while in Canada. We encourage you to learn more about this Bill and what it means for refugees, for smugglers, and for Canadian society.

Bill C-4 claims to target human smugglers. The process of individuals or criminal organizations taking advantage of people desperate to escape, putting their lives in jeopardy, and forcing them to pay their life savings in the hope of escaping their current situation is despicable. There should be consequences for human smugglers who take advantage of people and put them at risk, and there are. The current sentences for being convicted of human smuggling are extremely high, including up to life imprisonment and a \$1 million fine, but **this Bill does not focus on consequences for human smugglers, it focuses on consequences for refugees.**

The government publicly uses language such as illegal migrant and queue jumper to refer to the people who would be affected by Bill C-4, but the language in the law talks about refugees. The government knows that if they refer to the people affected by this law as refugees, that the law no longer has the same appeal. It should be clearly stated that this law specifically targets accepted refugees in Canada.

Bill C-4 will punish refugees in the following ways:

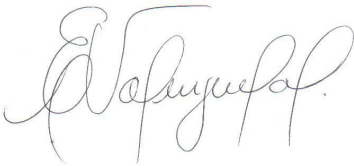
- Refugee claimants will be imprisoned for the entire process, with a strict prohibition on review prior to 1 year.
- Refugees will not be allowed to apply for Permanent Residency for 5 years, preventing refugees from accessing services and becoming part of Canadian society.
- Refugees will not be allowed to sponsor family members for 5 years, keeping families in deadly situations, and damaging the well-being of children who cannot be with their families.
- Refugees will be prevented from leaving Canada. Meaning that they could not go for a business trip to the US, or visit a sick family member in a safe third country.
- Refugee claimants will also be denied the chance to appeal a wrong decision made in their claim, and will be predetermined to not have Humanitarian or Compassionate reasons for staying in Canada.

The ways in which Bill C-4 will punish refugees for being desperate to escape situations of severe persecution, is contrary to our goal of providing a welcoming space for refugees in our community. It is important to understand what Bill C-4 means for refugees, and to respond accordingly as a community. Attached are the following resources for more information about Bill C-4 and how you can support refugees:

1. *Key Concerns with Bill C-4*: A document outlining why Bill C-4 is damaging to refugees and why it should be changed significantly.
2. *Bill C-4 Pamphlet*: A pamphlet that can be printed to provide additional information to others regarding Bill C-4.
3. *Take Action on Bill C-4*: Discusses the ways in which you can express your opinion regarding Bill C-4.
4. *Open Letter to Stephen Woodworth*: This sample letter to a Member of Parliament provides an example of how to express your concerns over certain issues in the Bill to MPs.

**Thank you so much for your ongoing support of refugees in our community, and for supporting the work of MCRS. We hope to continue advocating together for a more just and compassionate community, country and world.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Ferguson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

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