

CCR FAMILY REUNIFICATION MANIFESTO

We recognize that all refugees and immigrants contribute to society and that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, which governments have an obligation to protect, under international human rights law.

We affirm as central the need to respect the integrity of the family unit and ensure that families are not separated for any longer than is absolutely necessary. We further recognize that the notion of 'family' has different meanings in different cultural contexts, and encourage a definition of 'family' that is as broad and as inclusive as possible in order to fully respect the reality of many family clusters.

We have particular concerns for children separated from their parents and affirm that speedy family reunification should be of the highest priority for any society that cares for the best interests of the child.

We deplore any immigration or refugee system that is indifferent to the hardships caused by separation of families, and we call for the removal of any and all barriers to family reunification. We underline the costs of family separation, most importantly for those kept separate, but also for society at large which is also the loser when families are kept apart by the immigration system.



We particularly grieve the ongoing stress and anxiety that is imposed on refugee families separated by persecution and violence, and we make a renewed call for these families to be reunited as quickly as possible. We denounce any government that acts in our name to arbitrarily and cruelly turn a blind eye to the risks to which these families are unnecessarily exposed once a family member has been accepted for protection in Canada.

We therefore call on our government to promote an immigration and refugee system that respects basic rights by favouring the speedy reunification of families in the interests of the healthy, humane, respectful and productive integration of newcomers. We also call for the processing of family members of refugees, especially separated children, to be done in Canada.

**Approved by New Life Centre Board, March 13, 2007*

For more information, visit www.ccrweb.ca or call the Mennonite New Life Centre at 416-699-4527. The Canadian Council for Refugees has developed fact sheets on family reunification, including key messages and recommendations for MP visits.