

CILA POLICY IN RESPONDING TO GLOBAL CRISES

Approved by CILA Board of Directors on May 13, 2026

This policy aims to guide CILA in responding to global crises – in other words when to act, when not to act and what to request from IRCC.

CILA is a national association of immigration lawyers whose mission is to promote a fair and equitable immigration system. In doing so we act in the interests of our clients as well as the general public that benefits from a robust immigration system.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

CILA is not a political organization. We should not take sides or be perceived as taking sides in political conflicts. However protracted political conflicts will inevitably impact immigration applications in process or potential applicants who are considering seeking status in Canada.

Below are two scenarios where advocacy by CILA would be warranted by way of an open letter to the Immigration Minister copied to the usual media outlets.

A. POLITICAL CONFLICT RESULTING IN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

WHEN CILA SHOULD ACT

- War or political instability should be protracted with no resolution in sight – perhaps 9 months in a realistic benchmark for CILA to react.
- A humanitarian crisis must be declared by reputable NGOs such as UNHCR, Amnesty International, Humanitarian Rights Watch, etc. due to human rights violation, significant internal displacement or exit from the country, food insecurity, etc.
- Recent examples would be in Ukraine, Gaza, and the January 2026 violent clampdown on protesters in Iran. IRCC was willing to create special programs to facilitate entry in these situations.



- These programs provide a pathway for entry to applicants who otherwise have no pending immigration applications to Canada, or for extension of status for nationals of those countries already in Canada. Apart from the obvious benefits to successful applicants, these special programs burnish Canada's reputation in the international community as a welcoming country to victims of oppression.
- CILA should take notice of local advocacy groups whose members originate from the affected countries to gauge the severity of the crisis in the home country.
- Not every country experiencing political instability has a population interested in migrating to Canada. CILA should prioritize, but not limit its intervention to countries whose nationals already have a significant presence in Canada, which will assist in the integration and settlement services of new arrivals.

WHAT CILA SHOULD ASK FOR

- As in the special programs for Iran, Ukraine and Gaza, CILA should request similar programs be established to provide renewable temporary residence status for applicants as visitors, work permit or study permit holders.
- IRCC will place a cap on the numbers allowed and it is appropriate for priority given to applicants with a close relative in status in Canada. The definition of close relative could be similar to the exceptions in the Safe Third Country Agreement in which uncle/nephew/aunt/niece are the most distant relationships considered.
- It is appropriate for processing fees to be waived under the special programs.
- Usual settlement services should be offered, including IFH – Interim Federal Health coverage.
- Processing times should be expedited as applicants are seeking to extricate themselves from often dangerous situations.



- Applicants in family class sponsorships should be granted temporary residence status with processing finalized from within Canada.
- At the same time, it must be understood that war is a breeding ground for war criminals, some of whom will seek to blend in with the general population and take advantage of Canada's generosity. Therefore, security checks must be conducted but CILA can urge that they be expedited. CILA should urge IRCC to commit extra resources, i.e. manpower, to manage special programs that are put in place.
- It should be clear that CILA is requesting temporary measures to alleviate immediate hardship with the understanding that the program will expire once country conditions stabilize. CILA should not be advocating for an immediate special pathway to permanent residence as that would be perceived as queue jumping and inconsistent with the purpose of the special programs. Applicants will be free to apply for permanent residence under existing pathways. Nonetheless where an overseas conflict shows no sign of resolution after a period of years (as an example the conflict in Ukraine) it may be appropriate for IRCC to designate a dedicated pathway for permanent residence for applicants who have been in status as temporary residents under the special measures program for a minimum designated period.
- As an example, CILA's involvement might be to urge reactivation of the special measures program for Sudan which is not taking any new applications for temporary status. The latest war in Sudan has been raging since April 2023 with an estimated 14 million people displaced from their homes in the context of serious well documented violations of human rights. This conflict has not gained much traction among mainstream media and is therefore poorly understood by many Canadians.



B. CONFLICTS IMPAIRING THE EFFICIENT PROCESSING OF IMMIGRATION APPLICATIONS

WHEN CILA SHOULD ACT

- It is to everyone's benefit that processing of pending applications proceed in a timely fashion. Where a country blocks internet access, i.e. Iran during the height of protests, immigration applications cannot be submitted electronically, and visa post instructions cannot be received.
- Where war makes travel to visa post interviews dangerous or impossible (i.e., during the civil war in Sri Lanka, Tamils from the northern Jaffna Peninsula were unable to travel to Colombo for interviews).

WHAT CILA SHOULD ASK FOR

- Visa posts will already be aware of disruptions in internet access or safety concerns in travelling to interviews.
- CILA can advocate in a number of ways where visa posts are slow to react
- Requesting blanket extensions of time to submit documents
- Requesting to conduct interviews by landline telephone if available.

