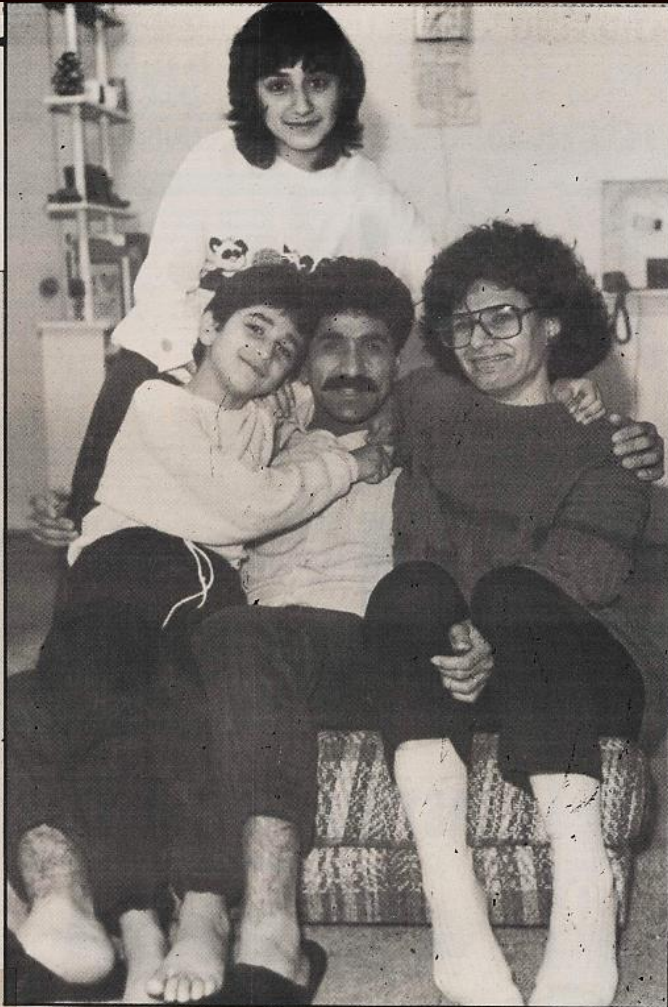


Refugee vow suicide rather than go home. (1988, December 29). The Ottawa citizen.



ZIA MORADI, his wife Mari, son Sam, 8, and daughter Peggy, 11, have refugee status.

Refugees vow suicide rather than go home

By SUE SHERRING and ANDY WALKER
Ottawa Sun

Refugee claimants terrified of deportation said they would rather die than return to their homelands.

"I will commit suicide if I have to go back," said Sri Lankan Govan Kulan, 23, who arrived in 1986. "The police beat and abused me. I will die anyway if I go back."

Subramaniam Tharmalingam, 35, another Sri Lankan waiting "to do paperwork" at a Toronto immigration office yesterday, echoed his fear.

"If I'm sent back to my country, I know I'm going to be arrested and I will die," Tharmalingam said.

He said his house and his father's was "blown up" by police who "beat and abuse young men everyday."

Riad Tallim, an immigration lawyer, said only time will tell if the new system has a "positive or negative effect" on refugees in Canada seeking official status.

"It's definitely going to affect them if they're waiting to be processed. They will get some action. But what that action will be is yet to be determined."

Ottawa Centre Liberal MP Mac Harb says the lack of a proper appeal process for claimants is "unfortu-

nate.

"There needs to be an appeal for each individual case. I'm not very optimistic about the proposed system."

"I don't believe the backlog is a priority. Here in Ottawa, we'll end up with the same backlog you see in Toronto unless more time and manpower is given."

"They need to come up with a system that is fair to everyone," Harb said. "We have to be very careful."

For Zia Moradi, being granted official refugee status meant Moradi, an Iranian refugee, has three brothers still left in that country. He escaped from Iran to Turkey in 1984, after five of his brothers were hanged by the Khomeini regime. Four were members of the Communist Party.

Moradi, 34, says he escaped death because his younger brother was hanged in his place.

He and his wife, Mari, and his two children, Peggy, 11, and Sam, 8, have only been in Canada five weeks. He's worried as Canada tightens its refugee laws, his brothers may never know real safety.

"I'm scared for my oldest brother. It's very difficult for him there. He now has to work illegally. And he has to support his family — there are eight kids."

REFUGEE PLAN

Feds could expel up to 60,000

By TOM GODFREY
Ottawa Sun Special

TORONTO — About 60,000 refugee claimants could be sent packing under a new \$100 million program announced yesterday by Immigration Minister Barbara McDougall.

The program, which will take place over the next two years, will clear up a massive backlog of 85,000 refugee claimants.

While McDougall wouldn't say how many claimants will be deported through this process, some immigration lawyers estimated up to 60,000 will be sent home.

McDougall ruled out a general amnesty and said the government will set up a new system in which each case will be examined by an adjudicator and a member of the newly created Immigration and Refugee Board.

More than 100 adjudicators, case officers and lawyers are now being hired to process cases, she said.

Refugee claimants waiting to have their cases heard will be allowed work permits beginning next month, she said.

Those found unqualified to live in Canada will be deported, she said.

"There will be no amnesty," MacDougall said. "I want to state categorically that removals (deportations) will take place. Removals are the legislated process by which Canada enforces its Immigration Act."

McDougall said she wasn't prepared to send claimants to safe countries while their claims are being processed in Canada.

She vowed to impose stiffer fines and sentences to unscrupulous immigration consultants and racketeers who bring people into Canada for huge profits.

"Our current system is vulnerable to abuse," she said. "Many people came here making refugee claims to circumvent our immigration laws."

She said rejected claimants will be asked to leave Canada voluntarily or be deported. She said those removed can reapply for entry into Canada but those persons deported need the consent of the minister to return.

"We must restore integrity to our refugee and immigration system," McDougall said.

"And we owe it to those who are genuinely fleeing persecution and tyranny."

Church groups and critics say the new laws are unfair and court challenges are in the works.



BARBARA McDOUGALL
Get-tough policy