



Designated Countries of Origin Prejudicial, Dangerous

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Toronto, ON) **December 14, 2012:** The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism today created a potentially fatal situation for thousands of people requesting Canada's protection. Jason Kenney's announcement of so-called "Designated Countries of Origin" creates a two-tiered judicial system and takes away even basic health care for people that he deems come from safe countries.

The list includes Hungary, a country where human rights abuses towards ethnic and political minorities are well-documented. Claimants from this country will now be forced into a system where they prejudicially have little time to prepare their claim and have effectively lost their ability to appeal negative decisions.

Worse, health care funding has all been cut. Individuals seeking asylum from countries that the Minister feels are safe will now only be able to access care when there are issues of "Public Health or Public Safety Concern."

"This is a very dangerous situation," says Dr. Michael C. Stephenson, a General Practitioner with Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services. "Pregnant women will no longer have access to essential pre-natal care, and will not be able to deliver their babies in hospital - unless they are able to pay thousands of dollars for it. People having heart attacks or diabetic shock will no longer be able to seek even emergency treatment for their conditions. Lives will be lost through this political decision."

Access Alliance joins a long list of other refugee-service organizations in requesting the Minister to reconsider this policy change.

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Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services works to promote health, wellbeing and improved access to services for immigrants and refugees in Toronto. From three locations in the city, we offer resources, provide links, conduct research and build capacity to enable individuals, families and communities to achieve health with dignity. Our range of programs, services, advocacy and partnerships address medical, social, economic, environmental, settlement and integration issues for immigrants of all ages at all stages of their life. Find out more about our work at www.accessalliance.ca.