

Baltic and Nordic Headlines

A press review with summaries of asylum and refugee-related articles in regional media. The Baltic and Nordic Headlines for next week will come out on Thursday 1 November and Friday 2 November.

Thursday 25 to Friday 26 October 2007

Denmark

Small municipalities will receive all refugees

The distribution list of refugees for 2008 from the Danish Immigration Service shows that the smaller municipalities in Denmark will receive all the quota refugees and other refugees next year. For the first time in eight years the larger municipalities of Copenhagen, Frederiksberg, Odense and others will not receive any refugees. The Integration Law from 1998, which was created to avoid refugees to be gathered in ghettos in the larger cities, will now for the first time be followed.

(Politiken 24 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article403218.ece>)

UN: Almost 4, 5 million Iraqi refugees

UNHCR has stated that there are nearly 4, 5 million displaced Iraqis. According to Astrid van Gendersen from UNHCR, the number is increasing. Violence and lack of income opportunities have forced the Iraqis to flee from their homes and settle either in other parts of Iraq or abroad. Almost 2, 3 million of Iraqis are internally displaced, while over 2, 2 millions have sought refuge in the neighbouring countries or in countries further away.

(Jyllands Posten and Berlingske Tidene 24 October 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1140871>, <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071024/verden/710240312/>)

Uncertainty about Asylum Plan

It is uncertain when the first asylum families can move out of the reception centres. None of the involved parties are willing to answer how the suggestion will be implemented. The Red Cross asylum unit, which is responsible for running the reception centres, has still not been in contact with the authorities. The municipalities which are going to organize the education of asylum children also have many unanswered questions. The upcoming election means it will take even longer time before the rejected asylum families can move out of the reception centres. Opposition politicians call the Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen "cynical" and claim the asylum children are the ones who will suffer.

(Jyllands Posten and Politiken 24 October <http://jp.dk/indland/article1141527.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article404033.ece>)

Asylum-seekers aren't tempted by cash offer

Despite the offer of a one-off DKK 55, 000 payment, just 2 out of 150 Iraqi asylum seekers have voluntarily agreed to return home. However, another 17 have expressed interest and the aid organization Care4You who are coordinating the repatriation scheme are confident that more will accept the money in the future.

(Politiken, Berlingske Tidende and Danmarks Radio 25 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article405576.ece> Translation by News Express

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071025/danmark/710250381/>,
<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2007/10/25/171020.htm>)

Decrease in the number of rejected asylum-seekers

New statistics prove that the number of rejected asylum-seekers in Denmark has been reduced. In 2004 the number was 2,141, while on 6 October this year the number was only 789. The new report arrives at a time characterized by a heated discussion between the government and the opposition parties about the treatment of rejected asylum-seekers. The Iraqis compose the largest group of rejected asylum-seekers. Red Cross promises that the election will not block the new plan of letting rejected asylum-seekers with children move out of reception centres.

(Jyllands Posten and Politiken 25 October 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1143033>,
<http://politiken.dk/indland/article405523.ece>,
<http://politiken.dk/indland/article404987.ece>)

Norway

Rolling Church will transport asylum-seeker to Oslo

A demonstration arranged for Shahla Valadi, a church asylum-seeker, took place in Oslo on 25 October. The protagonist was transported in a specially designed "rolling church". The church was constructed to avoid detention of the demonstrator.

The demonstrators appealed to the authorities and requested them to show mercy in this asylum-case. On her way to Oslo she received good news: while waiting for the Immigration Board to handle the case, she is for the first time in seven years free to step out of the church without risking detention.

(Dagbladet and VG 24 October 2007
<http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2007/10/24/516085.htm>,
<http://www.vg.no/pub/vgart.hbs?artid=176845> and
Aftenposten 25 October 2007
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2067348.ece>)

Sweden

Minor decrease of asylum-seekers

The estimated number of asylum-seekers coming to Sweden this year is 38, 000, which is 2, 000 less than the earlier forecast from the Swedish Migration Board. The Board believes that level to be consistent during the next year and then decrease to 35,000 asylum-seekers during 2009 and 2010. In the new forecast the Board writes that the number of Iraqi asylum-seekers has stabilized to approximately 400 per week. However, the number of asylum-seekers from the Middle East, Somalia and the rest of Africa is increasing.

(Dagens Nyheter 24 October 2007 <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=708271>)

Increased number of children living in hiding

According to Save the Children, the number of asylum-seeking children has increased dramatically the latest year. Last year approximately 2, 000 children were living in hiding and now the number might be up to 3, 000. According to Sanna Vestin at Save the Children a large group of children are living in hiding since they have received a negative decision on their asylum application but also a large group is here on tourist visas with

one parent or have been smuggled in. Vestin is critical to the fact that these children lack the legal rights to medical service and schooling and says that Sweden is not following the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(Sveriges Television 25 October 2007

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=950978&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

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Tuesday 23 to Wednesday 24 October 2007

Denmark

Denmark 'a haven for terrorists'

Numerous prominent terrorists and militant Muslims were given asylum in Denmark in the 1990's. According to former head of Danish Intelligence (PET) Hans Jørgen Bonnichsen, it was well known that at the beginning of the 1990's, Denmark was regarded as a 'haven for terrorists'.

(Jyllands- Posten 22 October 2007 <http://jp.dk/indland/krimi/article1138908.ece>, Translation by News express)

Citizens handing in 90,000 protest signatures to Hvilshøj

Minister of Integration, Rikke Hvilshøj, and Queen Margrethe will today receive 90,000 signatures from Danish citizens, encouraging the authorities to grant residence permit to the around 800 rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers who have stayed at reception centers for more than three years. The campaign was launched by a small grouping called Amnesti Nu.

(Jyllands- Posten and Berlingske Tidene 23 October 2007

<http://jp.dk/indland/article1139401.ece>,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071023/politik/710230307/>)

Asylum-seekers with children out from reception centers

The Danish government offers rejected asylum-seekers with children to settle outside the reception centers, until they are ready to be sent back to Iraq, stated the Ministry of Integration. So far the government has not let families live outside the reception centers unless they have been granted asylum, and has been strongly criticized for this practice.

(Politiken and DR 23 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article402276.ece>, <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Politik/2007/10/23/103247.htm?nyheder>)

Asylum statement gets mixed reception

The Danish government will have to struggle to get a majority for their offer to let the rejected asylum-seekers with children to move out of the reception centers, as announced earlier today. They now face various opinions from the other parties. The left-wing parties want more, while the the Danish People's party is strongly against the offer and says the adults should stay in the centres even if children are let out.

(DR 23 October 2007

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Politik/2007/10/23/131912.htm?nyheder>)

Fogh announces new election

After the statement on better conditions for the rejected Iraqi families yesterday, the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, announced that there is going to be a new election. The Election Day is likely to be in November. Immigration policies are predicted to have an important role in the election campaign.

(Politiken and Berlingske Tidene 24 October 2007
<http://politiken.dk/politik/article403417.ece> ,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071024/politik/71024058/>)

Finland

All residence permits to include right to work

Ministry of Interior has started a reform of the residence permit system, which would also affect the much criticized temporary residence permits, so called b-status, which do not, for example, allow employment in Finland. Ministry is aiming at a simple and clear system which would also shorten the handling times. The reform is prepared together with Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, and Department of Immigration, and in coordination with trade unions and several other authorities. Law changes are expected in the end of next year at the earliest.

(Helsingin Sanomat 23 and 24 October 2007)

Finland received reprimand on B-status

In its report from May, ECRI criticized Finland for granting temporary residence permits, the so called b-status, for asylum-seekers who were not granted asylum in Finland but could not be sent to their home countries either. ECRI says that b-status is problematic as it does not give basic rights, such as right to work or family reunification. ECRI also noted that in some cases children with b-status are not allowed to attend school in Finland, and asked Finland to stop granting such permits. Last year altogether 316 b-statuses were granted, mostly to asylum-seekers for Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

(Helsingin Sanomat 24 October 2007)

Norway

Expulsion of alien criminals

Foreigners who have committed crime in Norway are usually expelled after having served 7/12 of the penalty. They are sent back to either their home country or to the first country of asylum. Minister of Justice, Knut Storberget, is eager to increase the number of persons serving penalty in their home countries.

(Aftenposten 24 October 2007)

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2063780.ece>)

Sweden

Boat migrants drowned outside Yemen

UNHCR reports that about 66 migrants might have drowned after having been forced out of the human smugglers' boats on Sunday. UNHCR's spokesman, Ron Redmond, says this is the worst single incident so far this year and says his impression is that smugglers have become more and more cynical. The migrants were mostly of Somali and Ethiopian origin, and fled from Somalia.

(Dagens Nyheter 23 October <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=708045>)

Number of asylum-seekers is decreasing

This year it is estimated that the numbers of asylum-seekers coming to Sweden will be 38,000, which is 2,000 less than the previous prognosis from the Migration Board. The Migration Board believes this trend will continue during the next years. The number of Iraqis coming to Sweden has stabilized, while the number of asylum-seekers from Somalia, other African countries and the Middle East are increasing.

(Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet 24 October 2007

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=708271>

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_524965.svd)

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Saturday 20 to Monday 22 October 2007

Denmark

Hvilshøj accused of misleading

The Iraqi authorities have consistently refused to receive the rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers from Denmark, but Minister of Integration, Rikke Hvilshøj maintains that there is “a good and constructive dialog with the Iraqi authorities”. The Social Democrats’ head for international affairs, Mogens Lykketoft, now accuses Hvilshøj of misleading the parliament of the situation of the rejected Iraqis. “The government has created an illusion that only temporary difficulties prevent sending the Iraqis back. This has been used as an argument for keeping these people in the reception centres for such a long time, says Lykketoft, who demands a solution to the situation of the Iraqis.

(Politiken 19 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/politik/article398889.ece>)

Hvilshøj rejects criticism

Minister of Integration, Rikke Hvilshøj, says that she has been wrongly quoted on the situation of the rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers. Hvilshøj points out that Denmark has, for the time being, interrupted the negotiations with authorities in Baghdad on an agreement on forced returns of rejected asylum-seekers from Central and Southern Iraq. “We do not negotiate actively for a return agreement to Central and Southern Iraq. I have never commented on that. We, however, negotiate actively on a return agreement to Northern Iraq”, says Hvilshøj.

(Politiken 20 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/politik/article399544.ece>)

Asylum-seekers in prison too long

Asylum-seekers sentenced to prison may be forced to stay there for up to two extra years while their asylum case is being handled. Lawyer Gunnar Homann, who has written several books on aliens’ law, says this is unacceptable. He also says it is an exception that the Immigration Service would have finished the asylum case by the time the prison sentence has ended.

(Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands Posten and Politiken 22 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071022/danmark/710220302/>,

<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1137943>, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article401122.ece>)

CIA operation without Danish knowledge

Former Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (S) and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Niels Helveg Petersen, (R) reject having any knowledge of the disappearance of Abu Talal, a terrorist-branded Egyptian who got political asylum in Denmark in 1995. Talal was arrested in Croatia in September 1995 and handed over to Egypt, where he probably was executed. Now it shows that the American Intelligence Service, CIA, stood behind both the arrest and handing over of Talal, who CIA thought was a terrorist. Denmark did not want to hand over Talal to Egyptian authorities, since he was risking death penalty.

(Berlingske Tidende 22 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071022/danmark/110211095/>)

Norway

Increase in child trafficking

According to Save the Children, approximately 200 children who have arrived in Norway since 2004 may be victims of trafficking. 150 out of them were asylum-seekers.

According to project leader at Save the Children, Stian Vatnedal, the children continue to be exploited during the asylum process and also after getting a residence permit. It is difficult to determine the victims of trafficking, as children tend to be very loyal to the adults around them. Vatnedal says that the Child Welfare Service and Police in general lack the competence to identify and reveal trafficking cases.

(Aftenposten 22 October 2007

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2059911.ece>)

Sweden

Migration Court of Appeals will review Iraq

The 51-year old Iraqi will appeal on the ruling of the Migration Court of Thursday last week. His lawyer Bengt Nergård wants the Migration Court of Appeals to review both the security situation in Iraq and the ruling of the Migration Court which says that the client is not being individually persecuted. According to the Swedish Red Cross it is unreasonable that asylum-seekers must prove individual persecution in Iraq and therefore the Swedish Red Cross demanded a clarification of the Swedish legislation.

(Svenska Dagbladet 19 October 2007

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_510973.svd)

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Thursday 18 to Friday 19 October 2007

Denmark

More requirements for deportation

According to internal figures from the Danish Immigration Service, which Ritzau managed to get access to, it is becoming more and more common for prosecutors in court to request for deportation of foreigners having committed crimes. Regulations having entered the law make it possible to claim deportation regardless of time spent in the country or whether the person has refugee status. In consequence, a refugee can be deported if sentenced to more than 10 days in prison. The number of deportation claims has increased with 24 percent since last year.

(Berlingske Tidende 18 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071018/danmark/710180328/>)

Finland

Police caught Rwandese woman in church shelter

The asylum-seeking woman was caught in Lahti, where she stayed in a shelter provided by a local congregation. According to media reports, the women tried to commit suicide during the capture. She came to Finland in May 2005, after her husband disappeared in Rwanda, and has lived in hiding since her negative asylum decision last spring. Three weeks ago, the congregation announced having arranged private housing for her, and said the Department of Immigration should revisit the woman's case.

(Helsingin Sanomat 18 and 19 October 2007

<http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Ruandalaisnainen+otettiin+seurakunnan+suojusta+s%C3%A4il%C3%B6%C3%B6n/1135231126121>)

Estonia

Changes in citizenship policy rejected

The Estonian government has decided to reject the Center Party's proposal to allow taking the citizenship exam in a language other than Estonian and for freeing persons aged 65 or older from the exam. According to Tonis Lukas, The Minister of Education and Science, the government parties are against any amendments on the subject because it would change the essentials of the Estonian citizenship system. The aim of the proposal was to raise the number of applicants for citizenship and to make the integration of stateless persons more efficient.

(Baltic News Service 18 October 2007)

Sweden

The Swedish Migration Court: No armed conflict in Iraq

The Swedish Migration Court has decided not to overturn the decision of the Swedish Migration Board in which it refused to grant a 51-year-old man asylum since it did not consider the danger serious enough to prevent him from returning home. Under the new guidelines laid down by Dan Eliasson, head of the Migration Board, Iraqis from southern and central Iraq must now be able to convince Swedish authorities that they have a valid personal reason to stay in the country and not just claim that the situation in their homeland is dangerous, and the Migration Court agreed with the assessment. The court's verdict goes against UNHCR recommendations.

(Dagens Nyheter, Sveriges Radio and SVT18 October 2007

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=147&a=706064>,

<http://www.sr.se/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=1665418>

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=943935&lid=is_search549588&lpos=1&queryArt549588=irak&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

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Tuesday 16 to Wednesday 17 October 2007

Denmark

Priests support police report of Minister of Integration

Danish priests have now joined Doctor's Association and Psychologists' Association in making statements on the medical condition of asylum-seeking children. Even a police report on Minister of Integration, Rikke Hvilshøj, for negligence of asylum-seeking children, has been issued. Bodil Hindsholm Hansen, a priest, has expressed her support to the police report and says it is her duty to do so since priests, like medical personnel, are obligated to report violations.

(Politiken 16 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article395292.ece>)

Norway

No increase of quota refugees

The Norwegian government will not receive more quota refugees from the UN next year, despite their promise in the Soria Moria declaration. In the declaration the government had a goal to receive 1500 quota refugees every year, but next year the limit is still 1200 quota refugees. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion the government had to lower the goal on 1500 quota refugees in the yearly state budget. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) says that the government has no excuses for not receiving more quota refugees. "Norway has both the economic prerequisites to receive quota refugees and the receiving capacity, because the number of asylum-seeker has decreased", says Head of Information at NRC, Rolf A Vestvik.

(Aftenposten 15 October 2007

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2048154.ece>)

Norway in a hunt for war criminals

Thousands of files in the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) will be carefully looked through to seriously examine the background of all refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. The purpose is to find the about 70 suspected war criminals in Norway claiming to be refugees. According to Sylo Taraku, Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), a serious examination is necessary because there with certainty are war criminals in the country. Relevant ministries will form a plan next week on how the practical examination of UDI's files will take place.

(Aftenposten 16 October 2007

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2050129.ece>)

Sweden

The Minister for Migration wants re-establishment support for refugees

The border police of Västra Götaland believe that numerous refugees are living in hiding in the country after being rejected residence permit. Therefore the Minister for Migration,

Tobias Billström, wants refugees living in hiding to receive re-establishment support as well. The purpose of the support, which is about 3100 USD, is to give the refugees living in hiding a chance to return to their home country and start over with the help of the amount they have been given. Billström says that there are too many risks and dangers in being a refugee living in hiding in Sweden.

(Sveriges Radio 15 October 2007 <http://www.sr.se/cgi-bin/sjuharad/nyheter/artikel.asp?artikel=1658062>)

Refugee-rejecting municipalities named

Fourteen municipalities have been named by the Swedish Migration Board for not taking an equitable share of unaccompanied minors arriving in Sweden. Dan Eliasson, Director General at the Swedish Migration Board, says that the municipalities do not give enough support to maintain the Swedish asylum system and therefore are listed in seven newspapers around the country. The municipalities blame insufficient resources, while Eliasson says that the municipalities have a financial surplus and that the state in addition takes responsibility for any necessary costs. Therefore the municipalities should have no problem to deal with the refugee children. This year, 1.200 refugee children are expected to seek asylum in Sweden, and for the time being there are 243 children with no place to live in the country.

(Dagens Nyheter 17 October 2007

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=147&a=705333> and

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/road/Classic/article/0/jsp/faktaRender.jsp?fno=0&major=1&minor=705333>)

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Friday 12 to Monday 15 October 2007

Denmark

Political reactions concerning conditions in reception centres

A Danish Doctors' Association's statement on the asylum-seekers' poor condition in reception centres has been followed by several other reactions and statements. The New Alliance sent a proposal to the government with a request for changes in law and administration, in order to allow the rejected asylum-seekers leave the reception centres on a temporary residence permit. Helle Thorning-Schmidt from the Social Democrats appeals to the government to find a solution for the rejected asylum-seekers as soon as possible. Minister of Integration, Rikke Hvilshøj, admits that it is not healthy to stay at a reception centre for several years, but states that a number of initiatives have taken place during the last six months to improve the conditions at the reception centres. Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen does not take a position towards the rejected asylum-seekers' right to work and study.

(Berlingske Tidende 11 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071011/politik/710110321/>,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071011/politik/710110327/>,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071011/politik/710110346/>,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071011/politik/710110374/>)

Psychologists: examine all the asylum-seeking children

According to the Danish Psychologists' Association, the conditions for the asylum-seekers at the reception centres are so dire for their mental health that they become dependent on the Danish well-fare state. "It is a misunderstanding to think that by locking in the asylum-seekers for several years, one motivates them to return home", says the Head of the Association, Roal Ulrichsen. The Danish Psychologists' Association appeals to the authorities to take action in this question. In a letter to Minister of Integration, Rikke Hvilshøj (Liberals), they also appeal for a thorough examination of all the asylum-seeking children in the country.

(Berlingske Tidende 11 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071011/politik/710110345/> and Berlingske Tidende 14 October 2007 <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071014/danmark/710140323/>)

Asylum-seekers ready to return to Iraq

Seven of the approximately 150 rejected asylum-seekers from Northern Iraq are willing to leave Denmark and return to Iraq on a voluntary basis. They will leave within a month and receive a grant of 10,400 USD, as agreed in the contract with the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs. The contracts are a result of an agreement between the government and the Danish People's Party.

(12 October 2007 <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071012/danmark/710120350/>)

No further improvements

The majority of the Danish people think that the conditions in the reception centres must be improved and that the asylum-seeker should have the right to work. Minister of

Integration Rikke Hvilshøj (Liberals) says that the asylum-seekers' conditions have been improved last year, and she wants to wait and see the result before starting with any further improvements. Hvilshøj admits that the ones living at the reception centres must be activated, but not in the labour market.

(Berlingske Tidende 12 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071012/danmark/110121236/>)

Differing opinion within the Liberals

The Liberals legal-political chairperson, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, opposes her own party's standpoint in the case of the rejected asylum-seekers. "It says nowhere in the law that rejected asylum-seeker should stay at huge barracks with dire conditions", says Rønn Hornbech in an interview with Danish TV 2 News. Eyvind Vesselbo, also from the Liberal Party and a member of the Integration Committee, agrees with Hornbech's statement on the need to improve the rejected asylum-seekers' conditions. Neither Minister of Integration Rikke Hvilshøj nor Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, both Liberals, wanted to comment Hornbech's criticism.

(Jyllands Posten 12 October 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1127613> and Jyllands Posten 13 October 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1128520>)

Head of Red Cross: Give the rejected Iraqis amnesty now

The Secretary General of the Danish Red Cross, Jørgen Poulsen, appeals to the politicians to give amnesty to the approximately 500 rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers living in Denmark, who cannot return to their war-torn home country. "Their situation is totally unsustainable and the politicians must come up with a solution. That solution must be amnesty", says Jørgen Poulsen.

(Berlingske Tidende 15 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071015/danmark/710150341/>)

Finland

Hard-line office

Helsingin Sanomat Sunday edition issued a large reportage on the Department of Immigration (UVI), which has recently been under hard public pressure. When the Minister in charge of immigration changed from the hard-line Kari Rajamäki to the humanitarian-minded Astrid Thors, UVI started to receive criticism on its tough lines. The church also started to challenge UVI's decisions, and additionally several of them were changed at the Supreme Court. UVI has been described as closed, unserviceable and inflexible. According to the Head of Finnish Refugee Advice Centre, Liisa Murto, decisions often simply conclude that UVI considers the applicant's story unreliable, without further explanations. UVI says, however, that it is only implementing the existing law. (Helsingin Sanomat 14 October 2007)

Sweden

Sweden the best on integration

According to The Migrant Integration Policy Index, an EU financed project that evaluates integration promoting measures in the union, there is a big difference between the 25 member countries on how they integrate immigrants. It shows that Sweden is the best integrating country, while Latvia is at the bottom of the list. Overall, the EU member countries only do half of what they ought to for the 21 million immigrants in the union.

(Dagens Nyheter 15 October 2007 <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=704459>)

Conservative Party in Skåne criticize Prime Minister

The Conservative Moderate Party from Southern Sweden criticizes their party member Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt for interfering in asylum politics. During a visit to Malmö Reinfeldt said that it would be wrong to tighten control on where the newly arrived asylum-seekers settle down. Others in the party feel that refugees should be placed more evenly.

(Sveriges radio 12 October 2007 <http://www.sr.se/cgi-bin/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=1652146>)

Decisions to be made at record speed

20,000 Iraqis are expected to seek asylum in Sweden this year, 95 per cent of whom are estimated to receive residence permit. The Swedish Migration Board will start a project in the middle of November for making the handling of Iraqi cases more efficient. No case should take more than two weeks. In the refugee centre in Flen, two hundred beds are being prepared for asylum-seeking Iraqis whose cases are being processed. The project is expected to receive approximately 5,000 cases during a year, and asylum-seekers most likely to be rejected will have the opportunity to be transported to another refugee centre in the country.

(Dagens nyheter 12 October 2007 <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=703820> and <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=703821>)

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Denmark

Sharp criticism from the Doctors' Association

In a declaration presented on Thursday, the Danish Doctors' Association renounces the conditions for which the asylum-seekers and their children are exposed to in the reception centres, ran by the Red Cross. The association states that the treatment of the asylum-seekers and their children is not medically defensible and the association appeals to the politicians to make the stay in the centres shorter. The association also encourages the Red Cross to review its efforts and its role in the light of the Red Cross charter. Head of asylum Jørgen Chemnitz from the Danish Red Cross rejects the view that the organization does not notice the sign of ill health from the asylum-seekers and Danish Integration Minister Rikke Hvilshøj rejects the statement of not defensible conditions in the centres.

(Politiken 10 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article391605.ece>)

Danish people: Close the reception centres

An opinion poll done by Catinét A/S for the Danish Refugee Council shows that a majority, two out of three, of the Danish population want the reception centres to be closed down. The same percentage also thought that work and education should be accessible for the adult asylum-seekers and that the children should have the right to go to ordinary schools.

(Politiken 10 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article391604.ece>)

Political reactions to UNHCR report on Iraq

An UNHCR report on the situation in Iraq says that refugees from Southern and Central Iraq are entitled to international protection, and that authorities should be extremely careful with sending people back to Northern Iraq, since the political situation there is very unstable. "Our last detailed recommendations are from 2005. But after the bombing of the Shiite sanctuary in Samarra in February 2006 and the escalated sectarian violence in Iraq, we assessed that there was need for new recommendations and for a new detailed report", Anna Leer of UNHCR says. The Social Liberals and the New Alliance interpret the report as meaning that Iraqis waiting in Danish reception centres can't be sent back now, and that they must be permitted to leave the centres. The Social Democrats also want a change. The government and the Danish People's Party say that the report doesn't change anything and the latter questions its credibility.

(Politiken 11 October 2007)

UNHCR's Iraqi Guidelines have already changed praxis

In an interview in the daily Politiken the Director of the Refugee Appeals Board, Bent Ove Jespersen says that the report and recommendations from UNHCR have already had importance when the Refugee Appeals Board makes their decision and now more are granted asylum. Jespersen states also that the report from UNHCR is done on a general basis and that the Refugee Appeals Board is making decisions in individual

cases, taking into account the individuals' conditions, but following UNHCR's recommendations.

(Politiken 11 October 2007)

Estonia

Naturalization exams in Russian rejected by the coalition

While Population Minister of the Social Democrats, Urve Palo, still is in favor of having the exam in knowledge of the Estonian Constitution and the citizenship law in the applicant's mother tongue, meaning Russian, the suggestion has been rejected by the coalition partners. The minister said that she came up with the idea considering that very often the exams in the Constitution and the citizenship law are a formality, not a check of the actual knowledge of the person seeking naturalization.

(Baltic News Service 10 October 2007)

354 individuals granted citizenship

At the proposal of the Interior Ministry, the Estonian government granted citizenship to 354 individuals on Thursday. All 354 had fulfilled the requirements of the Citizenship Act. Since its restoration of independence in 1991, Estonia has naturalized over 145,000 people. At the end of 2006, there were 125,799 persons with undefined citizenship in Estonia, corresponding to 9 percent of the population.

(Baltic News Service 11 October 2007)

Norway

Supreme Court reviewing decision to deport Mulla Krekar

The government's decision to deport Northern Iraqi Mulla Krekar is currently being reviewed by the Supreme Court. Krekar, who has held a leading position in the Iraqi Kurdish party Ansar al-Islam, is not charged with any offence by the Norwegian police. According to the government, he poses a security risk to Norway. Neither Krekar nor his lawyer nor the judges have access to great parts of the evidence upon which the government's deportation decision is based. It is unknown when the Supreme Court will make its decision.

(NRK 10 October 2007 <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.3708539>)

Sweden

Sweden new member of Rabit

Sweden will contribute with help and material to the task force Rabit which is set up by Frontex, the external border security agency of the European Union. The purpose of the operations is to, with the help of a task force group consisting of 250-500 policemen from different member countries, set a limit to the refugee flows to EU. According to Björn Clarberg from the National Criminal Investigation Department the Rabit-regulation will not oppose the human rights by preventing refugees from seeking asylum in EU. He says that refugees with the will and reason to seek asylum in the member countries will be able to do so.

(Sveriges Radio 10 October 2007 <http://www.sr.se/cgi-bin/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=1647481>)

Pressure for Iraqi refugees

According to UNHCR, 2.2 million Iraqis are internally displaced. These people are denied admittance in other provinces because of lack of resources. The Director for UNCHR in Iraq, Andrew Harper, resembles the tense situation in the country to a "pressure cooker" and reckons the monthly increase of refugees to be about 100,000 people. Approximately 20,000 Iraqis seek asylum in the western countries, half of whom in Sweden. The Swedish government says that more countries in Europe should take responsibility for the Iraqi refugees.

(Dagens Nyheter 10 October 2007 <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=702791>)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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Tuesday 9 to Wednesday 10 October 2007

Denmark

Fewer asylum-seekers in Europe

Recent figures from Eurostat's survey show that the number of persons seeking asylum in the EU has decreased. In 2006, there were half as many asylum-seekers compared to 2001. The study shows, however, that Europe remains the region in the world where most people seek asylum. According to UNHCR, 596,000 persons sought asylum globally during 2006 and 300,000 out of them in the EU. In Denmark, there were 23 per cent less asylum applications in 2006 compared to the year before. Sweden is one of the few countries where the development is opposite.

(Jyllands Posten 9 October 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1122270>)

Estonia

Bill to grant citizenship to stateless residents' children

The Center Party handed in a bill to the parliament on Tuesday suggesting that citizenship would be granted automatically to the children of stateless residents in Estonia. Citizenship would be granted automatically to children whose both parents lived in Estonia with a permanent residence permit at the time of the child's birth but are not citizens of Estonia. The amendment would narrow the split between ethnic Estonians and Russians and reduce bureaucracy, the authors of the bill claim. There were 125,799 stateless persons living in Estonia on a permanent residence permit at the end of last year. The number of naturalized residents was 6,523 in 2004, 7,072 in 2005 and 4,753 in 2006.

(Baltic News Service 9 October 2007)

Iceland

27 Colombian refugees to Iceland

27 Colombian refugees, resettled through UNHCR, arrived on Iceland on Tuesday. According to the Icelandic daily Fréttablaðið the group had fled from Colombia to Ecuador after having been caught up in violence, conflict and persecution in their homeland. The refugees will first stay in Reykjavík and the Icelandic Red Cross will provide them with housing and counseling. Iceland has received 247 refugees since 1996.

(Iceland Review 9 October 2007

http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily_news/?cat_id=16539&ew_0_a_id=291227)

Latvia

Latvia and Estonia least popular destinations for asylum-seekers in 2006

Latvia and Estonia were the least popular destinations among asylum-seekers in the EU countries during 2006, according to statistics from Eurostat office. The data shows that Estonia received five and Latvia ten official asylum applications from refugees coming from unstable regions. Lithuania received 145 official asylum applications. In 2006, the number of asylum-seekers in Latvia and Estonia decreased from 2005, while it increased in Lithuania.

(Baltic News Service 10 October 2007)

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Saturday 6 to Monday 8 October 2007

Denmark

Rejected Iraqis receive return contracts

Rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers received return contracts from the Danish Immigration Service last Friday. The Danish Red Cross has earlier criticized the contracts, saying that people cannot be asked to sign return contracts as it is not possible to know how the situation in Northern Iraq will develop. The government has now changed the contracts and added a cancellation option. "Of course we are happy about that, since it gives the Iraqis an opportunity to change their decision to return home until the very last day", says Jørgen Chemnitz, head of the asylum department at the Danish Red Cross. (Berlingske Tidende 5 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071005/danmark/710050328/>)

New group of Iraqi interpreters have arrived

A group of approximately 50 Iraqi interpreters, who have been employed by Danish troops and other Danes in Iraq, and their relatives, arrived on Saturday night in Denmark. The flight to Denmark was arranged by the Ministry of Defense. Since last summer over 300 interpreters with families have been evacuated from Iraq and have come to Denmark. So far, 124 of them have been granted asylum.

(Berlingske Tidende 5 October 2007;

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071005/danmark/110051257/>,

Politiken 8 October 2007; <http://politiken.dk/udland/article390320.ece>)

Estonia

Russia to EU: statelessness in Estonia and Latvia must be addressed

In a meeting with the EU on Thursday, the Russian Foreign Ministry once again brought up the human rights situation in Estonia and Latvia, stating among other things that it was unacceptable not to address the huge number of stateless people there.

(Baltic News Service 5 October 2007)

UN rapporteur: Estonian citizenship policy must be reviewed

UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racial discrimination and xenophobia Doudou Diene, who is writing a report on the Baltic countries, has visited Estonia. He highlights the large number of stateless persons, saying that Estonian citizenship policy must be reviewed. He recommends that Estonia reviews its language requirements for citizenship and adds that in his view Russian should receive an official language status. (Baltic News Service 8 October 2007)

Norway

Burmese major has not been arrested by Thai police

Contrary to rumors circulating Friday, the Burmese major and his son fleeing to Thailand Monday last week are in safety and have not been arrested by the Thai police. This is confirmed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On Thursday last week, the Burmese man and his son sought asylum in Norway.

(Aftenposten 5 October <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/uriks/article2032918.ece>;
Verdens Gang 5 October 2007 <http://www.vg.no/pub/vgart.hbs?artid=173464>)

Sweden

Immigration of relatives doubled

This year, the Swedish Migration Board is expecting 40,000 asylum-applications from relatives of persons who have been granted asylum. This is a 118 per cent increase from 2006. The largest numbers of applicants are from Iraq and Afghanistan, and approximately 85 per cent of all applicants get residence permit.

(Sveriges Television 6 October 2007

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=931893&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&qqueryArt549588=asyl&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Halved waiting time for asylum-decision

So far this year, decisions have been made in 21,000 asylum cases, which is double as many as in the same period last year. The processing time has come down from 249 days to 149 days for Iraqis, Somalis and Afghans. Even though more decisions have been made compared to last year, and a larger percentage of the asylum-seekers are granted residence, the Swedish Migration Board still has 24,000 people waiting for their decision. For groups such as Russians, Lebanese and Uzbeks, the waiting time has become longer compared to last year. According to the Swedish Advice Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees, there is now a risk that the applications are rushed through and the legal safeguards will be affected.

(Sveriges Radio 6 October 2007 <http://www.sr.se/cgi-bin/International/nyhetssidor/artikel.asp?nyheter=1&ProgramID=2076&artikel=1641428>)

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Thursday 4 October to Friday 5 October 2007

Denmark

EU Commission wants fingerprints

Within the EU the fingerprints of all asylum-seekers are being collected and saved in a database. Now the EU Commission wants a new system whereby the fingerprints of all non EU-citizens travelling into Europe will be collected. According to the EU Commissioner of Justice, Franco Frattini, this system aims to fight terrorism, fraudulent asylum-seekers and secure the union's borders against illegal immigration. This is one of the new initiatives, revealed by Frattini at a conference for EU's Ministers of Justice this week in Lisbon. The EU Commission will present the plans for fighting terrorism in November this year and February next year.

(Berlingske Tidende 3 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071003/danmark/110021164/>)

Hvilshøj and Jespersen received criticism

At a conference in the Danish Parliament on Wednesday Minister of Integration Rikke Hvilshøj and Minister of Social Affairs Karen Jespersen defended the stay of asylum-seeking children at reception centres, even though it is negative for their health. Hvilshøj said that everything possible is done for these children. Hvilshøj and Jespersen got criticized by the Social Liberal's head of integration, Morten Østergaard among others, who said that more can be done. Rikke Hvilshøj maintained that there is no point to let asylum-seeker out in the society.

(Politiken 3 October 2007 <http://politiken.dk/politik/article388760.ece>)

Fogh criticized for not fulfilling a promise

Many of the parties in opposition directs criticism towards PM Anders Fogh Rasmussen (Liberals) and the rest of the government for not using the asylum-seekers' working possibilities in solving the problems with labour force shortage. The opposition parties' points out that Fogh already in 2002, in his opening speech to the Danish Parliament, said that the government wanted to work for extending the asylum-seekers' possibilities to work and now the opposition criticises Fogh for not keeping the promise. The Prime Minister says that asylum-seekers will get the possibility to work, the day they receive asylum.

(Jyllands Posten 3 October 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1113969>)

United opposition against the Liberals

During the Danish Parliament's opening debate on Thursday the Social Democrats, through their head Helle Thorning-Schmidt, changed their position in the asylum issue and now wants to give asylum-seeker the possibility to live and work outside the reception centres. With that, the Social Democrats, Social Liberals and New Alliance are now united in the battle of putting pressure on the government to let asylum-seekers live outside the closed reception centres. Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (Liberals) explains that the asylum-seekers will remain in the reception centres, because they do not have the "preconditions" to come out in the society. He

neither can nor wants to say for how long the Iraqi asylum-seekers will remain in the reception centres but he admits that the waiting time for the asylum-seekers is a “major physical and psychical stress”.

(Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands Posten and Politiken 4 October 2007

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20071004/politik/71004048/>,
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Judgment in ECHR can help Iraqi asylum-seekers in Denmark

A principal decision in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg might change the Danish asylum praxis and many experts state that the ruling can give the asylum-seeking Iraqis in Denmark new rights. The judgment from the ECHR states that asylum-seekers do not have to be able to prove they are being “individually persecuted” in order to be granted asylum. Belonging to a group or a clan in danger can be enough to receive asylum. The head of asylum at the Danish Refugee Council, Anne la Cour, points out that the judgment stresses the use of UNHCR’s information as well as the interpretation of the individualized demand. The Social Liberals demand new asylum routines but the Refugee Appeals Board rejects the demands. It has not been possible to get comments from the Minister of Integration, Rikke Hvilshøj. (Information 4 October 2007 <http://information.dk/147350>)

Head of Danish Red Cross rejects criticism

In reply to a reader’s letter, criticizing the Red Cross of politicizing through its recent appeal – together with other humanitarian organizations - to the Nordic authorities to offer asylum-seekers from war-torn areas better protection, General Secretary of the Danish Red Cross Jørgen Poulsen writes that it is not about politics. He says that it is about speaking on behalf of voiceless people who fear deportation to death and persecution, and in particular about helping persons who have been waiting for far too long for an answer to their asylum applications and suffer as a result. (Berlingske Tidende 1 October 2007)

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Directorate of Immigration screened

The Directorate of Immigration yesterday presented an analysis on the image of the office, as seen by its cooperation partners. Half of the 27 interviewees consider the office as active, and two thirds consider its staff professional and capable. Country of origin information was also appreciated. However, the customer service received strong criticism and over one third felt that the office does not pursue humanitarian values in its work. The Directorate of Immigration has been extensively discussed in public debate due to a couple of asylum cases where the church played a major role.

(Helsingin Sanomat 4 October 2007,

<http://www.hs.fi/politiikka/artikkeli/Ulkomaalais++virasto++I%C3%A4pivalaistu/HS20071004SI1MA012ga>)

Refugees to Oravais

During the autumn and winter, the municipality of Oravais will receive more than 80 refugees. 54 Somalis will come during the autumn to reunite with their families already

being in Oravais, and 30 quota refugees from Myanmar are estimated to come in the beginning of next year. The municipality has appointed a working group, consisting of officials and volunteers, which will take care of the refugee-related issues. (Yle 5 October 2007 <http://svenska.yle.fi/nyheter/artikel.php?id=110509>)

Norway

Burmese major has asked to come to Norway

On Thursday, the Burmese man who last week fled to Thailand together with his 17-year-old son and claims that he is a major in the Burmese army, had a meeting with the Norwegian embassy in Bangkok. He says he fled after having refused to shoot at protesters. Norwegian ambassador Merete Fjeld Brattested says that the man and his son want to come to Norway, and that it is now up to the Norwegian immigration authorities to make a decision. Kjell Magne Bondevik, leader of the Oslo centre for peace and human rights and former Norwegian prime minister, says that Norwegian authorities have to take action quickly, stating that Thai authorities have made it clear that they do not want the man to remain in Thailand for long. The authorities of Myanmar (Burma) have asked for the man to be returned.

(Aftenposten 3 and 4 October 2007

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/uriks/article2028263.ece>,

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Sweden

Reception centres are full

Swedish reception centres are full and unable to house many asylum-seekers, because persons stay on in them after their asylum applications have been rejected. This is a growing problem, says Dan Eliasson, general director of the Migration Board. If it is not possible to return them home, the Migration Board lets them stay on in its reception centres. Iraq and Somalia, for example, only receive rejected asylum-seekers from their countries if they return voluntarily. Hence Sweden cannot deport people to such countries.

(Sveriges Radio 3 October 2007 <http://www.sr.se/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=1634736>)

Social Democrats: refugees should be told where to live

The Social Democratic Party proposes that refugees who have received residence permit should be assigned a municipality where they are to live while they receive introduction support, offered for a period of maximum two years. If they settle elsewhere they should not receive any such support. The idea is to distribute refugees more evenly between the municipalities. At present they can choose where to live, which has resulted in great expenses for certain municipalities where many choose to settle. The Left Party and the Green Party oppose the proposition. Luciano Astudillo, the Social Democrats' spokesperson for integration issues, hopes for an agreement with the government parties. Minister of Integration Nyamko Sabuni welcomes an agreement with the Social Democrats.

(Dagens Nyheter 5 October 2007

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=147&a=700698> and Sveriges Radio 5

October 2007 <http://www.sr.se/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=1638498>)

Sweden received 1/8 of Western world's asylum-seekers

1/8 of those who sought asylum in the West this year did so in Sweden, according to UNHCR. The only country receiving more asylum-seekers was the US. During the first six months of 2007, 17,700 persons sought asylum in Sweden, compared to 8,900 in the same period last year. The increase is due to the Iraq conflict: 47 % of Iraqis who sought asylum in the West came to Sweden.

(Sveriges Television 4 October 2007

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=930579&lid=senasteNytt_275214&pos=rubrik_930579)

WWF and UNHCR distribute firewood among refugees

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has bought a large amount of firewood which, together with UNHCR, it is distributing in refugee camps on the border between Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. The idea is to help the refugees and to improve the situation of some rare gorillas which suffer from the exploitation by refugees of natural resources in the area.

(Svenska Dagbladet 4 October 2007

http://www.svd.se/dynamiskt/inrikes/did_17220759.asp)

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The Social Democratic Party proposes that refugees who have received residence permit should be assigned a municipality where they are to live while they receive introduction support, offered for a period of maximum two years. If they settle elsewhere they should not receive any such support. The idea is to distribute refugees more evenly between the municipalities. At present they can choose where to live, which has resulted in great expenses for certain municipalities where many choose to settle. The Left Party and the Green Party oppose the proposition. Luciano Astudillo, the Social Democrats' spokesperson for integration issues, hopes for an agreement with the government parties. Minister of Integration Nyamko Sabuni welcomes an agreement with the Social Democrats.

(Dagens Nyheter 5 October 2007

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=147&a=700698> and Sveriges Radio 5 October 2007 <http://www.sr.se/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=1638498>)

Sweden received 1/8 of Western world's asylum-seekers

1/8 of those who sought asylum in the West this year did so in Sweden, according to UNHCR. The only country receiving more asylum-seekers was the US. During the first six months of 2007, 17,700 persons sought asylum in Sweden, compared to 8,900 in the same period last year. The increase is due to the Iraq conflict: 47 % of Iraqis who sought asylum in the West came to Sweden.

(Sveriges Television 4 October 2007

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=930579&lid=senasteNytt_275214&lp_os=rubrik_930579)

WWF and UNHCR distribute firewood among refugees

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has bought a large amount of firewood which, together with UNHCR, it is distributing in refugee camps on the border between Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. The idea is to help the refugees and to improve the situation of some rare gorillas which suffer from the exploitation by refugees of natural resources in the area.

(Svenska Dagbladet 4 October 2007

http://www.svd.se/dynamiskt/inrikes/did_17220759.asp)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

A press review with summaries of asylum and refugee-related articles in regional media.

Tuesday 2 to Wednesday 3 October 2007

Denmark

Asylum-seekers not included in government's job plan

The New Alliance, the Social Liberals, the Social Democrats and the Socialist People's Party criticize the government for excluding asylum-seekers from the employment plan, despite Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's statement of his government's intention to extend asylum-seekers' right to work, given in 2002. Asylum-seekers haven't been allowed to help in running the reception centres, to participate in courses run by the Red Cross and to do internships at local companies. The Prime Minister says that better activation opportunities for asylum-seekers are being prepared.

(JyllandsPosten 3 October 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1113969>)

Estonia

Speaker of Parliament rejects PACE statements about stateless

Speaker of the Estonian parliament Ene Ergma, of the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, has addressed a letter to Rene van der Linden, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, rejecting once again his claims on the situation of the stateless population in Estonia. She rejects Linden's statement that stateless people in Estonia lack the right to vote in local elections, and that children of stateless persons are not granted citizenship, stating that all children under 15 and born in Estonia automatically receive citizenship if their parents apply for it on their behalf. According to Ergma, Linden's statements have led to great controversy both nationally and internationally.

(Baltic News Service 2 October 2007)

Finland

Congregation protects a Rwandese woman in Lahti

A Pentecostal congregation suggests reconsidering the case of a Rwandese woman, who applied for asylum in Finland in 2005, and later received a negative decision and a deportation order. The congregation is puzzled by the Directorate of Immigration's decision which expresses doubts on the woman's real nationality and at the same time orders her to return to this country. The congregation has been in touch with the police who have now interviewed the woman again. The congregation follows the recent recommendations given by the Finnish Ecumenical Council, and is prepared to take care of the woman until a new decision is made.

(Helsingin Sanomat 2 October 2007,

<http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Seurakunta+suojelee+ruandalaisnaista+Lahdessa/1135230738169>)

Astrid Thors: Finland will receive more Iraqi refugees

In a speech in Geneva on Monday, the Finnish Minister of Migration and European Affairs, Astrid Thors, said that Finland plans to receive more Iraqi refugees from Syria and Jordan next year. Finland has also accepted to receive more Burmese refugees. Minister Thors also said that particular attention should be paid to refugee women and children.

(Yle 1 October 2007 <http://svenska.yle.fi/nyheter/artikel.php?id=110145>)

315 Burmese quota refugees to Finland in 2008

Next year Finland will receive 315 Burmese refugees from refugee camps in Thailand. 200 of these form part of Finland's group of quota refugees for this year, and 115 of that of last year. Next week Finnish officials will travel to Thailand to select the quota refugees.

(Yle 2 October 2007 <http://svenska.yle.fi/nyheter/artikel.php?id=110205>)

Norway

NRC fears refugee flow

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) fears a new refugee flow both internally and to Thailand if the situation in Myanmar continues to develop like it has. "We fear a repetition of the situation in 1988", says Richard Skretting from NRC. Last week the High Commissioner for UNHCR, António Guterres, appealed to the world community to be prepared for a refugee flow to Thailand. There are close to 700,000 refugees from Burma in the neighboring countries, and close to 500,000 Burmese are internally displaced.

(Dagsavisen 29 September 2007 <http://www.dagsavisen.no/utenriks/article316552.ece>)

Major from Myanmar wants asylum in Norway or Sweden

The former major in Myanmar's military regime, Thay Win, fled the country after getting orders to kill Buddhist monks. He and his 17-year-old son fled through the jungle and crossed, with help from the Karen guerrilla, the border to Thailand on Tuesday morning. The major hopes to get asylum either in Norway or in Sweden. He has met with Norwegian and Swedish journalists, and has a meeting at the Norwegian Embassy in Bangkok to discuss asylum possibilities. Thai authorities want Win to leave Bangkok as soon as possible, fearing a confrontation with the military regime of Myanmar. Win says that he will be killed if he is sent back to Myanmar.

(Nettavisen 3 October 2007 <http://www.nettavisen.no/verden/article1367380.ece>)

Sweden

New policy for family reunification

According to the Migration Board's new practice, non-asylum-seeking parents without a residence permit can apply for family reunification from Sweden, but asylum-seeking parents still have to go through the process in their home countries. However, the Migration Board would like to see a change in the law, which would allow all groups to apply for family reunification in Sweden. Minister of Migration, Tobias Billström says that he will consider whether an investigation of the Aliens Act is necessary.

(SVT 1 October 2007

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=926535&lid=puff_926546&lpos=rubrik)

Proposal for supervising body in EU to check asylum practice

Minister of Migration, Tobias Billström, wants to set up an EU body to monitor asylum practices in the member countries. The proposal will be sent to Brussels as a part of Sweden's comments on the proposal for creating a common asylum system. "On the paper, Europe has a common asylum system, but practices differ a lot between countries. This has been evident in relation to the refugee flow from Iraq where some countries have helped a lot while others have not done much", says Billström in an informal meeting for the EU Ministers of Migration in Lisbon.

(Svenska Dagbladet 1 October 2007

http://www.svd.se/dynamiskt/utrikes/did_17199064.asp)

USA receives 12,000 Iraqi refugees

USA has now decided to receive 12,000 persons from the war torn Iraq within a year. Until the middle of September this year 900 Iraqis had come to USA. In June, UNHCR estimated that 2,4 million persons have fled from Iraq since the war started in 2003, most of them to Syria and Jordan. Another two million persons are internally displaced.

(Svenska Dagbladet 3 October 2007

http://www.svd.se/dynamiskt/utrikes/did_17208855.asp)

Moroccan's application rejected again

The government has once again decided to deport a 28-year-old Moroccan suspected of having connections to a 42-year-old Swede of Moroccan origin, who has been branded a terrorist by the UN. The government made its first decision in March but the Moroccan later claimed that there were new circumstances in his case. The government finds that these circumstances make no difference to the original decision, but the deportation is being delayed pending a ruling from the European Court of Human Rights.

(Dagens Nyheter 3 October 2007, translation by Swedish Press Review)

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Saturday 29 September to Monday 1 October 2007

Denmark

Rejected Iraqis granted asylum

Two Iraqi refugees, who have had their asylum applications rejected, were on Friday granted asylum by the Refugee Appeals Board in Denmark. In reference to UNHCR's recommendations to give asylum to all asylum-seekers from Southern and Central Iraq, the Danish Refugee Council has put pressure on the Danish authorities to grant asylum to the rejected Iraqis. "In light of the persecution of the civilian population we see in Iraq right now, there is good reason to review the cases. Therefore, it is more surprising that the Refugee Appeals Board has refused to reconsider most of the cases," says Secretary General of the Danish Refugee Council, Andreas Kamm. (Jyllands Posten 28 September 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1108992>)

Sweden

Archbishop: Not suitable to deport people to Iraq

In the church assembly meeting in Uppsala last week, the refugee issue was one of the most important issues. In a follow up interview, Archbishop Anders Wejryd states that some of the decisions to deport people from Sweden to Iraq or Afghanistan are not in agreement with the legislative history of the law. Wejryd also points out that the church respects the open court examination in the asylum cases but maintains his earlier stance that, "when Swedish air traffic is not allowed to fly into Iraq, it is difficult to think that one should consider the country as safe".

(Dagens Nyheter 28 September 2007
<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=698384>)

Substantial increase in family reunifications

Many relatives to asylum-seekers from conflict-ridden countries, especially Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, are coming to Sweden. Between January and August this year, the number of family reunion applications more than doubled compared to the number received within the same period last year. The temporary asylum law, which last year gave refugees in hiding a right to a re-examination of their case, lies behind the increase in family reunion applications. The temporary asylum law granted many people asylum and now their relatives are coming. Iraqi family reunifications have tripled since last year and accounts for half of the family reunifications.

(Sveriges Radio 29 September 2007

Amnesty: Palestinians tortured in Iraq

A new report from Amnesty International shows that thousands of Palestinian refugees in Iraq have been displaced, tortured and murdered by army groups of the Shia Muslims. Amnesty appeals to the government of Iraq, the US and to the World to take concrete action in order to help the Palestinians in Iraq. In May 2006 according to UNHCR, there were 34 000 Palestinians in Iraq, now there are fewer than 15 000. The report from Amnesty states that Palestinians are more vulnerable than other groups in Iraq since they do not have any armed forces defending them. So far, the Iraqi government and the American forces have failed in providing them with the necessary protection, Amnesty establishes.

(Svenska Dagbladet 1 October 2007

http://www.svd.se/dynamiskt/utrikes/did_17192148.asp)

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