

Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Tuesday 29 January to Wednesday 30 January 2008

Denmark

New Alliance founder resigns – party in deep trouble

Gitte Seeberg, one of the founders of the New Alliance, has left the party as a protest against the party's support for the centre-right government. She said that New Alliance had promised a humane asylum policy, for example, and has not managed to keep the promise.

(Jyllands-Posten and Politiken 29 January 2008

<http://politiken.dk/politik/article464717.ece>,

<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1248131&eceExpr=Ny%20Alliance&eceArchive=o>, translated by News ex-press)

Danish People's Party believes in asylum agreement with New Alliance

Pia Kjærsgaard from the Danish People's Party denies the existence of any new initiatives regarding the rejected asylum-seekers, but says that she believes that an asylum agreement can be reached with the New Alliance. New Alliance, however, wants to allow rejected asylum-seekers to work, which Kjærsgaard is not willing to accept.

(Politiken 29 January 2008

<http://politiken.dk/politik/article464609.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article465064.ece>)

Integration report full of mistakes says minister

Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Birthe Rønn Hornbech (V) has dismissed a controversial report from the British Council and the Migration Policy Group, severely criticizing Denmark's integration record, as an 'incompetent and superficial' piece of work. In a strongly worded letter, Rønn Hornbech states that there are at least 27 mistakes in the report, such as the claim that there are no laws that protect an individual against racial discrimination. She also challenges the assumption that Denmark's restrictive immigration policies lead to poor integration.

(Jyllands-Posten 28 January 2008 http://jp.dk/indland/indland_politik/article1247588.ece, translated by News ex-press)

NA's asylum demands will test government

When entering negotiations with the government on asylum-seekers' conditions, New Alliance will test Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Birthe Rønn Hornbech's claim of integration being well dealt with. The party will demand that all rejected asylum-seekers stranded in the country be given work permits allowing them to earn money and become self sufficient. New Alliance also intends to present a proposal letting young asylum-seekers between for example 17-25 years fill the gaps in the Danish labour market.

(Berlingske Tidende 28 January 2008 and Jyllands-Posten 29 January 2008

http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1247972&eceExpr=asyl*&eceArchive=o,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080128/politik/701280051/>, partly translated by News ex-press)

Sweden

Everyone want to go to Södertälje

In a six-page reportage, Svenska Dagbladet describes the situation in the Swedish municipality Södertälje, located just outside Stockholm, which in 2007 received more asylum-seekers from Iraq than the US. Some of the refugees have even started to call Södertälje "Little Baghdad". The municipality is struggling to manage the big numbers and the politicians say that they might need to create their own refugee camps if the government does not pay attention. The Municipality is now arranging information meetings for the refugees in Södertälje to tell about the opportunities to move elsewhere in Sweden where the labour market is less crowded.

(Svenska Dagbladet 27 January 2008)

500 Afghans waiting to be deported

The cases of nearly 500 Afghans have been handed over to the police and they are now waiting to be deported. The Swedish Afghanistan Committee has expressed their disagreement in a meeting with the Migration Board. Dan Eliasson, Director General of the Migration Board, says that they fully understand the difficult situation in Afghanistan, but stresses that the Migration Board has to follow legislation and that the situation in Kabul does not provide for the right to protection in Sweden. The Migration Board categorizes six provinces in Afghanistan as areas of internal armed conflict: Kandahar, Helmand, Ghazni, Uruzgan, Patika and Zabul.

(Dagens Nyheter 29 January 2008, translated by Swedish Press Review)

Uproar after Afghans deported

The first deportations to Afghanistan have been plagued with problems. Around 500 asylum-seekers from Afghanistan are to be deported from Sweden to their country of origin. Three deportations were planned for yesterday but only one succeeded. One of the Afghans had to be taken to hospital after taking an overdose of medicine, whilst in the care of the Migration Board, while the other was not allowed to board the aircraft due to his state of shock.

(Svenska Dagbladet 29 January 2008)

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_821903.svd

UNHCR bears no responsibility for the accuracy and content of the press summary, which is based on external news services and does not reflect the views of UNHCR.

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Saturday 26 January to Monday 28 January 2008

Norway

Memorial for missing asylum children

Over 600 asylum-seeking children have disappeared from reception centres since 2000. Very few of them are found, and Save the Children claims the investigation is inefficient. Save the Children arranged a memorial for the missing children in Oslo, demanding more action by the police.

(Aftenposten and Verdens Gang 26 January 2008

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/oslo/article2220411.ece>,

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=515629>)

Sweden

Migration Board increases speed

The waiting time for becoming a Swedish citizen has fallen to an average of three months according to the Migration Board's annual report. As recently as a couple of years ago it took nearly twelve months. According to general director Dan Eliasson it has not become easier to become a Swedish citizen but the reason behind the faster handling of cases is that they have been sorted more thoroughly and clearer instructions have been provided to those applying.

(Dagens Nyheter 28 January 2008, translated by Swedish Press Review)

Sweden urges more countries to receive quota refugees

Sweden is the country receiving most quota refugees in Europe, and together with five other EU countries, Sweden intends to teach and encourage the remaining 21 countries to receive more quota refugees. UNHCR estimates that 150,000 refugees will be in need of resettlement in 2008. The letter from six EU countries, Sweden, Finland, Holland, Denmark, Great Britain and Ireland, points out that EU receives only five percent of the refugees which according to UNHCR, are in need of resettlement.

(Svenska Dagbladet 26 January 2008

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_811287.svd)

Deportation to Eritrea despite protests

Despite UNHCR objections, the Migration Board intends to deport an Eritrean asylum-seeker. The deportation was going to take place already last week, but had to be cancelled because of his resistance on the plane. This time the police will charter a plane in order to deport the man to Eritrea. In a letter to Dan Eliasson at the Migration Board, UNHCR says that the man should not be sent back to Eritrea as he has been politically active in Sweden and therefore risks getting into trouble in his home country.

(Dagens Nyheter 26 January 2008)

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Thursday 24 January to Friday 25 January 2008

Denmark

Drug dealers have free access to reception centre

Drug dealers can easily sell drugs to asylum-seekers residing at Sandholmlejren, as all that is needed to get access to the reception centre is a visiting pass. Also, some of the asylum-seekers are bringing drugs to the centre. Head of Asylum Unit in the Red Cross, Jørgen Chemnitz, says drug dealing is a problem, but underlines that the reception centre is a place where residents can receive visitors as they like.

(Politiken 25 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article463014.ece>)

Election threat 'ridiculous' says Pia Kjaersgaard

While rescuing the government by voting for the resolution to re-negotiate the government's asylum bill, New Alliance leader Naser Khader claims that he is still ready for an election if NA doesn't win any concessions in a new round of negotiations – a threat dismissed as ridiculous by Danish People Party's leader Pia Kjaersgaard.

Kjaersgaard says she is ready to sit down and talk with the New Alliance about a new agreement, but not about the things proposed by Naser Khader, such as allowing asylum seekers to work so they become self-supporting.

(Politiken 24 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/politik/article462419.ece>, translated by News Ex-press)

New Alliance: Let asylum-seekers earn money to bring home

After flip-flopping all week on asylum, the New Alliance has finally come up with a concrete proposal – asylum seekers who have had their applications for residency rejected should be allowed to live outside asylum camps and be given a temporary work permit, but should also be required to sign a contract agreeing that a percentage of their wages be frozen until the day they leave Denmark. Although the Danish People's Party has refused to budge an inch from the original agreement, Mr Khader says he is hopeful that progress could be made. Social Democrat leader Helle Thorning-Schmidt says the New Alliance will get nothing out of the deal with the Prime Minister and claims they have been cheated.

(Berlingske Tidende 24 January 2008 and Politiken 23-24 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080124/politik/701240059/>,

<http://politiken.dk/politik/article462994.ece><http://politiken.dk/politik/article462131.ece>,

partly translated by News ex-press)

Christmas-Møller: I believe in Khader

After creating political tumult before eventually abstaining from voting on the resolution concerning the government's new asylum bill, independent MP Pia Christmas-Møller urges New Alliance's Naser Khader to use his newfound power to come up with something positive for the rejected asylum-seekers. Despite the defeat on the asylum issue, Christmas-Møller thinks that if changes are made, she has contributed to better asylum policy by putting much pressure on the Government.

(Politiken 24 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/politik/article462594.ece>, partly translated by News ex-press)

The Government's asylum proposal passed without problems

After Naser Khader from the New Alliance switched side in the asylum debate, the Government's asylum proposal was passed in the Parliament without any complications. 58 members of Parliament voted for the Government's proposal, while 48 members voted against. Independent MP Pia Christmas-Møller voted blank.

(Berlingske Tidende and Politiken 24 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080124/politik/80124038/>,

<http://politiken.dk/politik/article462482.ece>)

Many countries limit rejected asylum seekers' access to work

In most EU countries, asylum-seekers are allowed to work while their applications are considered, but not after they have been rejected. None of the other Nordic countries give rejected asylum-seekers access to the labour market. It would thus be rather generous if rejected asylum-seekers are allowed to work in Denmark. When it comes to allowing asylum-seekers to work, Denmark is stricter than the neighbouring countries, and Danish rules are in general below the EU minimum standards.

(Berlingske Tidende 24 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080124/danmark/701240052/>)

Asylum hearing: Embarrassing Danish debate

On the initiative of the Social Liberals, organizations and associations were gathered to discuss the Government's asylum agreement, and one of the conclusions reached was that the agreement in itself is not helping the rejected asylum-seekers. Both the Danish Refugee Council and the UN claims that Denmark goes against UNHCR recommendations when refusing to grant residence permits to refugees from Central and Southern Iraq.

(Jyllands-Posten 23 January 2008

http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1241219&eceExpr=unhcr*&eceArchive=0)

Norway

11 asylum children have disappeared

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has for the first time provided a complete account of the number of asylum children disappearing from Norwegian reception centres, revealing that 11 children disappeared in 2007. UDI fears that four of them have become victims of human trafficking. Due to fear of human trafficking among both children and grown-ups, 53 reports of concern were sent to the police and the Child Welfare Service during 2007. According to Kripos, the national police unit combating organized crime and other serious crime, investigations of these cases are ongoing.

(Aftenposten 23-24 January 2008

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2215176.ece>,

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2215177.ece>)

Sweden

Deportation to Eritrea given up

An Eritrean man was supposed to be deported to Eritrea on Wednesday this week, but due to his resistance on the plane, the deportation was called off. According to Amnesty International, people have been arrested and tortured after being deported to Eritrea, but Eugène Palmér at the Migration Board claims they have no information about this. UNHCR and Amnesty International recommend that no one be deported to Eritrea.

(Svenska Dagbladet and SVT 23 January 2008

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1033382&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=unhcr*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0, http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_799681.svd)

Denmark: Fogh Rasmussen avoided defeat

The Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen avoided defeat in Parliament after the New Alliance decided to support the asylum agreement proposed by the Government and the Danish People's Party. However, the condition set by the New Alliance is that it be invited to negotiate the details of the agreement. The Government won the voting with 58 votes against 46.

(SVT 23 January 2008 and Svenska Dagbladet 24 January 2008

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1033122&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0, http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_804073.svd)

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Denmark

Khader secures Fogh's majority

According to the latest news updates and despite the latest presumptions that the Government will face a defeat in parliament, the New Alliance has now decided to secure the Government's majority on the asylum issue. According to Naser Khader from the New Alliance there will be negotiations regarding the agreement and the New Alliance demands changes, but says they have decided to make an agreement with the Government. This was made clear after Khader had met with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

(Jyllands-Posten and Politiken 23 January 2008

<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1241066&eceExpr=ny%20alliance&eceArchive=0>,
<http://politiken.dk/politik/article462073.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article461990.ece>)

Government heading for defeat on asylum issue

The government is facing a defeat in parliament after independent MP Pia Christmas-Møller demanded changes in the new asylum agreement. Christmas-Møller has the opposition's backing for her proposal to allow rejected asylum-seekers to move out of asylum centres after two years, instead of the three years suggested in the government's new proposal. The votes of two Greenlandic MPs will now be decisive for the outcome. The Danish People's Party has threatened the two Greenland representatives that their country's annual financial grant from Denmark is at risk if they vote against the bill. In the midst of the confusion, the Conservatives' spokesperson on policy, Henriette Kjær, said it could be 'refreshing' to hold a new general election right away.

(Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands-Posten and Politiken 21 January 2008 and Politiken 22

January 2008 <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080121/politik/701210058/>,
<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1239093>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article461113.ece> ,
<http://politiken.dk/politik/article460995.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article461221.ece>,
translated by News ex-press)

Christmas-Møller resigns from Conservatives

Independent MP Pia Christmas-Møller has resigned from the Conservative Party after being threatened with exclusion by party leader Bendt Bendtsen. She is now at the centre of a political drama after opposing the government's new asylum bill and securing a majority behind her own counter proposal.

(Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands-Posten and Politiken 22 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080122/politik/801220373/>,
<http://politiken.dk/politik/article461474.ece>,
http://jp.dk/indland/indland_politik/article1239912.ece, translated by News ex-press)

Problems for asylum-seekers wherever they live

While the thorny question of when asylum-seekers should be allowed to move out of asylum centres and into their own homes has created a political stand-off in Denmark, new Swedish research shows that life outside the reception facilities does not get any better – uncertainty about the future continues to create psychological problems for families wherever they live, according to researcher Kjerstin Almqvist, who has studied asylum seekers for years.

(Berlingske Tidende 22 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080122/danmark/701220040/>, translated by News express)

Wave of refugees to Denmark

The newly opened borders of the eastern EU countries have led to a stream of Chechens towards Western Europe. Nine new countries became members of the Schengen cooperation on 21 December 2007. 42 asylum-seekers have arrived in Denmark since then, which is five times more than in an average month. The Danish Police hesitate to link the Schengen expansion together with the refugee wave.

(Politiken 23 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article461741.ece>)

Norway

Five Afghans deported

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly warns Norwegians against travelling to Afghanistan, but Norway has nevertheless forcibly returned five Afghan asylum-seekers to Kabul. A UNHCR report from December stated that it is impossible to define safe and unsafe regions in Afghanistan as the security situation is complex and continuously deteriorating. According to UNHCR spokesperson, Hanne Mathisen, people not in need for international protection may be returned as long as the UNHCR guidelines are followed.

(Verdens Gang 21 and 22 January 2008

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=506578>,
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=508880>)

More Afghans get to stay in Norway

Despite the deportation of the five Afghans, Norway in general deports a decreasing number of asylum-seekers to Afghanistan. Statistics from the Directorate of Immigration show that only seven percent got their applications rejected in 2007, while close to 70 percent were rejected in 2004. Also the forced returns have decreased during the last half year. Before the hunger strike last summer, 106 rejected Afghan asylum-seekers were sent back to Afghanistan, while during the autumn 2007, only 19 asylum-seekers were sent home.

(Verdens Gang 22 January 2008

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=506587>)

Sweden

Parents forced to leave their children

The Migration Board wants to change the law so that parents would not need to leave their children behind and apply for residence permit from their home country. Even

though having a family in Sweden can be considered as grounds for a residence permit, the 2006 legislation makes it difficult to change a negative decision. Many parents are therefore forced to return to their home country and apply for residence permits from there.

(Dagens Nyheter 19 January 2008 <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=734580>)

Denmark: Clarification regarding Iraqi spies is required

At least three of the interpreters working for the Danish Iraqi force were spies. According to the Government parties, the Conservatives and the Social Liberals, Denmark should not grant asylum to persons who have betrayed Danish soldiers. The Government and the Danish People's Party consider it important to get a clarification in this matter for the sake of the interpreters who really did help the Danish army, and to deport those who applied for asylum on false grounds. 306 out of 373 Iraqi interpreters have been granted asylum in Denmark.

(Dagens Nyheter 21 January 2008 and SVT 22 January 2008

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=734958>,

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1031283&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Eritrean asylum-seeker rejected

Despite UNHCR and Amnesty International recommendations on not returning anyone to Eritrea, an Eritrean asylum-seeker has been rejected by Sweden and will be deported to Eritrea. According to the Migration Board, the general situation in Eritrea does not give a reason to grant residence permits, and the man's individual grounds were not considered sufficient for residence. Madelaine Seidlitz from Amnesty International says the human rights situation in Eritrea is very serious, and claims that forced deportations to Eritrea violate the Refugee Convention.

(Svenska Dagbladet 23 January 2008

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_799681.svd)

Decision on healthcare for immigrants in hiding not ready

The Swedish Government has still not made a decision on changing the law so that illegal immigrants or those without ID would be able to obtain free healthcare. The Minister for Health and Social Affairs, Göran Hägglund thinks Sweden should have a more generous view in this area, but says other people are questioning whether people who hide to avoid deportation should have the right to receive healthcare. Sweden has been criticized by the UN and human rights organizations for its tough stance on healthcare for immigrants.

(Dagens Nyheter 23 January 2008, translated by Swedish Press Review)

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Denmark

Red Cross: Single men suffer in reception centres

Red Cross expresses its concern for some 300 single men living at reception centres. The focus has lately been on asylum families, but Red Cross underlines that also single men are suffering at the reception centres. Men live in crowded rooms and have few possibilities for a private life, as they share rooms with three to four other persons. (Politiken 18 January <http://politiken.dk/indland/article459820.ece>)

Asylum agreement to be reported to the UN

Save the Children and the National Council for Children are not satisfied with the Government's new asylum agreement, and together with other NGOs intend to send a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. They note that only a limited number of families are included in the new agreement, and that it is not sufficient if Denmark wants to live up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They also stress that children should not stay at reception centres for longer than one year. (Jyllands-Posten and Politiken 18 January 2008 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1235753>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article460156.ece>)

Social Liberals summon to an urgent hearing on asylum agreement

The Social Liberals have invited around 50 organizations and associations to an urgent Parliamentary hearing regarding the new asylum agreement. Experts such as doctors, psychologists and researchers have been asked to contribute to the hearing to ensure an objective debate. The agreement still has to win a majority, which may depend on the votes of two Greenland politicians and the independent MP Pia Christmas-Møller. The Greenlanders have not yet decided whether they will vote. (Politiken 18-19 January 2008 and Jyllands-Posten 19 January 2008 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1236833>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article460442.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article460136.ece>)

Swedish asylum-seeking children fall sick

Even though moving out of the asylum centres would be good, some new concerns might arise. Danish Red Cross has raised concerns for the so-called 'resignation syndrome', which some 400 asylum-seeking children suffer from in Sweden. Due to the close follow up of Red Cross staff and other adults at the reception centres, only one asylum-seeking child in Denmark has so far shown similar symptoms. The Red Cross does not believe the new asylum agreement would lead to 'Swedish conditions', but they intend to advise some families to reconsider moving out of the centre. (Jyllands-Posten 19 January 2008 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1236723>)

Iraqi interpreters were spies

At least three Iraqi interpreters, supposedly working for Danish forces in Iraq, were also leaking sensitive information to the enemy. The Danish People's Party's foreign affairs

spokesman, Søren Espersen, is now demanding a full inquiry into whether some of the interpreters who have been granted asylum in Denmark were actually working for the enemy. He considers it disturbing that some of these people who were brought to Denmark because their lives were in danger, were actually spies.

(Berlingske Tidende 20 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080120/danmark/801200373/>, translated by News express)

Sweden

Refugee children in hiding will get education

The Government has decided that refugee children in hiding will get the right to education. The police will not be allowed to enter the schools and pick up the children, and even the road to school will be regarded a 'free zone'. Norway has a similar solution for refugee children in hiding.

(Svenska Dagbladet 19 January 2008

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_789615.svd)

Iraqi asylum-seekers to be quickly handled

The Migration Board is launching a project to quickly handle 5,000 Iraqi asylum applications. The goal is to spend ten days per application to make the asylum process more efficient. The Migration Board will select the applicants who are likely to be granted residence permits and process them to a large extent orally to save time. In case a decision cannot be reached within ten days, the application will go through the ordinary process.

(Svenska Dagbladet and SVT 19 January 2008

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_789435.svd,

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1029982&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Human smuggling in Sweden

A court in Gothenburg has charged seven men with various offences, including human smuggling. They are accused for helping Iraqi citizens to get into Sweden. The men are thought to have helped around 30 refugees to leave the Middle East for a new life within the Schengen area. In a similar case, two Chinese women were arrested on suspicion of smuggling four Chinese teenagers into Sweden from Beijing.

(Dagens Nyheter 19 January 2008, translated by Swedish Press Review)

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Denmark

New asylum deal – but no majority

The government and the Danish People's Party have agreed to allow 50 asylum-seeker families, primarily from Iraq, Kosovo and Somalia, to move out of reception centres and into nearby housing. However, it is still uncertain whether the agreement will be passed by parliament after independent MP, Ms Pia Christmas-Møller, has said that she is unsure how she will vote. Opposition parties call the agreement a breach of the Prime Minister's election campaign promise to develop a broad, cross-party agreement on asylum policy, something the Minister of Integration, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, admits, saying she considers it more important to get a quick solution for the children than to keep the promise.

(Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands-Posten 16 January 2008 and Politiken 16-17 January 2008 <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080116/danmark/102160128/>, <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080116/politik/701160063/>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article458902.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article458921.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article459134.ece>, <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1233017>, partly translated by News ex-press)

Asylum children fall sick after one year

While the Danish Medical Association welcomes the new agreement allowing some asylum-seekers to move out of reception centres, it raises concerns about the medical condition of the asylum-seeking children since families are only allowed to leave the centres after three years have passed since their application was rejected. Researchers also question the decision, as a Public Health Institute survey shows that asylum-seeking children fall sick after one year at reception centres.

(Berlingske Tidende 17 January 2008 and Politiken 16 and 18 January 2008 (<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080117/danmark/701170074/>, <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080117/politik/701170068/>, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article459607.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article458918.ece>)

Danish Refugee Council and Red Cross express concerns about agreement

The Danish Refugee Council is skeptical towards the new asylum agreement, claiming that the main problem for the Iraqis, the fear of having to return to Iraq, remains unsolved. Once again the government ignores the UN recommendation to grant asylum to the rejected Iraqis, says Secretary General, Andreas Kamm. Both the Danish Refugee Council and the Red Cross welcome any improvement in the situation of the rejected asylum-seekers, but are concerned that the agreement neither includes all rejected asylum-seekers nor allows them to work. Red Cross is, however, pleased to see that, in addition to Iraqi families, it also embraces families from Iran, Kosovo and Somalia.

(Politiken 16 -17 January 2008 and Jyllands-Posten 17 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/indland/article458911.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article459189.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article459247.ece>, <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1234150>)

Tougher punishment for black labour

The Government and the Danish People's Party want to combat asylum-seekers' engagement in the black labour market, and propose to introduce severe punishment for both the employee and the employer. If the proposal is accepted, employers misusing asylum-seekers as black labour force will in the future risk two years in jail or fines, while asylum-seekers will risk deportation and other punishment. (Politiken 17 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/politik/article459247.ece>)

Norway

Croatian citizen charged with war crimes deported to Serbia

Ministry of Justice has decided to return a Croatian citizen charged for war crimes. Both Croatia and Serbia had requested to receive the man, but Norwegian authorities decided to return him to Serbia as the Serbian charge was more serious. The man is charged for murder and inhuman treatment of at least 200 war prisoners in Croatia in 1991. (Bergens Tidende 15 January 2008 <http://www.bt.no/utenriks/article476940.ece>)

Sweden

Municipalities want to make refugee accounts public

The Municipality of Årstorps has since 2006 make the financial costs of receiving refugees public. In 2007, the municipality even made some profit, benefiting refugees who are no longer entitled to financial support from the state. In other municipalities, profit is normally transferred to the main budget. Other municipalities are likely to follow Årstorps's example.

(SVT 17 January 2008

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1026752&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=flykting*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Swedish man jailed for people smuggling

A 44-year-old Swedish man of Iraqi origin has been sentenced to 14 years in jail and fines for having been involved in the trafficking of human beings. He was arrested in Greece along with illegal immigrants in a vehicle. According to the Greek media, he was on his way back to Sweden with all 13 people. The roads between western Turkey and Greece are known as a popular route for human trafficking and last year alone the Greek authorities arrested more than 196 suspected smugglers and 9,200 illegal immigrants. (Dagens Nyheter 17 January 2008, translated by Swedish Press Review)

Immigrants face tougher rules

Immigrants to Sweden will find it harder to get residence permits for close relatives in the future, after the four governing parties agreed to tighten policy on the issue. The Christian Democrats had earlier objected on humanitarian grounds to the tighter rules, requiring immigrants to show that they are able to support themselves and have somewhere to live.

(Svenska Dagbladet 17 January 2008
http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_783913.svd, translated by Swedish Press
Review)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Tuesday 15 January to Wednesday 16 January 2008

Denmark

European Court ruling challenges Danish immigration law

The European Court of Justice has overruled parts of Danish immigration legislation concerning family reunification, which means that in future it will be easier for Danish citizens residing in another EU country to take their spouses home to Denmark. The spouses will have the right to study or even claim unemployment benefits – even if the person in question comes from a non-EU country.

(Jyllands-Posten and Berlingske Tidende 15 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080115/danmark/701150065/>, translated by News express)

Prime Minister backs down on new asylum bill

The Prime Minister's promise to put together a broad, cross-party agreement on asylum policy faced a severe setback after demands by the Danish People's Party that only the governing parties should determine immigration policy. Negotiations are still ongoing, but the number of rejected Iraqis who could move out of the reception centres remains uncertain and municipalities report on a lack of housing available for asylum-seekers.

(Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands-Posten and Politiken 15 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080115/danmark/801150392/>,
<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1230926>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article457846.ece>,
<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1231378>, partly translated by News ex-press)

New Alliance: Asylum-seekers should save money for their return

New Alliance is willing to let the rejected asylum-seekers work, but only if they accept that part of their salary will be paid at the time they return. According to New Alliance, this would motivate the rejected asylum-seekers to cooperate in their return and allow them to leave Denmark with dignity and with professional experience. The party also finds it unreasonable that the society should cover the costs of asylum-seekers when they could earn their living.

(Politiken 16 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/politik/article458292.ece>)

Finland

Church-harboured refugee granted residence permit

Anna Lado became the first refugee sheltered by the Church, who was granted a residence permit in Finland. Immigration officials granted the Sudanese woman a one-year-long residence permit which will be automatically extended. At least three other asylum-seekers, sheltered by religious communities last year, were not as fortunate. One refugee has already been deported, while two others are still awaiting the authorities' decision. Turku parishioners harbouring the Iraqi Kurd Naze Aghai are hoping that the humanity displayed in Anna Lado's case has set a favourable precedent.

(Yle and Helsingin Sanomat 15 January 2008

http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=272301&search=turvapaik*,

<http://www.yle.fi/news/id79875.html>,

<http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Kirkon+suojelema+Anna+Lado+sai+muukalaispassin/135233272943>)

Sweden

UNHCR: Greece is not a safe asylum country for Iraqis

Demands are growing that Sweden should stop deportation of Iraqi refugees to Greece. Last year alone, Sweden sent near 900 asylum-seekers, the majority Iraqis, back to Greece. "While 90 percent of all Iraqis who come to Sweden are considered to be in need of international protection, no Iraqis get such protection in Greece", says Hanne Mathisen, spokesperson for UNHCR. UNHCR encourages EU countries to apply more broadly the article in the Dublin regulation which says that States can choose to handle the asylum application instead of sending the asylum-seekers to their first country of asylum, especially if they believe it is in the interest of the asylum-seeker.

(Sveriges Radio 15 January 2008 <http://www.sr.se/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=1831690>)

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Saturday 12 January to Monday 14 January 2008

Denmark

Terror suspects deported without conviction

Two foreigners, one of them a refugee, are deported without explanations or trial since they are considered a security risk for the country. The decision is criticized by lawyers who claim the deportations violate human rights. Both of the deportees have a residence permit in Denmark.

(Politiken 11 January <http://politiken.dk/indland/article456923.ece>)

Norway

Unusually many residents at reception centres

The Directorate of Immigration asks municipalities throughout the country to make room for some 2,000 new asylum-seekers. During the last couple of years, around 15 to 20 asylum-seekers have arrived in the country per day, but the number has doubled during the past few months. The 2007 statistics are not ready yet, but the Directorate of Immigrations says the number of asylum-seekers has increased by 20 to 22 percent.

(NRK 11 January 2008 <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.4501619>)

Asylum-seekers kept in custody while fingerprints grow back

According to the police, some Eritrean asylum-seekers have tried to manipulate their fingerprints in order to avoid being identified by the European database and thereby being sent back to their first country of asylum. In these cases asylum-seekers are taken into custody for a few weeks while the fingerprints grow back and they can be registered by the system.

(NRK 12 January 2008 <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.4509192>)

Sweden

Refugees receive care in hiding

The National Board of Health and Welfare has demanded an investigation into the healthcare provisions for asylum-seekers and refugees in hiding. Since 2005, the number of visitors at voluntary organizations which are offering help to people in hiding has increased by over 20 percent. Many of the patients are seriously traumatized after escaping rape, persecution and torture.

(Svenska Dagbladet 13 January 2008

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_768977.svd, translated by Swedish Press Review)

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Thursday 10 January to Friday 11 January 2008

Denmark

Iraqi asylum-seekers are still waiting in reception centres

Despite the Government's promise last October, no solution has been found for the rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers who cannot be returned back home. Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen is not able to say how long the Iraqis will have to wait in the reception centres, but ensures a solution will come as soon as possible. New Alliance wants the Government to take concrete action already this week.

(Politiken 9 and 10 January, Jyllands-Posten 10 January 2008

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article455457.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article456041.ece>,
<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1226135>)

Laundry company agrees on terms for employing asylum-seekers

The laundry company "A-Vask" has reached an agreement with the trade union in the conflict regarding the misuse of asylum-seekers as black labour, but neither party is willing to reveal details of the agreement. The Ministry of Integration has previously highlighted the company as a good example for its policy of employing immigrant women.

(Politiken 10 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/erhverv/article456368.ece>)

Finland

UN: It takes almost 200 million euros to help Iraqi refugees

UNHCR appeals for 177 million euros, which will be used for helping Iraqi IDPs and Iraqi refugees living abroad. UNHCR does not encourage Iraqis to return to their insecure home country, but is nevertheless providing support to those who have decided to do so. UNHCR also hopes to arrange schooling for 200 000 Iraqi children this year.

(Yle 10 January 2008

[http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=271370&search=pakolai*"\)](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=271370&search=pakolai*)

Norway

Hunger strike against poor conditions

Five residents at Lien detention centre are hunger striking against the poor conditions at the centre. The rejected asylum-seekers receive only food and lodging, but no medical care unless the situation is acute. Sylo Taraku from the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) claims that either the conditions at the detention centre must be improved, or the centre must shut down. The Directorate of Immigration does not agree with NOAS and claims the detention centre is a basic, but acceptable and humanitarian facility for people without resident permits.

(Aftenposten 9 January 2008

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2188365.ece>)

Sweden

Human smuggling league revealed

Yet another human smuggling league bringing Iraqis to Sweden has been revealed in Germany. The human smugglers are suspected of smuggling at least 60 Iraqis to Sweden. The Iraqis have been brought from Greece and Italy and traveled through Austria, Germany and Denmark to reach Sweden. According to the Migration Board, the number of Iraqi asylum-seekers has doubled from 2006 to 2007 and most of them are smuggled into the country, 95 percent without documents.

(Dagens Nyheter 9 January 2008 <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=731380>)

Refugees must enter labour market within four years

According to a study conducted by Jan Ekberg, Professor in National Economy and an expert on immigration, it becomes difficult for refugees to get a job if they have not entered the labour market within four years after arrival. Moreover, the study showed that it pays off for municipalities to actively help refugees to get a job.

(SVT 10 January 2008

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1018698&lid=is_search549588&lpos=1&queryArt549588=flykting*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

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Tuesday 8 January to Wednesday 9 January 2008

Denmark

Opposition wants the asylum negotiations to start

Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen claims the negotiations concerning the rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers are ongoing, while none of the parties confirm having been invited to the negotiations. The New Alliance is not impressed by the Government's pace in the issue.

(Berlingske Tidende 8 January 2008

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080108/politik/801080369/>)

Estonia

Fourteen people sought asylum in Estonia in 2007

Altogether 14 people applied for asylum in Estonia in 2006. Half of the applicants were of Belarusian origin; four were from Sri Lanka and three from Russia. According to the Citizenship and Migration Board all applicants were men, 18-60 years old. Additionally protection was given to two persons from Sri Lanka, who did not meet the requirements for obtaining asylum but could not return to their country of origin.

(Baltic News Service 7 January 2008)

Sweden

Fewer asylum-seekers attend medical check-up

Asylum-seekers' medical check-up upon arrival in Sweden has become less common. In the early 1990s, the majority of asylum-seekers attended an examination, while less than one out of three did so in 2007. Doctors are concerned about the trend, as it constitutes a health risk for the individuals, but also because there is a risk of transmitting diseases, such as tuberculosis.

(SVT 6 January 2008

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1016089&lid=is_search549588&lpos=1&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Refugee's right to care must be investigated

The National Board of Health and Welfare is demanding an investigation into how asylum-seekers and refugees in hiding can receive health care under same conditions as others living in Sweden. The Board believes there is a risk of violations of individual human rights. Minister for Health and Social Affairs, Göran Hägglund, agrees but cannot promise that anything will be done during the spring. According to Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Tobias Billström, it would be inconsistent to offer these rights to

people who are illegally in the country, and says it would risk undermining the entire Swedish asylum system.

(Svenska Dagbladet 8 January 2008, translated by Swedish Press Review)

Several have died while waiting for help

According to the Red Cross, illegal immigrants have died or are at risk of dying because they do not receive medical treatment in time. The Red Cross runs a health care centre for refugees in hiding, and is in daily contact with 15-20 persons who are in need of help. Many of them are afraid of seeking help in fear of being revealed by the authorities, and the Red Cross struggles to find staff willing to treat patients who are unable to pay for it.

(Svenska Dagbladet 8 January 2008,

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_748423.svd)

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Saturday 5 January to Monday 7 January 2008

Denmark

Priests protest treatment of Iraqi asylum-seekers

The priests of Hillerød marched together with Iraqi asylum-seekers in protest against the Government's treatment of Iraqi asylum-seekers and demanded a broad asylum agreement, as Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen promised during the election campaign. This was the second time Hillerød priests raised voices in relation to the treatment of Iraqi asylum-seekers.

(Politiken 4 January 2008 and 5 January 2008

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article453764.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article454127.ece>)

Social Democrats and Social Liberals argue again on immigration

Social Democrats internal survey implies that immigration policy was a key factor in the election defeat in November, especially the proposal of allowing asylum-seekers to work and live outside reception centres. The Social Liberals, also standing behind the proposal, however considers asylum and immigration policy as one of the core issues to the party, and do not intend to drop it from their future election campaigns, as the Social Democrats plan to do.

(Politiken 6 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/politik/article454326.ece>)

Thousands of Pakistanis flee to Afghanistan

Fights in Pakistan have forced around 6,000 people to flee the country, according to UNHCR. Most of the refugees are women and children, and many have been given shelter by Afghans. UNHCR has distributed blankets to the refugees.

(Politiken 7 January 2008 <http://politiken.dk/cci/article454337.ece>)

Finland

Agencies warn of a humanitarian crisis in Kenya

According to UN, some 250,000 have been forced to leave their homes due to the violence in Kenya. UNHCR has delivered emergency aid to 100,000 persons. The risk of a humanitarian catastrophe is especially high in the western parts of Kenya.

(Helsingin Sanomat 5 January 2008

<http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/artikkeli/Afrikan+unionin+puheenjohtaja+matkustaa+Keniaan/1135233055577>)

Victims of torture do not get sufficient help in Finland

Due to the overall lack of resources in mental health care, refugees who have been subjected to sexual violence in conflicts and arrived to Finland do not receive the help they need, says psychologist Carla Schubert from the Reconciliation centre for torture victims. Schubert finds the situation especially difficult for youngsters, who lack an officially responsible authority.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 7 January 2008)

Minister Thors wants to modernize immigration system

Minister of Immigration and European Affairs, Astrid Thors, wants to make immigration to Finland easier by cutting the number of needed permits and by simplifying procedures. She believes the residence permit could be granted much faster and should always entitle entering the labour market. She is also concerned about the high unemployment rates among immigrants.

(Yle 5 January 2008,

http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=270748&search=maahanmuut*)

Norway

Thousands flee to Afghanistan

Thousands of Pakistanis have fled to the neighbouring Afghanistan during the last weeks. According to UNHCR, 6,000 Pakistanis have sought refuge in Afghanistan due to fights between Shiite and Sunni Muslims on the Pakistani side of the border. According to Salvatore Lombardo, UNHCR representative in Kabul, the security in these areas has worsened and might get out of control.

(Verdens Gang 7 January 2008

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=509651>)

Sweden

More people are returning to Iraq

Iraqi Red Crescent reports on signs of an increased return of refugees to Iraq. 45,000 Iraqis have returned from Syria since the middle of September 2007. The number of internally displaced persons has at the same time dropped from 2,3 million in the end of September to 2,2 million in the end of November. The Iraqi government claims that around 60,000 people have returned, primarily from Syria, but also from Jordan. According to UNHCR in Syria, it is difficult to estimate how many refugees have returned and UNHCR still does not recommend doing so.

(Svenska Dagbladet and SVT 4 January 2008

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1015509&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=unhcr*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0, http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_741865.svd)

Nearly two out of three applicants were granted asylum

The number of asylum-seekers increased remarkably in 2007, as did the number of applicants who were granted asylum in the first instance. The Migration Board made a decision in 32,492 cases and 48 percent were granted residence permits by the Migration Board, the respective figure being 42 percent in 2006. The Migration Board granted asylum to 93 percent of the Iraqi asylum-seekers and to 99 percent of the Somali asylum-seekers.

(Svenska Dagbladet 6 January 2008

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_745209.svd)

Pakistanis flee to Afghanistan

According to UNHCR, fights between Shiite and Sunni Muslims in combination with the murders of Government supporters have forced people to flee Pakistan. For the first time in many years, the refugee stream now goes from Pakistan to Afghanistan, not the other way around. UNHCR says the fights in the Kurram province have intensified during the last weeks.

(Svenska Dagbladet 7 January 2008

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_745611.svd)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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Thursday 3 January to Friday 4 January 2008

Denmark

Over 36,000 asylum-seekers in Sweden last year

A new report from the Swedish Migration Board shows that the number of asylum-seekers in Sweden doubled in 2007, compared to the previous year. The increase was especially large in the number of asylum-seekers from Iraq and Somalia.

(Politiken and Jyllands-Posten 4 January 2008, <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1219187>, <http://politiken.dk/udland/article453220.ece>)

Norway

Want Iraqi case in Supreme Court

Norway continues to disregard UNHCR recommendations for not sending refugees back to Southern and Central Iraq. UN, NOAS and the Socialist Left Party demand that the Norwegian Immigration Grand Board takes a position in the case. Cases have been taken to Grand Board three times before, when Norway has gone against UNHCR recommendations.

(NRK 22 December 2007 <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.4358714>)

More asylum-seekers in Østfold

The number of asylum-seekers crossing the border between Norway and Sweden has increased recently. Many of them are Afghans and have arrived in the Østfold region by train from Gothenburg.

(NRK 31 December 2007 <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/ostfold/1.4402448>)

Stream of Serbs

New troubles in the Balkans have resulted in many Serbs applying for asylum, unlike in the 1990s when the majority of asylum-seekers were Kosovo-Albanians. 500 Serbian asylum-seekers have arrived this autumn, many of them in the northern part of Norway. According to many asylum-seekers, they are being harassed by Albanians and do not believe they will ever be able to return to Kosovo.

(NRK 2 January 2008 http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/troms_og_finnmark/1.4411244)

Sweden

Agreement on family reunification is near

The Government is close to reaching an agreement on conditions for family reunification, namely requiring that in order to qualify for family reunification, immigrants need to be able to support themselves. Minister of Migration, Tobias Billström, believes in an agreement, despite hesitation from the Social Democratic Party and the Christian Democrats, who raise concerns over consequences for refugee families.

(SVT 20 December 2007

http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1008557&lid=is_search549588&lpos=3&queryArt549588=flykting*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Heated refugee debate between Reepalu and Billström

During a political debate in Malmö, Municipal Commissioner Ilmar Reepalu blamed Minister of Migration Tobias Billström for failing to abolish a law allowing asylum-seekers to live in very small apartments. Billström on the other hand blamed Reepalu for failing in the labour policy, and for inhuman application of the Dublin agreement.

(Sydsvenskan 20 December 2007 <http://sydsvenskan.se/sverige/article288762.ece>)

No-one wants refugee children

It is difficult to find host families for unaccompanied refugee children. The municipality of Staffantorp signed last year an agreement with the authorities for receiving refugee children, but so far no-one has accepted to host them. According to Steffan Möller at the Social Board, families may be concerned about language differences and the traumatic experiences the children may have gone through.

(Sydsvenskan 20 December 2007

<http://sydsvenskan.se/skane/staffantorp/article288808.ece>)

The Government wants to make it easier to reject Iraqis

An agreement on return, which will make it easier for the Migration Board to reject Iraqi asylum-seekers, will soon be made with Iraq. The Migration Board does not consider the situation in Iraq as an obstacle for sending people back, and Minister of Migration, Tobias Billström, underlines that Iraqi citizens are important resources for Iraq. Since 2006, Sweden has made return agreements with large asylum countries, and Sweden has recently renewed an agreement with the Afghani Government and UNHCR about return to Afghanistan.

(Sydsvenskan 22 December 2007 <http://sydsvenskan.se/sverige/article289290.ece>)

Asylum-seekers have increased by 50 percent

The Migration Board's figures for last year show that the number of people seeking asylum in Sweden last year was 36,207. This is an increase of 50 percent compared to 2006. The number of Iraqi asylum-seekers more than doubled and those from Somalia increased threefold. Nearly half of the total number of asylum-seekers, 18,559, originated from Iraq.

(Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet 3 January 2008

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_738797.svd)

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Tuesday 18 December 2007 to Wednesday 2 January 2008

Denmark

Danish People's Party wants agreement with Northern Iraq

The Danish People's Party wants Denmark to reach an agreement with the authorities in Northern Iraq, in order to be able to send back 500 rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers.

(Jyllands-Posten 19 December 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1208288>)

Rejected asylum families should be granted residence permits

In a letter to the Danish Parliament and Government, the National Council for Children suggests that all asylum-seeking families with children who have lived in Denmark for more than two years should be granted residence permits. The Council also calls for faster improvement of the conditions for children of rejected asylum-seekers at reception centres, and says the asylum process should not last more than two years.

(Jyllands-Posten 19 December 2007 <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1207984>)

Criminal register for foreigners

The ruling Liberal Party is ready to consider registering criminal immigrants according to their country of origin. A new survey shows that 66 percent of residents of institutions for young criminals have a non-Danish background and 70 percent of them have been refugees. The idea of categorizing criminals into ethnic groups was rejected by consultant Fahmy Almajid, saying that the biggest risk factor is the social situation rather than the ethnic origin.

(Politiken 27 December <http://politiken.dk/indland/article450656.ece> and <http://politiken.dk/indland/article450754.ece>, partly translated by News Ex-press)

Finland

Financial distress forces refugees back to Iraq

The increasing number of returning refugees has surprised even the UN refugee agency, which conducted a survey among a hundred refugee families. "Most common reasons for return seem to be financial difficulties and expired visas. Only few return because they actually trust that the security situation has improved", says Information officer Sybella Wilkes from UNHCR. Wilkes emphasizes that UNHCR does not encourage anyone to return to Iraq for the time being.

(Helsingin Sanomat 21 December 2007

<http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/artikkeli/Taloudellinen+ahdinko+ajaa+pakolaiset+takaisin+Irakiin/1135232771814>)

Norway

Kurds escape Turkish bombs

According to UNHCR, more than 1,800 Kurds have fled their homes due to the Turkish bombings in Iraq. People have fled to safer parts of the Kurdish area in Northern Iraq. UNHCR has distributed necessities such as blankets, mattresses and ovens.

(Aftenposten 18 December 2007)

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/uriks/article2158955.ece>)

1,400 refugees have drowned in the search for peace

Around 200 Africans have drowned or are missing after two boats sank outside the coast of Yemen. UNHCR statistics show that 1,400 persons have drowned in the Gulf of Aden during 2007. 28,300 have survived the dangerous journey to Yemen, and 18,500 of them sought help from UNHCR.

(Verdens Gang 18 December 2007)

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=191173>)

Six out of ten refugees get work after attending course

A new evaluation shows that six out of ten refugees enter the labour market after having attended the introduction programme. Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, Bjarne Håkon Hanssen, considers this an indication of an effective introduction programme, but is concerned about the differing success factors for men and women. Only 43 % of refugee women find employment or education after the course while 70 % of the men do the same. (Aftenposten 19 December 2007)

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2160820.ece>)

Priests want an active church in refugee policy

According to a survey conducted by the Norwegian TV channel, NRK, nine out of ten priests want the church to be active in the refugee and asylum debate. Most of them also support bishops who are engaged in asylum cases. Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien says the church should always question whether wealthy Norway has the asylum and refugee policy it should have.

(Verdens Gang 23 December 2007)

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=191689>)

Seven arrested for human smuggling

Seven Chechens have been arrested in Fredrikstad in connection with suspected human smuggling. The police arrested five asylum-seekers and two people who are accused of helping the asylum-seekers into the country.

(Aftenposten 26 December 2007)

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2167793.ece>)

Asylum-seekers have to wait long for help

An evaluation carried out for the Directorate of Immigration reveals that asylum-seekers with serious psychological problems living in so-called 'strengthened units' at reception-centres, have to wait long to receive help. The units host asylum-seekers whose health does not allow staying at ordinary reception centres, but neither entitles for care at a mental hospital. According to psychiatrist and researcher Sverre Varvin, Norway is one

of few European countries lacking a special institution for seriously traumatized refugees.
(27 December 2007 <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2167952.ece>)

Sweden

Help for torture victims

Victims of torture that have claimed asylum in Sweden currently have access to therapy as a method of dealing with traumatic experiences. However, it is much more difficult for them to receive treatment for physical pain caused by those experiences. The Red Cross runs six treatment centres for refugees and asylum-seekers affected by war and torture. From the beginning of 2008, the Red Cross Centre in Stockholm and the pain clinic at Capio St. Göran's hospital will start a torture injury centre where people can get advice about how to relieve pain.

(Dagens Nyheter 20 December 2007, translated by Swedish Press Review)

The population continues to increase

Due to high immigration and many new-born children, the population in Sweden has increased with 71,000 people in 2007, the total number of inhabitants now being 9,184,000. In 2006, the record high immigration rate of 96,000 people was explained with a temporary asylum law. However, the immigration rate has continued to increase even though the law is no longer valid. Some 100,000 people have immigrated to Sweden in 2007, two biggest groups being Swedes and Iraqis.

(Dagens Nyheter 20 December 2007 <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=726613>)

Only persecuted Iraqis allowed to stay

Asylum-seekers from southern and central Iraq must show that they have an individual reason in order to be allowed to stay in Sweden. It is no longer enough to refer to the current situation in the country, as only those who are personally persecuted will be granted asylum. This was made clear after the Migration Court of Appeal decided not to overrule a decision by the Migration Board. The decision will affect 10,555 Iraqis who are waiting for decisions on their asylum applications.

(Dagens Nyheter 21 December 2007 <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=727260>, translated by Swedish Press Review)

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