

# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Saturday 28 June to Monday 30 June 2008

## Denmark

### Independent assessments for asylum children

In the future, municipalities will assess independently whether asylum children are ready to enter municipal schools, says Jørgen Chemnitz, Head of the Danish Red Cross Asylum Department. According to the current practice that has recently met massive criticism, these decisions are made by Red Cross officials. Jørgen Chemnitz says that until now, the current system seems to have worked well, but now that doubts have been raised, the Red Cross wants to have the doubts removed.

(Politiken 28 June 2008, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article531614.ece>)

### Lawyer wishing to pursue the case of asylum children

Lawyer Hans Boserup from Sønderborg intends to bring an action for damages against the municipalities which have not ensured that asylum children are provided access to Danish public school. He considers that they have not complied with their obligations referring to the decision by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in the so called Ostrava case condemning the Czech practice of sending Roma children to a special school. Hans Boserup expects the Danish court to follow this decision as well.

(Politiken 29 June 2008, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article531767.ece>)

### A majority of immigrants would vote for Muslim party

Over half of all Muslims residing in Denmark would consider voting for a Muslim based political party, if there was one. A new survey by weekly newsletter, Ugebrevet A4 shows that 52 per cent of immigrants and refugees replied “yes” when asked if they would consider voting for a Muslim party whereas 24 per cent say “no”. However, even with the backing of 52 per cent it is still unlikely that a Muslim party could win enough votes to achieve the 2 per cent of all votes that are needed for parliamentary representation.

(Politiken 30 June 2008, Partly translated by News-express)

## Finland

### Nordic ministers' meeting on immigration matters

Astrid Thors, Minister of Migration and European Affairs, met the Nordic migration ministers in Denmark on Friday to discuss asylum and refoulement procedures, prevention of radicalization and workforce immigration. As for asylum matters, the returns to Greece under the Dublin regulation were discussed. Finland has lately not returned any vulnerable asylum-seekers to Greece. Thors underlined that those returned to Greece due to the Dublin regulation should have access to Greek asylum procedures and stated that all member states must contribute to making the regulation work. In addition, the ministers discussed the latest developments concerning Iraqi asylum-seekers. Sweden is the only Nordic country with an agreement allowing returns to Iraq.

(Yle 27 June 2008, <http://svenska.yle.fi/nyheter/artikel.php?id=132808>)

## Latvia

### **Russian Consul-general: Visa-free regime to solve problem of non citizens**

Consul-general Nikolai Vihlajev in the Russian Consulate in Daugavpils hopes that the new visa-free regime encourages the EU together with Latvia and Estonia to solve the non citizen problem, including granting them the possibility of participating in municipal elections and allowing national minorities to acquire education in the language they wish. Russia's visa-free regime of Latvian and Estonian non citizens is a step towards a visa-free regime between the European Union and Russia says Vihlajev, expressing his hopes that soon Russian citizens may freely enter the Schengen area and vice versa.

(Diena 27 June 2008, <http://www.diena.lv/lat/politics/politika/krievijas-generalkonsuls-cer-ka-bezvizu-rezims-latvijas-un-igaunijas-nepilsoniem-mudinas-risinat-to-problemas>)

## Norway

### **New board leader at Immigration Appeals Board**

Last Thursday, it was made public that Abid Q. Raja, a prominent defence lawyer, will take office as board leader at the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board for a fixed-term of eight years. Raja is a member of the Norwegian parliament where he represents the Liberal party. He has participated actively in the debate on immigration policy, an aspect Per-Willy Amundsen from the Progress Party has criticised highly. He contests the nomination saying that it seems to be politically motivated whereas Abid Q. Raja himself considers it to be based only on his competence in legal matters.

(Verdens Gang 27 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=501189>  
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=501284>)

### **Immigration Appeals Board asks Christian Afghan to convert back to Islam**

Afghanis who have converted to Christianity are automatically granted residence permit in Norway. However, the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board doubts the credibility of a 28 year old converter and now encourages the man to revert to Islam, despite that the man is baptized, daily studies the bible and attends church every Sunday. A Norwegian support organization for Afghani refugees criticizes the Board for trying to decide the man's religion and thereby to violate the freedom of religion. The main reason given by the Board is that the man was baptized after having been rejected asylum,

(Aftenposten 30 June 2008, NRK 30 June 2008, Verdens Gang 30 June 2008,  
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2512377.ece>,  
[http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/hedmark\\_og\\_oppland/1.6120438](http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/hedmark_og_oppland/1.6120438),  
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=509320>)

### **Twice as many asylum-seekers**

Previously the Directorate of Immigration estimated that Norway would receive 12,000 asylum-seekers in 2008, but new estimates suggest that up to 15,000 asylum applications may be submitted, which is twice as many as last year. According to Dag Terje Andersen, Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, it is not possible to explain the increase by reference to a specific event or to a particular country. The number of rejected asylum applications has also increased.

(NRK 30 June 2008, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.6120444>)

## Sweden

### **Human smuggling can become case for the Supreme Court**

The first word smuggled refugees should say at the Swedish boarder is 'asylum', otherwise the person who have helped the refugee could be imprisoned. That is the consequence of a ruling in the Court of Appeal. The background is that two German men got caught with three Iraqi refugees in the back seat of their car when entering Sweden. The men were cleared in the district court, but the decision was changed by the Court of Appeal, which questioned the refugees' intention to apply for asylum, since the refugees waited one day to seek asylum.

(Sydsvenska Dagbladet 27 June 2008, <http://sydsvenskan.se/sverige/article341143.ece>)

### **Few Iraqis deported, but the Iraqi asylum policy stands**

According to Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy, Tobias Billström, Sweden will continue to reject Iraqi asylum-seekers, despite the fact that few decisions are implemented. After Sweden's return agreement with Iraq entered into force 1,715 Iraqis have been rejected asylum in Sweden, but so far only 45 persons have been deported to Baghdad, which is the only available route into Iraq. Furthermore, half of all rejected Iraqis have disappeared. The Swedish Migration Board now fears that the legitimacy of the Swedish asylum system will be damaged by the slow pace of Iraqi deportations.

(Svenska Dagbladet 27 June 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 29 June 2008,

[http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel\\_1410933.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1410933.svd),

[http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel\\_1415493.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1415493.svd))

### **Homosexual Iranians granted a reprieve**

The Swedish Migration Board took a landmark decision on Friday, deciding that homosexual Iranian asylum seekers, who have lived openly in a relationship in their home country, will now be allowed to stay in Sweden. On Friday an Iranian man was granted permanent residency in Sweden as a refugee on the grounds that he risks persecution in Iran due to his sexual orientation. (Dagens Nyheter 28 June 2008)

### **Kidnappings and murder part of everyday life**

In Somalia, which has been in civil war since 1991, kidnappings and murder of international aid workers are commonplace. According to the UN, eight aid workers had been kidnapped prior to the recent kidnapping of a Swedish, Danish and Somali UN employee. Only a week ago ten armed men abducted the Head of office of UNHCR Somalia. Neighbours testify of a fire fight and blood in front of the house of UNHCR Head of office.

(Dagens Nyheter 28 June 2008, <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=798944>)

### **Norway asks Christian to convert to Islam**

Afghanis who have converted to Christianity are automatically granted residence permit in Norway, but the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board doubts the credibility of a 28 year old converter and now encourages the man to revert to Islam. A Norwegian support organization for Afghani refugees criticizes the Board for trying to decide the man's religion and thereby to violate the freedom of religion.

(Svenska Dagbladet 30 June 2008, [http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel\\_1416279.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1416279.svd))

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Thursday 26 June to Friday 27 June 2008

## Denmark

### More Iraqi refugees granted asylum in Denmark

Out of the 150-200 Iraqis whose asylum procedure have been completed since the beginning of 2007, more than half have been granted asylum. Up to 2006, the rate was only a few percent. The change in practice comes in the wake of the strong recommendations that UNHCR made in the end of 2006 advising not to return Iraqi refugees, especially not to central and southern Iraq. According to Eva Singer from the Danish Immigration Service, "UNHCR believes in principle that all Iraqi refugees should be granted asylum. This is not the Danish position, but both UNHCR's recommendations and other information on the situation in Iraq are part of our assessment, as are the individual's own circumstances".

(Politiken 25 June 2008, Jyllandsposten 25 June 2008,

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article530192.ece>

[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1378660&eceExpr=unhcr\\*&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1378660&eceExpr=unhcr*&eceArchive=o))

### Struggle to get asylum children in Danish public school

Many parents of asylum children have fought for years for the right to enroll their children in public schools instead of special Red Cross schools. There are no legal obstacles hindering the Red Cross from sending asylum children to public school, and the government as well as the Danish Parliament have signaled that children who are ready to enter Danish public school should do so. For the Red Cross, the dilemma is that every time it sends a child to public school, there will be less money to operate the Red Cross schools that, eventually, may have to close down.

(Politiken 26 June 2008,

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article530821.ece>

[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1379561&eceExpr=asyl\\*&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1379561&eceExpr=asyl*&eceArchive=o))

### Humanitarian by profession

Søren Jessen-Petersen, currently teaching at Georgetown University in Washington DC, worked for 35 year for UNHCR and has traveled to all the hotspots in the world. Geographically, his book Fra den humanitære frontlinje ("From the humanitarian front line") ranges from the Balkans to Rwanda and Burundi, and thematically from local circumstances to the Danish immigration politics. Descriptions of the international refugee problems are interesting and informative. Still the book would be more effective if it presented a more concrete attitude towards the fear of religious fanaticism and integration problems, rather than just categorizing them as xenophobia, which is also how Jessen-Petersen interprets the publishing of the Mohammed drawings in Jyllandsposten.

(Jyllandsposten 27 June 2008,

[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1379449&eceExpr=unhcr\\*&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1379449&eceExpr=unhcr*&eceArchive=o))

## Finland

## **Roma unlikely to get asylum in Finland**

This spring and summer, an estimated 50 Roma from Romania and Bulgaria have submitted their asylum applications in Helsinki. The Immigration Service and the police doubt their chances of success as, in principle, all EU states are considered as safe countries. A representative of Finnish police authorities claims that Roma often apply for asylum but soon withdraw the application to move to another country, and after one year, they may be back. The Immigration Service is familiar with the phenomena but their representative underlines that this year, there have not been many such cases.

(Helsingin Sanomat 25 June 2008, Hufvudstadsbladet 25 June 2008,

<http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Romanien+vaikea+saada+turvapaikka+Suomesta/1135237426550>

<http://www.hbl.fi/text/inrikes/2008/6/25/d14849.php>)

## **Norway**

### **Norway returns six out of ten asylum-seekers**

Almost 60 per cent of all asylum-seekers in Norway are rejected. By the end of May the Directorate of Immigration had handled 2,500 asylum applications, and out of these 57 per cent were rejected, compared to 41 per cent during the same period in 2007. Especially Serbian and Russian asylum-seekers are rejected, out of whom 90 and 85 per cent respectively are denied asylum in Norway. The number of asylum-seekers from these countries has increased sharply in 2008, but the Directorate does not deem them in need of protection. The number of asylum-seekers coming to Norway has more than doubled since 2007.

(NRK 26 June 2008, Verdens Gang 26 June 2008,

<http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/rogaland/1.6116169>,

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=501099>)

### **Controversial tent camp ready for asylum-seekers**

The first asylum-seekers will this week-end be able to move into the controversial tent camps in Nordbybråten reception centre in Våler. The asylum-seekers will live in the tents for up to three weeks, while they are waiting for a place at an ordinary reception centre. Only male adults will be housed in the tents, which will be able to accommodate up to 120 persons. According to the Directorate of Immigration the tents, although not an ideal solution, are necessary in order to receive the increasing number of asylum-seekers coming to Norway.

(NRK 26 June 2008, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/ostfold/1.6115834>)

## **Sweden**

### **Smuggling of Iraqis generates one billion**

The smuggling of Iraqis into Sweden is estimated to have generated one billion SEK in turnover in 2007, according to the Swedish Police, which estimates that 90 – 95 per cent of the 18,500 Iraqi asylum-seekers last year were smuggled into Sweden. Refugees pay smugglers between 100,000 – 150,000 SEK in order to get to Sweden. According to the Police, much of the smuggling into Sweden is organized by Iraqis already granted residence permit or having Swedish citizenship. Furthermore, the smugglers have a large knowledge of countries' asylum policies and information about changes in practice are spread fast among them, states the Police. Hence the Swedish Migration Board's more restrictive policy is expected to lead to a decrease in human smuggling to Sweden.

(Svenska Dagbladet 27 June 2008, Partly translated by the Swedish Press Review,  
[http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel\\_1408045.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1408045.svd))

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Tuesday 24 June to Wednesday 25 June 2008

## Denmark

### **A poor world in motion**

In 2007, the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons reached a record number of 37.4 million persons. The refugee situation is far more complex than it was upon the founding of UNHCR in 1951, and thorough classifications of who is entitled to protection as a refugee are becoming increasingly useless. The best solution to the situation is prevention. The right legal basis must be created in order to ensure that the international community puts all the efforts - aid, trade, diplomatic work, security and relief work - that are available to help steer countries away from defeat and towards sustainable stability.

(Belingske Tidende 19 June 2008, "op-ed" article by UN High Commissioner António Guterres <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080619/kommentarer/706190015/>)

### **The state wants clarifications on the Red Cross spending**

The economic reporting from the Red Cross has been inadequate and delayed, noted the Danish Immigration Service last year and, therefore, work has been launched to shed greater light on how the Asylum Department of the Red Cross uses the annual state funding for operating asylum centres. Politiken has in recent days described how the Asylum Department of the Red Cross spends a lot of money to maintain a large organization with many employees, own schools, institutions, administration and management. Its number of employees per asylum seeker has almost doubled since 2001.

(Politiken 23 June 2008, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article528916.ece>)

### **Deported Iraqis still in Baghdad jail**

Three out of the eight Iraqi offenders who were forcibly deported from Denmark last month are held in a Baghdad prison for the fourth week. Two Iraqi ministers signed an agreement with the Danish embassy in Baghdad on May, 21 accepting the repatriation of 13 Iraqi refugees who had been found guilty of serious criminality in Denmark, but international conventions forbid states from sending people back to countries where there is a risk that they could be assaulted or physically abused. The Danish authorities were warned by both the UN's High Commission for Refugees and human rights organizations in Denmark that the deportations could result in human rights violations but the authorities carried out the plan despite these warnings.

(Politiken 24 June 2008, partly translated by News-express <http://politiken.dk/indland/article529525.ece>)

## Finland

### **Organizations want to double Finland's refugee quota**

Finland should double its refugee quota and the Finnish state should provide proper support for municipalities receiving refugees. These requests are stated in an appeal presented by the Finnish Refugee Council, Amnesty International's Finnish section, the Finnish Red Cross and the

Refugee Advice Centre. The appellars remind that poor developing countries, notably in Asia, bear the greatest responsibility of refugees worldwide and consider that raising the quota would set a good example in the EU.

(Helsingin Sanomat 19 June 2008,

<http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/J%C3%A4rjest%C3%B6t+tuplaisivat+Suomen+pakolaiskiinti%C3%B6n/1135237303319>)

### **Finland should be more active within the EU refugee policy**

Currently 15 states, including all Nordic countries, participate in the so called quota refugee system that is based on an agreement between UNHCR and the resettling country. The weakness of the system is that as it does not create an obligation under international law, a country can withdraw from the program without any legal effects. Now the European Union has opened the way for an EU level quota refugee program which, if it is taken and implemented seriously, could grant new possibilities for refugees to access the EU. For the EU it could provide a concrete way of taking responsibility as a contrast to the current situation in which the EU does not bear an equal responsibility in refugee protection on global level. Based on its experience, Finland should take an active role in constructing and developing this new EU resettlement program.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 19 June 2008, "op-ed" article by Sari Sirva)

### **Minister for Foreign Trade and Development ready to reduce refugee quota**

On Thursday, Paavo Väyrynen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, demanded in a causerie on YLE's Radio Lapland a reduction of Finland's refugee quota, saying that instead, refugees should be assisted in areas neighbouring their countries of origin where more efficient help can be provided. Väyrynen claims that immigrants in general and quota refugees in particular have not been successfully integrated in Finland. Several Finnish organizations that carry out refugee work have requested that the refugee quota be doubled, an opinion supported by the Evangelical Lutheran church of Finland.

(YLE 19 June 2008,

[http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=287991&search=pakolai\\*](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=287991&search=pakolai*))

### **Minister on Migration dismantles the claims on failed refugee integration**

Astrid Thors, Minister of Migration and European Affairs, contests the claims from the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development concerning the poor integration of refugees by saying that after the entry into force of the integration law in 1999, the employment of refugees has improved so strongly that it cannot be explained only by economic growth. Thors, however, considers it a problem that it is increasingly difficult to place refugees to municipalities: in the reception centres, there are a couple of hundred refugees that are allowed to stay in Finland but do not have a place in any municipality. As a solution, Thors proposes regional cooperation within the communities as well as upgrading the compensation allocated to the municipalities for receiving refugees, previously upgraded back in 1995.

(YLE 21 June 2008,

[http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=288102&search=pakolai\\*](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=288102&search=pakolai*))

### **Increase in food and oil price create more refugees**

The increase in food and oil prices threatens to drive even more people to flee their homes, warns UNHCR. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres spoke on Friday on the occasion of the World Refugee Day in Kenya, stating that all too often, refugees are expelled from the borders of countries from which they hope to find refuge. The steep rise in food prices has caused riots in African countries. Brazil, Vietnam, India and Egypt have tried to restrain the

crisis by limiting their food exports. According to the World Bank, the food prices have doubled in three years.

(YLE 22 June 2008,

[http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=288145&search=unhcr\\*](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=288145&search=unhcr*))

### **Researcher evaluates positively the criticized Finnish alien policy**

Harsh requirements on language skills, employment problems and reluctance in granting asylum. The image of Finnish alien policy is gloomy. In his thesis concerning the aliens policy in Finland from 1812 to 1973, Antero Leitzinger from the Finnish Immigration Service however gives a less negative image. He praises especially the reception of large numbers of refugees from Kronstadt in 1921 and Eastern Carelia in 1922 in circumstances that were more difficult than those nowadays. As for the discourse on foreigners, he sees historical continuity in the themes but also points out that the current debate is marked by impatience. Before, it was not necessarily expected that anybody learns the language in five years.

(Helsingin Sanomat 23 June 2008)

## **Latvia**

### **Visa-free regime for non-citizens**

The Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree on a visa-free regime for non-citizens living in Latvia and Estonia. Former Soviet citizens who are currently stateless persons residing in Latvia or Estonia may now visit Russia without applying for a visa, only using the non-citizen passport issued in Latvia or the foreigner's passport issued in Estonia. The Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is critical about the decision that, according to the Ministry, affects negatively the Latvian efforts to speed up the naturalization process and does not secure non-citizens the possibility of using the benefits granted by the status of EU citizens. Russia is surprised by the negative reactions of Latvia and Estonia.

(Diena 19 and 24 June 2008, Tallinn Newsroom 25 June 2008

<http://www.diena.lv/lat/politics/politika/krieviju-parsteidz-latvijas-reakcija-par-vizu-atcelsanu>

<http://www.diena.lv/lat/politics/politika/krieviju-parsteidz-latvijas-reakcija-par-vizu-atcelsanu>)

## **Norway**

### **18,000 illegal immigrants**

According to Statistics Norway's estimations, there are 18,000 unauthorized foreigners in Norway. The numbers are however uncertain says researcher Li Chun Zhang, who conducted the study and the actual figure can vary between 10,500 and 32,000 persons. Libe Rieber-Mohn of the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion underlines that the number of unauthorized persons living in Norway without rights are much lower than in other countries. However, the Ministry will study the report carefully in order to determine which welfare functions that should be available for those living in Norway illegally.

(Aftenposten 23 June 2008, Bergens Tidende 23 June 2008, NRK 23 June 2008,

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2500552.ece>,

<http://www.bt.no/nyheter/article588114.ece>, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.6093965>, Download

the study: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/90/doc\\_200811\\_en/doc\\_200811\\_en.pdf](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/90/doc_200811_en/doc_200811_en.pdf).)

### **Success for nationalistic party in Sweden**

The Sweden Democrats are approaching the four per cent barrier, which will give the nationalistic party seats in the Swedish parliament. Among other things, the party wants to reduce the number of asylum-seekers granted residence permit in Sweden to a minimum.

(Verdens Gang 23 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=509041>)

### **Security overshadows everything**

Despite the criticism directed at Haslemoen transit centre, newly arrived asylum-seekers are well received. Protected by the pine forest surrounding the transit centre, they can finally relax. The asylum-seekers do not notice the alleged xenophobia; on the contrary the controversial transit centre is best characterized by harmony, both among the residents and among the local population.

(NRK 24 June 2008, [http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/hedmark\\_og\\_oppland/1.6107386](http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/hedmark_og_oppland/1.6107386))

## **Sweden**

### **Large raid against human smugglers**

In a Europol-coordinated action the police in nine European countries raided suspected human smugglers. In total, 75 persons were arrested out of which 13 in Sweden. Swedish police was included in the raid since Sweden is one of the most common end-destination for the many refugees using human smugglers. According to the Swedish police, human smuggling into Sweden has increased and Iraqis granted residence permit are being recruited by the smugglers. Sweden is very rarely the first country of entry.

(Dagens Nyheter 23 June 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 23 June 2008, Sveriges Television 23 June 2008, <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=796768>,

[http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel\\_1397725.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1397725.svd)

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1180257&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=1&queryArt549588=asyl\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1180257&lid=is_search549588&lpos=1&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0))

### **Confidentiality will protect asylum-seekers**

By giving the courts greater possibilities to keep information about asylum-seekers' identity confidential the courts will be able to account for the verdict's reasoning without putting the asylum-seekers at risk. This is the conclusion of a partial report presented to Tobias Billström, Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy.

(Svenska Dagbladet 24 June 2008, Sveriges Television 24 June 2008,

[http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel\\_1400331.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1400331.svd),

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1181215&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1181215&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0))

### **Investigator trusts the Swedish Migration Board**

The government's investigator, Bertil HübINETTE has proposed that the Swedish Migration Board is allowed to continue appointing public counsels to asylum-seekers, despite heavy criticism. The investigation shows that the Migration Board's routines are failing when it comes to assessing public counsels. However Mr. HübINETTE states that he trusts the Board's judgment. Due to a concern for bias, critics have argued that legal counsels should not be appointed by the Migration Board, but HübINETTE does share the concern and only demands that the counsels are of a 'sufficiently high level'.

(Dagens Nyheter 25 June 2008, Partly translated by the Swedish Press Review)

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Friday 20 June to Monday 23 June 2008

## Denmark

### **The Red Cross receives millions for ceased work**

The Danish Red Cross receives five to six million DKK to, among other things, run a canteen in a reception centre, but the canteen has already been shut down. The organization is now met with massive criticism for its high administration costs and for having too many persons employed at its reception centres. Karsten Lauritzen of the Liberals criticizes the organization's double standards; on the one hand the Red Cross criticizes the government for not spending enough resources on asylum issues and on the other the Red Cross uses the received funds on salaries and administration. The Red Cross denounces the criticism.

(DR 22 June 2008, Jyllands Posten 22 June 2008, Politiken 22 June 2008, Jyllands Posten 23 June 2008, Politiken 23 June 2008, <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/06/22/011036.htm>, <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/06/22/005148.htm>, [http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1375368&eceExpr=asyl\\*&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1375368&eceExpr=asyl*&eceArchive=o), <http://politiken.dk/indland/article528091.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article527950.ece>, [http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1375770&eceExpr=asyl\\*&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1375770&eceExpr=asyl*&eceArchive=o) <http://politiken.dk/indland/article528230.ece>)

### **Amnesty: Victims of torture abandoned at reception centres**

Almost half of all the newly arrived asylum-seekers have suffered torture before arriving in Denmark shows a new study by Amnesty International. Even more are severely traumatized. Amnesty International now demands of Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, that the authorities take responsibility for investigating the asylum-seekers background and giving them the relevant treatment. Psychiatric counsel should be available at the centres, advocates the organization.

(DR 22 June 2008, Politiken 22 June 2008, <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/06/22/044754.htm>, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article528204.ece>)

### **Amnesty: Deportation of Tunisians is indefensible**

Amnesty International claims that Denmark violates its international obligations if two Tunisian men, suspected of planning the murder of painter Kurt Westergaard, are deported to Tunisia, which Amnesty claims uses torture systematically. Furthermore, they are critical of the fact that Tunisia has not signed the specific expulsion treaties, which are meant to insure that those deported are treated fairly. Given the present circumstances, it is completely irresponsible to forcibly return Tunisian citizens, claims Amnesty International.

(DR 22 June 2008, <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/06/22/223124.htm>)

## Latvia

### Latvians negative towards refugees

The attitude of Latvia's residents to refugees is either indifferent or negative, suggests the survey "Integration of New Members of Society". Latvia's residents tend to have a negative rather than a positive attitude to providing asylum to refugees from foreign countries. About one-third of respondents in the poll believe it is necessary to help these people, while 43.8 percent said Latvia does not have to provide assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. (Riga newsroom 19 June 2008, Translated by Baltic News Service)

## Norway

### These are the countries Norway's asylum-seekers come from

Last year, 6,530 persons sought asylum in Norway – 1,210 more than in 2006, and most of the asylum-seekers come from conflict-thorn countries like Iraq, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Afghanistan. On a global level, the number of refugees has increased to 42 million persons, and the Norwegian Refugee Council's annual account show that the number of asylum-seekers in industrialized countries has increased by ten per cent.

(Verdens Gang 19 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=500567>)

### Jolie: "We are thinking about you today"

UN Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie sent her greetings to the world's refugees at World Refugee Day. "They have survived war, forced resettlement, rape, starvation and sickness. For those that have survived and for those who have not. We are thinking about you today" says Jolie, who has been a goodwill ambassador since 2001. UN High Commissioner António Guterres also sent his greetings. Mr. Guterres greeted "the many that have been forced to flee and the many that have helped them" and added that "refugees show incredible courage and perseverance while fighting for their lives". The theme of this year's World Refugee Day was the need for international protection.

(Verdens Gang, 20 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=500660>)

### No to reception centre in Ålesund

With a small majority the municipal council in Ålesund on Thursday voted against the planned reception centre in the municipality. The Directorate of Immigration has now postponed their decision until the end of June, due to economic negotiations. Local politicians now fear that Ålesund will get a xenophobic reputation. The planned reception centre, if established, will have 150 places for asylum-seekers.

(NRK 19 June 2008, 20 June 2008,

[http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/more\\_og\\_romsdal/1.6060294](http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/more_og_romsdal/1.6060294),

[http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/more\\_og\\_romsdal/1.6064629](http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/more_og_romsdal/1.6064629))

### No reception centre in Olden

The Directorate of Immigration will not go through with its planned reception centre in Olden, after taking into consideration the unusually strong resistance from Stryn municipality. The Directorate now lacks 400 to 500 asylum places in the western region.

(NRK 20 June 2008, [http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/nrk\\_sogn\\_og\\_fjordane/1.6064923](http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/nrk_sogn_og_fjordane/1.6064923))

### **Demands that the tents be removed**

Norwegian People's Aid demands of Dag Terje Andersen, newly appointed Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, that the asylum-tents in Lier, where 34 asylum-seekers have been housed in the past weeks, be removed immediately. According to the organization the tents are an unworthy form of housing people and only fulfill the function of deterring people from seeking asylum in Norway. Prior to being elected to the Norwegian Parliament, Dag Terje Andersen worked for the Norwegian People's Aid between 2002 and 2005, administrating among other things one of the organization's reception centres.

(NRK 21 June 2008, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/ostafjells/buskerud/1.6076857>)

### **Fleeing from climate change**

Extreme weather conditions like draught, heavy precipitation and floods have forced more and more persons to flee. According to Elisabeth Rasmussen of the Norwegian Refugee Council, the climate affects the main causes why people flee, namely conflicts and natural disasters. In April, the organization issued a report called *Future Floods and Refugees* highlighting developing countries' need to increase their capacity to deal with the effects of climate changes. There are 40 million refugees globally, but no-one knows how many of those that are 'climate refugees'.

(Aftenposten 21 June 2008, <http://www.aftenposten.no/fakta/innsikt/article2497250.ece>)

## **Sweden**

### **Previous Guantánamo prisoner rejected**

A former Guantánamo prisoner has been rejected asylum in Sweden. The man, of Uigur origin – a Chinese minority, was recently released from Guantánamo but was not granted asylum in the US. At the same time, the US does not deem it possible to return the man to China. The Swedish government, like many other countries, has turned down proposals from the US to grant previous Guantánamo prisoners asylum.

(Sveriges Television 19 June 2008,

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1178382&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1178382&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0))

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Thursday 19 June 2008

## Denmark

### Security situation deteriorates in Chad

On Tuesday, Chad accused the Sudanese army for attacking a town in Chad located by the border of Sudan. Chad also accused Sudan for supporting the Chadian rebels whose attacks have disrupted the international relief work for thousands of refugees. UNHCR has suspended its work in the eastern part of Chad referring to the deteriorated security situation. In the same area, EU's military strength EUFOR is posted to protect nearly half a million civilians displaced by the fighting.

(Jyllands Posten 17 June 2008, [http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1371431&eceExpr=unhcr\\*&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1371431&eceExpr=unhcr*&eceArchive=o))

### Human rights organizations warn for returns and torture

International human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International demand in a joint letter to the Danish Minister of Justice Lene Espersen that Denmark puts an end to its plans to deport people to states practicing torture. The seven-page long letter urges Denmark not to pursue the use of diplomatic assurances against torture and other ill-treatment in any return context.

(Berlingske Tidende 18 June 2008,  
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080618/danmark/806180370/>)

## Latvia

### Long queues and lack of employees at Migration Office

The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs is facing problems with exceptionally long queues for issuing passports. The problem is related to people going abroad for the summer as well as to the fact that in 1998, a record number of passports for non-citizens were issued, and now these 10 year passports are expiring. The office is working on solutions to the problem, the basic difficulty however being the difficulty of recruiting qualified employees as the gross salary of 350 Lats (less than 500 euro) does not attract people to undertake the psychologically straining work at the Migration Office.

(Diena 18 June 2008, [http://www.diena.lv/lat/tautas\\_balss/nejedziba/rindas-pec-pasem-nemazinas-darbinieku-trukst](http://www.diena.lv/lat/tautas_balss/nejedziba/rindas-pec-pasem-nemazinas-darbinieku-trukst))

## Norway

### Will receive more asylum-seekers

All seven reception centres in Nordland are full, meaning there are over 1,000 asylum-seekers in the county. Now, the Directorate of Immigration is negotiating in order to open up more reception centres in the county. Earlier this week, UNHCR announced that the number of refugees in the world was record high. With this in mind, the Directorate wishes to extend its capacity to receive asylum-seekers in Nordland with 2,500 places in three new reception centres.

(NRK 19 June 2008, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/nordland/1.6053111>)

## Sweden

### **Criticism against EU decision on refugees**

The coming EU rules on how persons living in the Union without permission shall be handled are met by harsh criticism by Amnesty International and the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights Louise Arbor, who before the vote pleaded with the EU to reject the proposal. Ms. Arbor regrets that the public does not want illegal immigrants to obtain the same rights as others in the community. Furthermore, Ms. Arbor feels that it is high time for persons fleeing extreme poverty to be given the same treatment as those fleeing political persecution. Those mostly affected by the decision are rejected asylum-seekers and those who have remained in the EU longer than their visa permits.

(Dagens Nyheter 18 June 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 18 June 2008,  
<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=795207>,  
[http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel\\_1380443.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1380443.svd))

### **Nine days of torture**

On 5 May 2008, the Swedish Migration Board deported a young Libyan asylum-seeker, who upon arrival in Libya's capital Tripoli got arrested by Libyan security forces and later died of torture, according to Libyan opposition sources. The man, who arrived in Sweden in 2003, had been active in the opposition movement National Front for the Salvation of Libya, whose members, according to Amnesty International, have been persecuted and imprisoned by Libyan security forces. The Migration Board is investigating the matter and may come to change its practice regarding asylum-seekers from Libya. Currently, 15 Libyan rejected asylum-seekers await deportation in Sweden.

(Aftonbladet 19 June 2008, Aftonbladet 18 June 2008, Tv 4 Nyheterna 18 June 2008,  
<http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article2720891.ab>,  
<http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article2710792.ab>,  
[http://nyhetskanalen.se/1.508035/2008/06/18/utvisad\\_till\\_tortyr\\_och\\_doden](http://nyhetskanalen.se/1.508035/2008/06/18/utvisad_till_tortyr_och_doden)

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Tuesday 17 June to Wednesday 18 June 2008

## Denmark

### More refugees in the world

For the second successive year, the number of refugees and internally displaced people in the world increases globally, as indicated by a new report from UNHCR. Prior to the upcoming World Refugee day, The UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees reports about a record number of refugees and internally displaced people. In 2007, UNHCR had responsibility for no less than 11.4 refugees and 26 million internally displaced persons. The High Commissioner Antonio Guterres warns for an even greater number due to new conflict-related emergencies, poor governance and climate changes. Further instability is created by scarcity of resources and by the sharp price increases which hit the poor populations hardest.

(Politiken and Jyllands Posten June 17

<http://politiken.dk/udland/article525455.ece>

[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1371262&eceExpr=flygtn\\*&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1371262&eceExpr=flygtn*&eceArchive=o))

### A “better class” of immigrants

The number of immigrants being granted residency in Denmark has nearly doubled over the past five years, from 33,363 in 2002 to 58,569 last year, an all time-high. However, the overwhelming majority of the new arrivals are from Europe, particularly the new EU members, who come to study or work, compared to the previous wave of immigrants who arrived from non-Western countries seeking family reunification or asylum. The Social Democrats’ spokesperson on integration, Karen Ellemann, said it was “encouraging” that those immigrants who come now are making an effort to become part of Danish society and the figures prove that immigration legislation is working as planned.

(Berlingske 18 May 2008, translated by News-express

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080617/danmark/706170043/>)

## Latvia

### Increase in the global number of refugees

The number of refugees and displaced people is up to 67 million, informed the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres on Tuesday. From 2001 to 2005 the number decreased, but in the last two years the trend is upward. The number of refugees and displaced persons, the people that UNHCR is taking care of, has increased in one year with 2,5 million persons amounting to a record number of 25,1 million people. If the persons of concern to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are added to this number, a total of 67 million persons are out of their homes. Afghanistan and Iraq continue to be the most important countries of origin for refugees.

(Diena 17 June 2008

<http://www.diena.lv/lat/politics/arzemes/pieaudzis-beglu-skaits>)

## Norway

### **11,4 million refugees**

1,5 million more refugees have been uprooted since 2006 states UNHCR. More than half of the world's refugees in 2007 have fled the conflicts in Iraq and in Afghanistan. According to High Commissioner António Guterres the large number of refugees is caused by bad governance, climate change, poverty and an extreme increase in global prices. Furthermore, the tendency is that industrialized countries are getting more reluctant to receive refugees. "The world is getting more and more inhospitable for refugees" says UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler. (Dagbladet 17 June 2008, <http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2008/06/17/538490.html>)

### **42 million refugees in the world**

On Wednesday the Norwegian Refugee Council presents its annual account over worldwide refugee trends in 2007. Noted in the report is that the number of conflicts in the world is decreasing – from 35 in 2006 to 31 in 2007 – but the number of refugees is increasing. The largest populations of the world's 42 million refugees are from Sudan and Iraq. The number of asylum-seekers increased as well. In 2007, 338,350 persons sought asylum in 51 industrialized countries, show statistics from UNHCR. Typically, the Nordic countries receive an uneven share of asylum-seekers compared to other industrialized countries, when the total number of asylum-seekers increases.

(Verdens Gang 18 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=500510>)

### **Heated debate over reception centre**

On Thursday the executive committee in Ålesund will discuss the Directorate of Immigration's planned reception centre, but there is massive disagreement among the politicians. The Liberals and the Socialist Left Party want Ålesund to receive 150 asylum-seekers, while the Progress Party claims that the municipality does not have enough resources to manage the reception centre. Furthermore, the Progress Party is strongly critical of the fact that the Directorate can establish the centre without asking the municipality. The Directorate will decide on the matter on Friday. (NRK 17 June 2008, [http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/more\\_og\\_romsdal/1.6038745](http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/more_og_romsdal/1.6038745))

### **Better conditions promised for unaccompanied minors in child welfare centre**

Asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors in Eidsvoll child welfare centre will get better conditions. The government has given the municipality one million NOK to strengthen the centre's pedagogic education.

(NRK 17 June 2008, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/ostlandssendingen/1.6035693>)

## **Sweden**

### **Record increase of refugees**

UNHCR's annual report "Global trends" released on Tuesday shows that during 2007, the number of refugees and IDPs worldwide reached the record high figure of 37,4 million persons, compared to 34,3 million in 2006, an increase by almost ten per cent. Between 2001 and 2005 there was a steady decrease in the number of refugees, but the trend was broken in 2006 – a development that was amplified in 2007. "The increase is clear and the causes are increasingly complex" says UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler and adds that "many more are fleeing the climate change and poverty, not only war and ethnic conflict". To a large extent the increase is an effect of the unstable situation in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Almost half of the world's refugees are Iraqis and Afghans.

(Dagens Nyheter 17 June 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 18 June 2008, Sveriges Television 17 June 2008, Sydsvenska Dagbladet 17 June 2008, <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=794732>,

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1175805&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=1&queryArt549588=flykting\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1175805&lid=is_search549588&lpos=1&queryArt549588=flykting*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0), <http://sydsvenskan.se/varlden/article337260.ece>)

### **The Church critical of refugee policy**

The rapid refugee political changes make working with refugee issues straining, claims the Church in Härnösand. Furthermore, the Church states that many of the government's country positions are inconsistent. For example, asylum-seekers are returned to allegedly secure areas at the same time as Sweden is sending armed forces to the same areas. Also, the handling of certain cases shows an arrogant attitude towards esteemed organizations such as Amnesty International and UNHCR, comments Lars Ribeth of the Swedish Church's work group for refugee- and integration issues in Härnösand.

(Sveriges Television 17 June 2008,

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=55868&a=1175849&lid=is\\_search527895&lpos=1&queryArt527895=asyl\\*&sortOrder527895=3&doneSearch=true&sd=47225&from=siteSearch&pageArt527895=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=55868&a=1175849&lid=is_search527895&lpos=1&queryArt527895=asyl*&sortOrder527895=3&doneSearch=true&sd=47225&from=siteSearch&pageArt527895=0))

### **The Swedish Migration Board investigates death by torture**

A young Libyan man has, according to unconfirmed information, been tortured to death after having been deported from Sweden. The Migration Board has started investigating the matter, which may lead to a change in policy. The last years the Board has rejected approximately 90 per cent of all Libyan asylum-seekers.

(Sveriges Television 18 June 2008,

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1176497&lid=is\\_search527895&lpos=0&queryArt527895=asyl\\*&sortOrder527895=3&doneSearch=true&sd=47225&from=siteSearch&pageArt527895=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1176497&lid=is_search527895&lpos=0&queryArt527895=asyl*&sortOrder527895=3&doneSearch=true&sd=47225&from=siteSearch&pageArt527895=0))

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Saturday 14 June to Monday 16 June 2008

## Norway

### Fortress Europe

Bjarte Vandvik, Secretary General at ECRE, deplors that Fortress Europe is becoming a reality. The development was intensified at the turn of the millennium due to an increased focus on security and border control. In 2007, a total of 254,200 persons applied for asylum in Europe, whereas in 2003 the number was 395,810 persons. In Germany alone, the number has dropped from 50,560 to 19,160 in five years. The paradox behind the statistics is that, as Hanne Mathisen from UNHCR Stockholm confirms, the number of refugees increased in both 2006 and 2007. As for Norway, the number of asylum seekers dropped from 15,960 in 2003 to 5,400 in 2005. However, in 2008, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration is expecting as many as 12,000 applications.

(Vårt Land 13 June 2008)

### A swift and valid reaction

After an article in Verdens Gang about prostitutes not being granted asylum after having witnessed against their pimps in human trafficking matters, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion reacted quickly and now grants these women asylum. The Ministry's new policy is that victims of human trafficking who do not meet the regular requirements for being granted asylum shall receive residence permit in Norway. The new policy includes women arriving from EU member states.

(Verdens Gang 13 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=513319>)

## Sweden

### Twice as many denied asylum

During the first five months of 2008 only a quarter of all asylum-seekers was granted asylum, compared to 50 per cent last year, shows statistics from the Swedish Migration Board. Last year 72 per cent of all Iraqi asylum-seekers were accepted, while so far this year only 32 per cent were granted residency. The story is the same for Somalis, last year 80 per cent got permission to stay in Sweden, while the figure for 2008 is 49 per cent. The situation is unchanged for Afghans although a small increase of rejected applications has been noted – from 68 per cent to 72 per cent. Behind the change is the Migration Board's decision that neither Iraq nor Somalia are in an internal armed conflict.

(Dagens Nyheter, 15 June 2008, Sveriges Television 16 June 2008,

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=794005>,

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1174489&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1174489&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0))

### Iraq gives Jordan refugee aid

Iraq has given UNHCR eight million USD to provide Iraqi refugees in Jordan with better medical care and education. Close to one million Iraqis live in Jordan and it is estimated that the refugees have cost the kingdom more than 12 billion SEK the last years. This year, UNHCR has requested 1,5 billion SEK to help the refugees of the war in Iraq.

(Dagens Nyheter 15 June 2008, , Svenska Dagbladet 15 June 2008,

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=793919>,

[http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel\\_1368447.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1368447.svd))

### **Harder to get asylum for unaccompanied minors**

The Swedish Migration Board's decision to not grant asylum to a 16 year old unaccompanied minor from northern Iraq will become a precedent setting case for asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors.

(Sveriges Television 16 June 2008,

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1174533&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1174533&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0))

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Thursday 12 June to Friday 13 June 2008

## Denmark

### **European Council Commissioner questions Danish immigration policy**

Xenophobia is alive and well in Denmark – that was the message from the Council of Europe’s human rights commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg, who during a stopover in Copenhagen, Wednesday said that Denmark’s harsh immigration policy has created an atmosphere of hate against foreigners, which manifests itself in incidents such as vandalism of Muslim burial sites. However, at a press conference, the commissioner said that talks with Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Birthe Rønn Hornbech had provided hope that Denmark will change direction. “Allowing asylum seekers to reside outside refugee camps is a start,” he said. “We are neutral, impartial and don’t get involved in Danish politics, but it’s my hope that our recommendations have some form of credibility. Unfortunately, up until now they haven’t.”

(Jyllands Posten 11 June 2008, Berlingske Tidende 12 June 2008, Translated by News-express <http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1367207&eceExpr=Hammarberg&eceArchive=o>)

### **Easy visas**

Ukrainian, Indian and Chinese citizens will have an easier time getting visas for travel to Denmark when the latest changes to visa regulations are presented by the Integration Ministry on Thursday. Previously, citizens of the three countries typically had to wait up to three months to receive permission to enter Denmark, but the process should now only take a few days, provided trips were booked through a certified travel agency. Birthe Rønn Hornbech, the integration minister, warned that if the new rules were abused by asylum seekers they would be immediately revoked.

(The Copenhagen Post 12 June 2008, <http://www.cphpost.dk/get/107654.html>)

## Finland

### **Deportation decision of human rights activist freed**

The Administrative Court in Helsinki has decided to freeze the deportation order for Maria Kirbasova, Russian human rights activist. The Finnish Immigration Service has previously decided that Kirbasova will be deported. The court, however, decided to forbid the enforcement of the decision, subject to appeal. Kirbasova’s lawyer Leo Hertzberg welcomes the solution as it enables his client to live in peace for several months. According to YLE, the decision means in practice that Kirbasova can stay in Finland for up to one year.

(Helsingin Sanomat 12 June 2008, YLE 12 June 2008, <http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Ihmisoikeusaktivistin+karkotus+keskeytet%C3%A4%C3%A4n/1135237124657>, <http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/24h/id93454.html>)

## Latvia

### **Latvian MEP calls for reviewing the question of non-citizens**

Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, member of the European Parliament, stated that the Russian State Duma's announcement on the need for the EU to reach an agreement on granting citizenship to non-citizens of the Baltic States appears to be provoking another Nuremberg Trial. Kristovskis pointed out that "non-citizens and the occupation of the Baltic States are parts on the same chain" and said that if the Duma wishes to involve international mediators in solving the question, it must take into account that the interconnection of the problem will finally be reviewed. He expressed confidence that it would only be in Latvia's interest that the problem be assessed in a process similar to the Nuremberg Trials, based on the Geneva Convention.  
(Diena 10 June 2008, <http://www.diena.lv/lat/politics/politika/kristovskis-krievija-uzprasas-pec-otras-nirnbergas-pravas>)

## **Norway**

### **Russia sentenced for five "missing" persons in Chechnya**

On Thursday, the European Court of Human Rights sentenced Russia to pay 116,000 Euros in compensation to the relatives of five persons that disappeared after having been arrested by Russian authorities. According to Aage Borchgrevink of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, this shows that persons in Chechnya in practice lack legal safeguards and that it is remarkable that Norway rejects asylum-seekers from the region.  
(Verdens Gang 12 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=513257>)

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Tuesday 10 June to Wednesday 11 June 2008

## Denmark

### **Guterres advocates for a common European asylum system**

In the years to come, an even greater number of people have to flee their homes for more varied reasons, notably climate change, and despite the fact that these people are not defined as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention, they will be in need of protection. To meet the future challenges in a changing landscape, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres calls for a stronger European level asylum policy. He argues that there cannot be a space with freedom of movement without a common asylum policy and common asylum criteria. Guterres states that from the perspective of UNHCR, it is important that Europe remains a continent of asylum, and consequently, there is a need to build a system that is fully compatible with international law and based on best practices. Guterres strongly warns against building a system that is merely based on minimum common denominators of various national systems.

(DR 8 June 2008, <http://www.dr.dk/P1/europaligenu/Udsendelser/2008/0609133651.htm>)

### **Practical obstacles and dangers affecting returns to Iraq**

Claus Gade Sørensen, former First Adviser at the Danish embassy in Baghdad, reflects on the practical obstacles hindering his task of getting the rejected Iraqi asylum seekers back to their native country, thus fulfilling the will of the Danish government and Danish voters but acting against the will of the rejected Iraqi asylum seekers and the Iraqi government. Referring to the practical dangers and obstacles in his work, he points out that an agreement alone does not ensure the return, but also flight connections and other practical measures must be in place.

(Politiken 10 June 2008, <http://politiken.dk/debat/kroniker/article519862.ece>)

## Estonia

### **Baltic diplomats call on Russia to help reduce numbers of non-citizen residents**

Estonian and Latvian ambassadors to Moscow urged the Russian parliament to lend a hand to encourage Russian-speaking residents of the Baltic countries to more actively seek citizenship of their countries of residence. "We think the State Duma could encourage them (persons of undefined citizenship) to become full-fledged citizens either by acquiring citizenship or by learning the Estonian language," the Estonian ambassador, Marina Kaljurand, was quoted saying at the Duma hearing on the subject of non-citizenship on Monday. According to Kaljurand, there are in Estonia around 100,000 persons (8 percent of the population) of undefined citizenship. Latvia's Ambassador Andris Teikmanis said, without quoting figures, that the percentage of stateless persons in Latvia was slightly higher than Estonia's.

(Baltic News Service, 9 June 2008)

## Finland

### **Deportation order of human rights activist to Russia upheld**

The Administrative court in Helsinki rejected on Monday an appeal to lift the deportation order of Maria Kirbasova, human rights activist and founder of an organization for mothers of Russian conscripts. The Finnish Immigration Service rejected the residence permit application by Kirbasova because a mother-daughter relationship is not considered sufficient grounds for residence. Kirbasova is elderly and in very poor health, and one difficulty connected to her returning to reside in Russia is her involvement in founding an organization opposed to the conflict in Chechnya. In Finland, her situation has evoked public sympathy. According to Tallinn Newsroom, Marko Mihkelson, Chairman of the Estonian Parliament's European Affairs Committee, has taken up the possibility of Estonia offering Finnish colleagues help to solve the delicate situation, should Kirbasova herself be interested in a possible Estonia-related solution. (Yle 8 June 2008, Helsingin Sanomat 9 June 2008, HBL 9 June 2008, BNS News Service <http://yle.fi/news/id93040.html> <http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Kansalaisaktivistin+k%C3%A4%C3%A4nnytyks+j%C3%A4+voimaan/1135237034067> <http://hbl.fi/text/inrikes/2008/6/9/d14348.php?rss>)

### **Better investigations needed on the psychological state of unaccompanied minors**

At present, authorities are unable to assess sufficiently the psychological state of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum. Upon arrival, these children are shocked already by the journey as they may have arrived by such means as a lorry trailer. According to the organization "All our Children", the children are interviewed by a civil servant, an interpreter, a representative of the child and a lawyer. Now the Immigration Service and different organizations aim at involving professionals in psychology in these interviews. Every year 100 to 200 unaccompanied minors arrive to Finland, mostly from Somalia, Iran and Afghanistan.

(Helsingin Sanomat 10 June 2008, <http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Turvapaikka+hakevia+lapsia+halutaan+tutkia+paremmin/1135237055629>)

### **Immigrants' mental health at risk**

In Finland, the organization of mental health services, notably preventive services, for immigrants is still at an early stage, and hardly any research has been made on the subject. Research from Britain suggests there is a need for it, as immigrants of the first generation are at a three times greater risk to get schizophrenia than the local population, and for second-generation immigrants the risk is fivefold. Refugees and asylum seekers have even more mental health problems than other immigrant groups. In Finland, the biggest problems for immigrants are isolation, unemployment and marginalization. Ideally, Finland should be able to offer immigrants meaningful work and thereby a natural and egalitarian contact to the local population.

(Helsingin Sanomat (Editorial) 10 June 2008, <http://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitus/artikkeli/Maahanmuuttajan+mieli+j%C3%A4rkky/HS20080610SI1MA01frl>)

## **Norway**

### **Vadsø municipality best in Norway**

Vadsø municipality has won the Settlement award for 2008, announced the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. The aim of the award is to raise positive attention to the issue of refugee settlement. Among other things, the jury mentions that Vadsø has received a high number of refugees, from all parts of the world, compared to the number of inhabitants in the municipal.

(NRK 10 June 2008, [http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/troms\\_og\\_finnmark/1.5953312](http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/troms_og_finnmark/1.5953312))

### **Hunger strike outside the Directorate of Immigration**

Eleven Palestinian asylum-seekers are hunger striking in front of the Directorate of Immigration in protest of their rejected asylum applications. Many of the strikers have been rejected in another European country before coming to Norway.  
(Dagsavisen 10 June 2008, <http://www.dagsavisen.no/innenriks/article353987.ece>)

### **Norway rejects Guantánamo prisoners**

Numerous times American authorities have asked Norway to grant asylum to released Guantánamo prisoners. For the moment there are 60 to 80 previous prisoners still at Guantánamo because they cannot return to their countries. Norwegian authorities have declined American requests to grant these persons asylum since UNHCR has not asked Norway to prioritize this particular group of asylum-seekers.  
(Verdens Gang 10 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=512867>)

### **Sweden**

#### **“It is high time for a common European asylum policy”**

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres thinks it is time for the EU member states to coordinate their asylum policies. “There is a need for a European asylum system that rests solidly on the Geneva Convention” says Mr. Guterres, but adds that the great differences among the countries in the number of received asylum-seekers create an environment of insecurity regarding refugee policy. Therefore Mr. Guterres emphasized that he “does not want to see a new asylum system in which the EU agrees upon the lowest refugee political ambitions as the member states’ lowest common denominator”. Furthermore, the High Commissioner is concerned about the fact that several European countries like Denmark, Sweden and France deports asylum-seekers to insecure areas.  
(Sydsvenska Dagbladet 9 June 2008, <http://sydsvenskan.se/varlden/article333686.ece>)

#### **Good advice and cheap flights determine the refugee flow**

Cheap flights, refugees’ success stories and an increased commercialization of the global migration direct the migration- and refugee flows around the world. According to Peter Walker, expert on migration issues at Tufts University, there are four main reasons behind refugees’ choice of country of asylum: historical ties between the countries, good communications, the possibility of being granted asylum, and lastly, advice and recommendations from previous asylum-seekers.  
(Sydsvenska Dagbladet 9 June 2008, <http://sydsvenskan.se/varlden/article333679.ece>)

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Saturday 7 June to Monday 9 June 2008

## Finland

### True Finns party ready to prohibit begging

On Sunday, the nationalistic “True Finns” party, led by Timo Soini, completed its electoral program for the municipal elections. The party considers that Finnish municipalities should not actively receive refugees and that begging on the streets should be prohibited by law. The position on begging can be seen as a reaction to the recent presence of Roma beggars from Eastern Europe on the streets of Helsinki.

(Helsingin Sanomat 7 June 2008,

<http://www.hs.fi/politiikka/artikkeli/Timo+Soini+vaalirahoituksesta+Antaa+m%C3%A4d%C3%A4n+pursuta/1135236989647>)

### Increase in the number of asylum seekers

For the first time in many years, the number of asylum seekers is up. From January to April 2008, 521 asylum seekers arrived to Finland, 20 percent more than a year ago. The most important increase was to be seen in applicants from Somalia, Iraq and Nigeria. The Immigration Service estimates that the present increase is partly due to Sweden tightening its policy as regards Iraqi asylum seekers. Part of the Iraqi asylum seekers have been refused asylum in Sweden.

Furthermore, the IS estimates that the decline in the conditions in Somalia may have contributed to the increase. In 2007, Finland received a total of 1,434 asylum applications, whereas in 2004, there were 3,861 applications.

(Helsingin Sanomat 8 June 2008,

<http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Turvapaikanhakijoiden+m%C3%A4%C3%A4r%C3%A4+k%C3%A4%C3%A4nty+kasvuun/1135237008945>)

## Latvia

### Campaign on granting non-citizens voting rights

On Saturday, the left-wing political party “For Human Rights in United Latvia” announced that in the near future, it plans to start a campaign aimed at granting non-citizens voting rights at municipal elections as well as at the European Parliament elections. The campaign will be carried out both in Latvia and within the European Parliament. In the latter case, it is conducted by MEP Tatjana Ždanoka. As regards the next European Parliament election, the party “For Human Rights in United Latvia” has invited the “Harmony centre” alliance to join forces by forming a common list.

(Diena 7 June 2008,

<http://www.diena.lv/lat/politics/hot/pctvl-grib-panakt-lai-nepilsoni-varetu-balsot-pasvaldibu-velesanas>

## Norway

### **Common European asylum policy**

How do we distinguish refugees from economic migrants, asks Bjarne Håkon Hanssen, Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, in a debate article regarding the common European asylum policy to be established before 2010. Quoting UNHCR's magazine *Refugees*, Hanssen wonders if economic migrants may come to threaten the refugee convention, leading to stricter applications of it by national legal bodies, which in turn will lead asylum-seekers to countries with a liberal asylum policy. As a result, Hanssen argues, it is difficult for a country like Norway to have a more liberal policy than its neighbors. Through that perspective Hanssen asks what the benefits are of a common European asylum policy and announces that a commission of inquiry will present a proposal on Norwegian asylum- and migration policy from a European perspective next year. In conclusion, Hanssen writes that asylum policies are important for refugees but they are not the answer to the worldwide increase of migration.

(Dagbladet 8 June 2008, <http://www.dagbladet.no/kultur/2008/06/08/537577.html>)

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Thursday 5 June to Friday 6 June 2008

## Denmark

### **Praises and criticism of Denmark's humanitarian efforts**

Despite the strict refugee policy in Denmark, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, who visited Denmark Wednesday this week, also praised the country, calling it “a very valued partner”. When asked about the expulsion of Iraqi offenders to Baghdad, a question that triggered a heated debate in Denmark a few weeks ago, Guterres referred to the UN guidelines advising against forced returns to Iraq. Guterres also participated in a conference forming the basis for a new Danish humanitarian assistance policy.

(Jyllandsposten 4 June 2008,

<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1360736&eceExpr=Guterres&eceArchive=o> )

### **What kind of protection to award populations fleeing the climate change?**

The international community lacks an instrument to deal with the possible massive flow of people fleeing as a result of climate change, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said Wednesday. Mr. Guterres does not, however, believe in extending the 1951 Refugee Convention to include these people. Instead Mr Guterres talked about the need to improve international cooperation on all levels and creating legal instruments for temporary protection. Guterres emphasized the need to find an immediate solution, and if return is not possible, these people should according to Guterres have the possibility of acquiring citizenship in another country. In extreme circumstances ruling out the possibility to return, he suggests to consider these people stateless persons in need of a new citizenship. However, Guterres emphasized that presently only temporary measures are necessary.

(DR 2 Udland 4 June 2008)

### **Antonio Guterres pleads for asylum seekers**

Antonio Guterres, the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, has pleaded with the Danish government to find a “humane solution” for the hundreds of Iraqi asylum seekers who have been stranded in the country for years after having their applications for asylum rejected. During a meeting in Copenhagen with Minister of Refugees, Immigrants, Integration and Ecclesiastical Affairs Birthe Rønn Hornbech, Wednesday, Mr Guterres said it was unfair to force people to live in a vacuum for years on end, uncertain about their futures, and they should at least be granted temporary residency so they can live a normal life and provide their children with schooling. However the plea fell on deaf ears. Ms Rønn Hornbech said yesterday: ‘We had a good, polite exchange of views, but we agreed to disagree. I told Mr Guterres that we evaluate each case on an individual basis and would prefer the problem to be solved in Iraq. He, as high commissioner, is obviously on the refugees’ side and doesn’t want to see anybody sent back to Iraq.’ There are currently around 400 rejected Iraqi asylum seekers housed in Danish refugee centres who have refused to return home but are not permitted to work in this country.

(Politiken 6 June 2008, Translated by News-Express)

## **EU wants tougher policy on illegal immigrants**

The EU integration ministers have just agreed to a decision, allowing for illegal immigrants to be detained for up to 18 months, children to be detained and immigrants, who refuse to return voluntarily to not be allowed in the EU for five years. The tightened rules target the estimated eight million illegal immigrants, who according to the Commission are living in the EU. Out of these eight million, 200,000 were arrested and 90,000 were expelled in the first half of 2007. Denmark is not immediately affected by the decision due to its opt-out. Denmark can, however, join through a special agreement with the EU. Next week, the directive proposal will be taken to the European Parliament where controversy is expected.

(Politiken 5 June, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article519213.ece>)

## **The Social Liberals: Denmark should follow EU asylum rules**

Morten Østergaard from the Social Liberals wants Denmark to follow the newly proposed EU directive, regarding rejected asylum-seekers and illegal immigrants. This would bring Denmark's asylum policy on line with the rest of Europe. While he does not wish for Denmark to "be a magnet" for asylum-seekers, there is also no reason for it to be the country treating asylum-seeker the worst in Europe, as he says.

(Berlingske Tidende 6 June 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080606/danmark/806060327/>)

## **Finland**

### **Returned Roma returns to apply for asylum**

Three months ago, the Finnish media gave large coverage to the decision to return to Romania a young Roma beggar, Mihaela Stoica, who had just given birth to her baby. Begging on streets is not illegal, but as the beggar's under-aged children will be taken into custody, the return decision was based on child protection concerns. Now Stoica and her husband have returned to Helsinki, leaving the baby in their home village in Transsilvania, and Stoica has applied for asylum. She is placed in a reception centre in Helsinki. At the Helsingin Sanomat web site, these developments have triggered a heated debate, partly very critical of the motives of Roma beggars, who have arrived in Finland from Eastern Europe, partly reflecting on the misery they suffer in their countries of origin.

(Helsingin Sanomat 5 June 2008,

<http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/artikkeli/Nuori+romanalais%C3%A4iti+palasi+Helsinkiin/1135236924586>

<http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/artikkeli/Miksi+nuori+kerj%C3%A4is%C3%A4iti+palasi+Helsinkiin/1135236924730>)

## **Norway**

### **Risk of death penalty grants protection**

After an editorial arguing that Norway in asylum decisions should consider the new Iranian law, making religious conversion a crime worth punishing with the death penalty, Hanne Jendal, Department Director at the Directorate of Immigration, replies that the Directorate closely follows the situation in Iran, for instance through UNHCR reports. Furthermore, she adds that the risk of persecution has always led to protection in Norway. However, she states that simply converting from Islam is not the decisive factor. Instead it is the risks upon return determining the asylum claim. Jendal emphasizes that the Directorate has to consider whether the asylum-seeker actually has converted or only has done so to be granted asylum.

(Aftenposten 4 June 2008, Aftenposten 2 June 2008,  
<http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/article2464750.ece>,  
[http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/leder\\_morgen/article2459518.ece](http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/leder_morgen/article2459518.ece))

### **Norway supports new rules for deportation**

The government claims that the new EU-rules for deportation of immigrants are strengthening the legal safeguards. Knut Storberget, Minister of Justice, disagrees with Amnesty International and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, who argue that the EU directive undermines asylum-seekers' fundamental rights. Instead, Storberget claims that the directive will strengthen immigrants' rights in many EU-countries.

(Bergens Tidende 6 June 2008, <http://www.bt.no/utenriks/article577923.ece>)

## **Sweden**

### **EU-rules may lead to fewer asylum-seekers**

Tobias Billström, Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, hopes that the newly proposed EU Return Directive will lead to fewer asylum-seekers in Sweden as it reduces the huge differences in EU asylum policies. The directive, which has been met with harsh criticism by several organizations working with refugee issues, will set out common rules and procedures for the return of illegal migrants and rejected asylum-seekers. Specifically, the directive stipulates that rejected asylum-seekers have to return within 30 days and that those waiting for deportation can be held in custody for up to 18 months. Furthermore, people who do not return voluntarily will not be able to return to the EU within the next five years. The European Parliament will vote on the directive on 18 June.

(Dagens Nyheter 5 June 2008, Sveriges Television 5 June 2008,

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=776944>,  
[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1166618&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1166618&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0))

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Tuesday 3 June to Wednesday 4 June 2008

## Denmark

### **68 million DKK for displaced Iraqis**

Two million Iraqis have fled from Iraq to the neighbouring countries, Syria and Jordan, and just as many are internally displaced. This year, Ulla Pedersen Tørnæs, Minister for Development Cooperation, has asked the Finance Committee of the Danish Parliament to grant 68 million DKK for Iraqis displaced within the country and the neighbouring countries. The Danish support to the efforts in neighbouring countries goes to UNHCR, Caritas, Catholic Relief, The Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims and the Red Cross. In Iraq, the funds go to the Danish Refugee Council, UNICEF and the Swedish NGO Qandil.

(Politiken, 2 May 2008, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article517185.ece>)

### **Terror attack linked to Danish foreignpolicy**

The terror attack against the Danish Embassy in Islamabad has set off a heated debate at the Danish Parliament about Denmark's foreign policy and the reasons why a Danish embassy became a target. Social Liberal leader Margrethe Vestager claim that the Mohammed cartoons, the Danish participation in the Iraq war, and the constant political attacks on Muslim residents in the country have put Denmark in a bad light. Although politicians from several parties condemn Vestager's use of the terror attacks to raise a discussion on the Danish foreign policy, the attack has likewise brought several foreign policy experts, including the head of the foreign policy unit at the Danish Institute for International Studies Hans Mouritzen, to question the controversial foreign policy.

(Politiken 2 and 3 June 2008, Berlingske Tidene 3 June 2008, Jyllands Posten 3 June 2008,

<http://politiken.dk/politik/article518127.ece>

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article518244.ece>

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20080603/kommentarer/706030007/>

<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1359649&eceExpr=Margrethe%20Vestager%20&eceArchive=o>)

## Finland

### **Bangladeshi author to receive asylum in Sweden**

According to the newspaper Uppsala Nya Tidning, Taslima Nasrin, the book author with two fatwas issued against her after she described the life of women in a closed and patriarchal Muslim society, has now arrived in Uppsala where she will be provided with accommodation and guaranteed residence for two years. Already in 1994, she lived in Sweden and acquired Swedish citizenship. Reportedly, she has heart problems and is now very tired. Currently, she does not give interviews.

[http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=286604&search=turvapaik\\*](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=286604&search=turvapaik*)

## **Iceland**

### **“We have enough with caring for ourselves”**

Magnús Thor Hafsteinsson, MP for the Liberal Party and former chairman of the Office of Social Affairs in Akranes, strongly opposed the arrival of 30 refugees from Iraq to Akranes, a position he was highly criticized for. Hafsteinsson claimed that the small village did not have enough financial resources to receive the refugees. After the town council earlier in May decided to receive the refugees, Hafsteinsson resigned from his post.  
(Iceland review 28 May 2008)

## **Norway**

### **The asylum-seekers have arrived**

The first 22 asylum-seekers arrived on Monday to the highly controversial reception centre in Våler, which can house a maximum of 800 asylum-seekers. At the same time, Kjell Konterud, Mayor of Våler, met with the Directorate of Immigration, aiming to reduce the length of the municipality's reception centre contract with the Directorate. Instead of the agreed ten years, Konterud wants the reception centre closed down within two-three years.  
(NRK 2 June 2008, [http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/hedmark\\_og\\_oppland/1.5867759](http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/hedmark_og_oppland/1.5867759))

### **Unreasonable that Kosovo-Serbs are rejected asylum**

Up until May, the majority of asylum-seekers from Kosovo has been granted asylum in Norway, but now the Directorate of Immigration announces that most of them will be rejected. The reason for the change is that Norway in February recognized Kosovo as an independent state. Hence, Kosovo-Serbs are not longer seen as internally displaced persons in Serbia, nor will asylum-seekers from Kosovo be recognized as refugees fleeing Serbia. However, the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers claims that the situation has not changed for the Kosovo-Serbs in the country and that refugees from Kosovo are still in need of protection.  
(Verdens Gang 3 May 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=527823>)

## **Sweden**

### **Companies to assist refugees**

Refugees' introduction into Sweden should not be the responsibility of the municipalities. Instead state-regulated private companies and organizations should take over. This is the main conclusion of a commission of inquiry presented on Monday to Nyamko Sabuni, Minister for Integration. Every newly-arrived refugee should according to the commission be assisted by a private company, supervising and helping the refugee in the search for job and housing. The commission believes such system to be more effective as the companies will be more motivated to help the refugees. The companies should be paid based on performance. Minister Sabuni welcomes the ideas put forward in the proposal.

(Dagens Nyheter 2 June 2008, Sveriges Television 2 June 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 3 June 2008, <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=775698>, [http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1162175&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=flykting\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1162175&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=flykting*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0))

### **New refugee proposal ruled out**

The new law proposal, in which municipalities will be forced to receive refugees, is simply window dressing by the government, according to Anders Lago, municipal commissioner in Södertälje. Lago claims that the reason for overcrowding in certain municipalities is not the lack of paces but the right of refugees to choose location, which according to him needs to be annulled.

(Dagens Nyheter 3 June 2008)

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# Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Friday 31 May to 2 June 2008

## Denmark

### Prime Minister condemns proposal on Guantánamo prisoners

Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussens completely rejects the proposal of the Social Democrats on granting asylum to 80 Guantánamo prisoners. He states that he does not see how these persons in any way meet the criteria for obtaining a residence permit in Denmark and he is wondering what Denmark should do about these people. Fogh Rasmussens assumes that the Social Democrats have not thoroughly considered the proposal, and he states that it is obviously a new element in undermining the strict policy as regards foreigners.

(Politiken 30 May 2008, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article516370.ece>)

### Rejected Iraqi asylum seekers going home

The 357 Iraqi nationals who have been refused asylum in Denmark and are currently cooped up in a refugee centre awaiting their faith, will be sent home “within months” according to Iraq’s embassy in Hellerup. Denmark has no repatriation treaty with Iraq and therefore cannot force the asylum seekers to return home, but according to the head of the embassy, chargé d’Affaires Faris Shakir Fatouhi, Danish authorities have sent a proposal to Baghdad and it looks like it will be accepted. “Sweden has already signed a similar agreement and I personally believe that if all laws and regulations are in order, then it’s up to the host country to decide if it wants Iraqi asylum seekers to remain in the country.”

Translated by News-express

(Jyllands Posten 1 June 2008,

<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1357300&eceExpr=Faris%20Shakir&eceArchive=o>)

### UNHCR concerned about possible treaty

According to Jyllands Posten, in a few months Denmark is going to conclude with Iraq an agreement that foresees the return of 357 Iraqi refugees. However, according to the Danish Refugee Council, an agreement on the return of Iraqis from Central and Southern Iraq is going to be in direct conflict with UNHCR's recommendations, an opinion confirmed by the spokesperson at UNHCR Stockholm, Hanne Mathisen, who confirms that persons fleeing from Central and Southern Iraq are in need of international protection. UNHCR refers to the lack of law and order as well as to problems with infrastructure as obstacles for returning the large amounts of refugees to Iraq.

(DR 1 June 2008, <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/06/01/113703.htm>)

### Integration minister was close to walking out

Minister of Refugees, Immigrants, Integration and Ecclesiastical Affairs Birthe Rønn Hornbech was reportedly very close to resigning during the “headscarves in court” debate. Ms Rønn Hornbech says she was forced to repeatedly ask herself throughout the controversy whether she could be part of a government that was ready to implement legislation banning all forms of religious headwear or symbolism in a Danish courtroom – a law aimed directly at young female jurists who insist on wearing a headscarf. However Ms Rønn Hornbech took the decision not to resign.

Partly translated by News-express  
(Jyllands Posten, 1 June 2008,

<http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1357285&eceExpr=Affairs%20Birthe%20Rønn%20Hornbech%20&eceArchive=o>)

## **Estonia**

### **Baltic discussions on emigration and inter-ethnic relations**

Emigration and inter-ethnic relations were discussed on 30 May at an informal meeting of the Estonian minister, Urve Palo, Latvia's minister for society integration Oskars Kastens, and the director of the Department of Ethnic Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad, Antanas Petrauskas. Ethnic minorities make up 41 percent of the population in Latvia, 17 percent in Lithuania and 33 percent in Estonia. "In view of this, it is essential for the Baltic states to exchange integration-related experiences," the spokesperson said. Petrauskas invited his colleagues to a conference scheduled to take place in Vilnius in September at which the status of the official language and minority languages will be in focus.

(Tallinn Newsroom 30 May 2008, Translated by Baltic News Service)

## **Finland**

### **Rwanda has requested Finland to extradite alleged war criminal**

The request came already in the beginning of April, but the Ministry of Justice considered it incomplete. The Ministry of Justice has not yet received the documents in support of the accusations despite its requests to Rwandese authorities. The alleged war criminal, a Baptist priest, applied for asylum upon his arrival to Finland in 2003, and although he is not on the list of suspects of the UN International Tribunal for War Crimes, the organization Human Rights Watch suspects that he has provided combat training and conducted one of the first blood baths in Rwanda during spring 1994.

(YLE 31 May 2008,

[http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=286254&search=turvapaik\\*"\)](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=286254&search=turvapaik*)

### **More than 120, 000 Afghani refugees have returned home**

This year, with the help of UN more than 120, 000 Afghan refugees have been able to return to their home country. On Sunday, UNHCR said that almost all of the Afghan returnees came from Pakistan. UNHCR warns about Afghanistan's limited reception capacity and underlines that the returns to Afghanistan should be carried out gradually and on a voluntary basis. The Afghan refugee community is one of the largest in the world. Pakistan still hosts the largest number of Afghan refugees, numbering about two millions, whereas the corresponding number in Iran is about one million persons.

(Helsingin Sanomat 1 June 2008,

[http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/artikkeli/Yli+120+000+Afganistanin+pakolaista+palannut+kotimaahansa/1135236829447\)](http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/artikkeli/Yli+120+000+Afganistanin+pakolaista+palannut+kotimaahansa/1135236829447)

## **Latvia**

### **Naturalization as an administrative, a democratic and a political question**

In Latvia, there was a lot of discussion about naturalization of the stateless in the 1990's. Latvian politicians had to constantly explain to their western counterparts and to human rights organizations the complicated situation in Latvia as well as the fact that among ethnic minorities, very few people know Latvian language or they know it very badly. That was the situation then,

and unfortunately the situation is partly the same. In the last month, there has been passionate discussions also in Switzerland whether naturalization is an administrative, a democratic or also a political question.

(Diena 31 May 2008,

<http://www.diena.lv/lat/politics/viedokli/vai-pases-izsniegs-balsojot>)

## Norway

### **Denmark rejects Guantánamo prisoners**

Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen replies to criticism from the Social Democrats by stating that it is not Denmark's responsibility to receive the Guantánamo prisoners, since they lack grounds for asylum.

(Verdens Gang 30 May 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=195782>)

### **Members of the Norwegian Parliament: Not of immediate interest to Norway to break ties with Teheran**

Demands are being raised in the Norwegian Parliament about Norway's relations to Iran and whether Norway should protest against a new Iranian law making the death penalty obligatory for religious converts. The Socialist Left Party and the Christian Democratic Party state that the new Iranian law should lead to asylum for Iranian converts in Norway, which today is not the case. In order for the Directorate of Immigration to consider granting asylum, the applicant, as a general rule, has to have had converted prior to leaving Iran.

(Aftenposten 31 May 2008, <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/uriks/article2455870.ece>)

### **No one wants 1,200 refugees**

1,700 persons wait in reception centres to get permanent housing, but the municipalities do not want to receive 1,200 of them. The situation is critical, claims the Directorate of Integration and Diversity. More than a fourth of the accepted asylum-seekers have waited longer than the maximum period of six months. The municipalities' excuses vary from lack of housing to only wanting refugees from specific countries. Despite statistics showing that the municipalities' economy improves the more refugees they accept, the municipalities remain hesitant. Today, the government cannot force municipalities to house refugees, a system that is a cause of concern for the Directorate. However, according to Bjarne Håkon Hanssen, Minister of Labor and Social Inclusion, the present system will not be changed.

(Aftenposten 1 June 2008, Dagbladet 1 June 2008, NRK 1 June 2008,

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2456910.ece>,

<http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2008/06/01/536850.html>,

<http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.5853789>, [http://www.nrk.no/kanal/nrk\\_sami\\_radio/1.5857828](http://www.nrk.no/kanal/nrk_sami_radio/1.5857828).)

### **Afghan refugees forced to return**

There are about 1,5 - 2 million paperless Afghans in Iran facing possible deportation. Since April 2002, when the first agreement on voluntary return was signed, UNHCR has contributed to the voluntary repatriation of 856,390 Afghans. But this year the program for return has come to a halt, since practically no one wants to return voluntarily, in part because of the security situation but also because of the drought and a lack of food in the country. According to the High Commissioner's representative in Iran, Carlos Zaccagnini de Ory, "it is a sad situation for the paperless Afghans, who now risk deportation".

(Verdens Gang 2 June 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=527607>)

## Sweden

### **“Risk of honour related violence can be considered more in an asylum decision”**

In an interview with Dan Eliasson, Director General of the Swedish Migration Board, Eliasson claims that the Board is increasing its knowledge of honour related violence, and that such a threat may be given more impact on asylum decisions in the future, for instance Eliasson mentions that more Iranian homosexuals may receive asylum in Sweden. Eliasson further states that the Board needs to shorten the average handling time of asylum cases from nine months; by autumn 2009 half of the cases will have a handling time of three months. The increase in family reunification applications is also commented and Eliasson states that the Board has increased its efficiency to investigate the applicants, since Eliasson is “convinced that there are falsified applications, I would be naive otherwise”. He also comments on the need to forcefully return the many rejected asylum-seekers waiting on deportation in Sweden: “Without the capacity to forcefully return them, many will keep dreaming of living in Sweden, despite a rejected application”. Lastly, Eliasson mentions that, on a personal level, it is especially straining to make an asylum decision at odds with UNHCR’s recommendations.

(Dagens Nyheter 31 May 2008)

### **More Iraqis leave Sweden**

During 2007, 233 Iraqis returned from Sweden to Iraq. This year’s numbers show that close to 300 Iraqis have left Sweden during the first four months. The increase can be a result of a sharp decrease in the percentage of approved asylum applications; from 97 per cent last year to 45 per cent so far this year. Tobias Billström, Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, welcomes the development, in view of the potentially high number of family reunification arrivals. Billström sees the increase as an effect of both the perception that Iraq is gradually becoming safer as well as the perception that Sweden’s asylum system is effective. According to the border police there are as many Iraqis arriving in Sweden as before, about 70 every day, but they remain in the country illegally.

(Dagens Nyheter 31 May 2008, Sveriges Television 31 May 2008,

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=775138>,

[http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1160794&lid=is\\_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl\\*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0](http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1160794&lid=is_search549588&lpos=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0))

### **Maliki promises help to those that return**

In a Q and A session the day after the International Compact with Iraq in Stockholm, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Maliki promised the many Swedish-Iraqis attending that the government is trying to build a safe Iraq, where everyone can return. Maliki promised aid and benefits for those that, by returning, want to help restore the country.

(Dagens Nyheter 31 May 2008)

### **“The government’s standpoint worries us”**

The newly elected chairman of Save the Children Sweden, Inger Ashing, comments on the most important issues that the organization will work for in Sweden. Especially the rights of refugee children are mentioned. Furthermore, the government’s plan to make the families responsible for the economic support of their immigrant relatives is met with grave concern by the organization, which fears that the policy will tear families apart. According to Ashing, the policy is in violation of numerous basic rights of the child.

(Dagens Nyheter 1 June 2008, <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=775371>)

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