

## **Nordic Headlines 2 August 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **UN critical of Danish refugee policies**

The UN's High Commission for Refugees, UNHCR, has criticised Denmark for rejecting families from Sri Lanka who seek residency via family reunification. The immigration authorities have over the past few months denied a number of Tamils resident the possibility of bringing a spouse to the country. They claim that refugees who have married someone from their own country after arriving in Denmark do not meet the conditions of the affiliation requirements that were introduced in 2002. However, Denmark has once again come under fire from the UN, which claims that those Tamils who are rejected can not return home because they are under the threat of political repression. One Tamil refugee refused residency has now announced he will legally test the decision in a Danish courtroom, and is prepared to go all the way to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg if necessary. Whilst refusing to comment on individual cases, Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder said he is convinced that Denmark is not in breach of article 8 of the human rights convention, which maintains that all individuals have the right to respect for their family life.

(Jyllandsposten, 1 August 2004, p. 2, NE translation)

#### **What now, Mogens?**

Social Democrat leader Mogens Lykketoft returns to work after his summer holiday in China today. He lands right into the middle of a brewing row with potential government partners, the Social Liberals, whose leader Marianne Jelved has demanded an easing of the country's harsh immigration restrictions as a precondition of entering into any ruling center-left coalition with the Social Democrats after the next election. Although the Social Democrats political spokesman, Frank Jensen, has maintained in Mr Lykketoft's absence that the party's immigration policy is not up for negotiation, social democrats themselves are deeply divided on the issue. A majority of the party's mayors in local councils, where there are many immigrants, are opposed to any change in current legislation, which they claim has successfully led to a significant decrease in the number of new immigrants. However, seven out of ten local county chairmen would, according to a *Jyllands Posten* survey, prefer to see the contentious 24 year age limit removed. Mr Lykketoft's first reaction on arrival home was to accuse the Social Liberals of shutting their eyes to the problems of forced and arranged marriages.

(Jyllandsposten, 1 August 2004, p. 4, and Politiken, 2 August 2004, p.2, NE translation)

### **Conservatives rally against EU criticism**

'International human rights conventions are always subject to interpretation'—that's the view of Conservative Party leader Bendt Bendtsen. He has now for the first time joined in the summer-long debate about the possibility of easing strict Danish immigration legislation by distancing his party from the Council of Europe's harsh criticism of human rights in this country. The council's human rights commissioner, Alvaro Gil-Robles, created a domestic political furor four weeks ago when he claimed that the 24 years of age requirement for immigrants seeking residency through family reunification was an 'unconditional breach of human rights.' Mr Bendtsen says he has no intention of revoking any restrictions in the government's much criticized legislation. 'Human rights conventions are extremely flexible, and the world is constantly changing. There is always the possibility of different interpretations, and I am not concerned about accusations that we are not abiding by current legislation,' he said. He added that immigration policy is at the 'heart' of the government because it has successfully limited immigration, whilst at the same time Denmark has not closed its borders to the world. 'We cannot accept that so many people have been allowed to come to this country that we are unable to integrate them. The government has now put a stop to that, but have not closed the doors to people who are willing to make a contribution to society.'

(Jyllandsposten, 1 August 2004, p. 2, NE translation)

### **Swedish press**

#### **Swedish assistance on its way to Chad**

Swedish assistance is on its way to the Sudanese refugees in Chad. 29 August, the Swedish Rescue Service Agency loaded a plane at Landvetter Airport in Gothenburg with eight trucks, 44 tents, personnel and other necessities to Chad. "Security is a priority. The refugees need housing, water, food and health care", said Mats Hultgren, who is responsible for logistics at UNHCR in Geneva. He continues: "Our biggest problem is finances, we are relying totally on our donor countries. They have problems donating funds before the catastrophe has reached media and become known to the public."

(Svenska Dagbladet, July 30; Dagens Nyheter, 30 July; City, 30 July; Göteborgs-Posten, 30 July; and [www.svt.se](http://www.svt.se), 29 July 2004).

#### **Three taken into custody after fight at reception centre**

Police arrested three men after a big fight involving approximately 50 persons at a reception centre in Karlskoga. The men are now charged with causing grievous bodily harm and for attempted escape, said the police.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 1 August 2004, p.10 and Dagens Nyheter, 1 August, p. 5)

## **Nordic Headlines 5 August 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **DF: Withdraw Danish troops from Iraq**

The Danish People's Party, which gave the government support for its war against Iraq, is now withdrawing support for the continued stationing of Danish forces there. The reason is not the abuse scandals and the criticism of Danish forces, but the slow trickle of repatriation of Iraqi refugees. "The repatriation of rejected Iraqi asylum seekers is just not moving forward, and the new regime is apparently just not interested. But Denmark should not have to take this when we are helping the country with stability and security. If Iraq does not start receiving its own citizens, we should withdraw our soldiers", says political spokesman Mr Peter Skaarup.

(Politiken, 5 August 2004, p3, NE translation)

#### **DF: Immediate jailing of rejected refugee applicants**

Rightist Danish People's Party (DF) proposes the immediate internment of refugees who have their asylum applications rejected. "If the asylum applicant gets rejected, police should arrest them and transport them to the Centre Sandholm camp where they are to stay until they are to be sent out of the country", says vice chairman of the Danish People's Party Mr Peter Skaarup. Government spokesman and ministers reject the proposal offhand, saying that an applicant should have the chance of voluntarily complying with a rejection ruling. The Danish People's Party proposal goes against fundamental principles of justice, they say.

(Berlingske Tidende, 5 August 2004, p8, NE translation)

#### **Development aid to be used locally**

Use development aid money where it is needed the most - in the close vicinity of where refugees come from. This was the message from the Minister of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs Bertel Haarder on August 3 as he assumed responsibility for administering foreign development aid from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Per Stig Møller, part of Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's ministerial shake-up. Haarder maintained that helping refugees in local areas, typically countries forming a border close to the refugees' country of origin, is the way forward. He however stressed that this does not mean that development aid will be paid to other countries' governments for receiving refugees who have been rejected by Denmark. "DKK 100m of *Danida's* budget last year was set aside towards helping refugees in these local areas and it has now been doubled, so it is a question of putting programmes into place. I do not intend to issue threats and conditions, but I will adhere closely to the guidelines of the UN's High Commission for Refugees and our efforts will be in accordance with all current conventions", said Haarder without offering any concrete plans. Denmark is already working closely with UNHCR, Holland, and Great Britain to

establish protection zones for refugees in local areas, and Haarder is hoping to send asylum seekers back to these zones.

(Jyllands-Posten 4 August 2004, p. 4, NE translation)

### **Danish People's Party puts pressure on Haarder**

The Government's parliamentary backers, the Danish People's Party intend to exploit Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder's double role as development aid minister to get more Iraqis sent home. "Until now, our demands that more Iraqis should be sent home have been met by a 'Berlin Wall' in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and claims that it was the Minister of Integration's area of responsibility. Now that Haarder is wearing two hats we are expecting concrete action," said Danish People's Party deputy leader Peter Skaarup. Danish People's Party made a deal with the government during budget negotiations last year that more rejected asylum seekers should be repatriated, but the US and the newly installed Iraqi administration have refused to accept any more. Haarder has so far been unavailable to comment on the Danish People's Party demands. However, the Conservatives' spokeswoman on integration, Else Thiell Sørensen, said that even if Danish People's Party had an overall majority in parliament it would not have the power to send more refugees home, because Denmark is already the country that sends the greatest number back.

(Berlingske Tidende 4 August 2004, front page, NE translation)

### **Development aid to prevent refugees**

The Minister for Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs, Bertel Haarder, wants to strengthen aid efforts in the immediate vicinity of refugees' home country. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has joined Denmark, the Netherlands, and Great Britain in developing a strategy for refugee protection zones in the immediate regions. Haarder wants to send asylum-seekers in Denmark to these zones. He believes that an effort in the surrounding areas will help a great number of refugees and at the same time result in less refugees coming to Denmark. At the moment, UNHCR is investigating the possibilities to arrange zones for Somali refugees in Kenya and Tanzania. However, UNHCR does not intend for these zones to be used by the Danish authorities to send back Somali refugees. Denmark wants the pilot zones in Kenya and Tanzania to be in place within this year, arguing that otherwise the project risks becoming too expensive. However, UNHCR does not think it will be possible to have the project ready within such a short timeframe. The Minister for Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs, Bertel Haarder and Danida have argued about the financial side of the project.

Refugee and development organisations disagree on the consolidation of the two ministries. Andreas Kamm, Secretary-General at the Danish Refugee Council, hopes that it will contribute to a broader perspective on the issues that creates refugee situations. He also supports the idea of zones in the immediate surroundings. However, he points out that a strategy for immediate surrounding zones should not be used as a shield against refugees coming to Denmark. Lars

Udsholt, Secretary-General for the Danish Association for International Cooperation, is less positive: "I'm happy that there is now a Minister in charge of foreign aid ... But I would like to distance myself from the consolidation if it uses one million DKr from foreign aid money to the immediate surrounding strategy. Fighting poverty should not be mixed with the prevention of asylum-seekers." (Politiken 3 August 2004, p2)

### **The Danish Refugee Council appeals for deported asylum seeker**

Wissam Mansour was imprisoned when he was repatriated to Lebanon from Denmark by the end of June this year. He had spent five years in Denmark together with his family before they were deported. The Danish Refugee Council has now decided to act on the case. Mansour was released on bail but his case is to be taken to court.

(Politiken, 30 July 2004, p5)

### **Law, justice, and love**

Denmark has for years been accused of violating human rights when it comes to family reunification. However, the accusations have never been tested in court. Now, the first actual case on family reunification is on its way. First, it has to pass through Municipal court, Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court in Denmark but most likely, it will end up with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The core question is: what will weigh most heavily: a family's right to a family life or a country's laws guarding immigration?

By John Hansen and Orla Borg

This is not just a story about unhappy love. This is also the story about a case that once and for all can provide the answer to the question of whether Denmark has become a country that violates human rights? The story begins in Sri Lanka but right now it has reached the moor of Jutland. In a single bedroom apartment in Ikast, Karuna and Raji sit and admire Abi, their small dark-eyed daughter when she babbles and plays with the rattle. It looks like pure idyllic family life. It is the last days of holiday for the 32-year old father who on Monday will continue his work as semiskilled worker at Midtjysk-Farveri (Middle Jutland Dyeworks). The 29-year old mother goes to the kitchen for a feeding bottle and brings water to boil for coffee. Outside, the sun shows its rare face in the otherwise wet Danish summer and throws some sunlight into the living room this afternoon in July. But this idyllic family-life is existing on borrowed time. In 15 days, the family will be broken in two. Then, the Danish police will send Raji out of the country. She has had her application for family reunification with her husband in Denmark rejected. Well, yes, some will say. We have heard this sort of stories plenty of times by now. We have many a times seen TV-pictures from the airport in Kastrup or Billund where a crying spouse is to be sent out of the country and angry Danish neighbours, colleagues and friends are interviewed about what they call an inhumane Danish Aliens Act. But the story of Karuna and Raji is different. They will be the first to have their family reunification case determined according to the government's new rules from 2002, tried at the courts. While there are three

family unification cases being tried in Danish courts presently, they all concern immigrants and not refugees. Furthermore, they are all based on the 1999-Act, not the 2002-Act, which is much stricter in regard to family reunification. The couple has together with the private organisation the Advisory and Documentation Centre for Racial Discrimination (DRC) applied for a free process to take the case through the Danish courts. However, the goal is to have the Danish law tried at the court in Strasbourg. Karuna and Raji believe this to be the only chance they have to live together. In Sri Lanka they cannot stay because he risks persecution, Karuna says. He refers to the political activities in Sri Lanka that made him flee the country in the first place. Moreover, he and his wife do not want to have their family name mentioned because they fear acts of reprisal against her when she in a few weeks will be sent back to Sri Lanka.

### Young lovers

The couple met and fell in love with each other in Sri Lanka in 1990. Karuna was a political active Hindu of faith and had to flee Sri Lanka in 1995. According to Karuna, he was a member of a Tamil youth organisation that was critical of the Sinhalese authorities. He criticised the authorities in public and arranged among other things a demonstration against the better grades given to Sinhalese than Tamils. This resulted in him being picked up in the middle of the night by army people and taken to a military prison where he was tortured, he says. 1 August 1995 he came to Denmark and an examination at the forensic clinic in Århus strengthened his claim that he had been victim of torture and he was granted asylum in Denmark. Raji remained in Sri Lanka where she undertook a four-year training to become a social worker. Throughout the years the couple wrote to each other and talked on the phone as often as they could afford. When Raji got a job as a head clerk in a public institution, they could also e-mail each other. In Denmark, Karuna quickly learned Danish and took the first part of Handicraft and Technique at the Technical School after which he got his present work as a semiskilled worker. The distance between the two did not diminish their love for each other and in January 2003 the couple met each other in Thailand where they got married and stayed for a while on a tourist visa. In January 2004 Raji came to Denmark on a visitor's visa and it was also here she later gave birth to their daughter Abi. The couple applied for family reunification to live together in Denmark. The Danish Immigration Service rejected the application and later it was also rejected by the instance of appeal: the Ministry of Refugees, Integration and Immigration Affairs.

### The tightening of the rules

The argument was clear: the couple did not fulfil the so-called attachment requirement that was introduced in 2002. This says that to live in this country, the attachment of both of the spouses to Denmark must be greater than their attachment to the homeland. The demand states that in order to live in the country, the couple's connection to Denmark should be larger than the one they have to their native country. Since Raji has lived her whole life in Sri Lanka and Karuna a large part of his life in Sri Lanka, their attachment to Sri Lanka was the

greatest. The couple thus became one of the first to experience the government's tightened rules. Until 2002, refugees had been entitled to family reunification. This was abolished. However, it is possible to disregard the requirement for attachment if a refugee risks persecution by returning to his/her home country. But this is only if the couple was married before one of them arrived in Denmark. The letter of rejection states clearly: a refugee, who only gets married to a person from his /her home country after he/she has fled to Denmark does not have such special eased terms for family reunification. In other words: Because Karuna and Raji got married after he had come to Denmark, they cannot be reunited as a couple in Denmark. It does not count at all in the decision of the Immigration Service whether it is possible for the family to settle in Sri Lanka due to the risk of persecution that Karuna faces. According to a report from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, April 2004, there is a definite risk of persecution in Sri Lanka. The report says that for the moment the situation is that neither a dignified repatriation nor physical, legal, and material security can be guaranteed. The conflicting parties have not signed any peace treaty and there are still reports about violations of human rights such as abduction, blackmail, hostage taking, recruitment of child-soldiers, people disappearing and murder. But the Danish authorities shall according to the 2002 act not consider the situation in the home country. It is of no significance at all, the act says. Inge Bruhn Thomsen, head of the residency unit at the Danish Immigration Service does not want to comment on a specific case, but says: "In general terms, the law says that refugees, who get married after they arrive in Denmark, can no longer maintain any rightful expectation of carrying out their family life in Denmark". Karuna and Raji are frustrated about the situation: " we can only live together in Denmark. In Sri Lanka, I risk persecution and what other third country would welcome us? Therefore, our only possibility is to raise the matter and try to win the case in court. Even if we need to take it all the way to Strasbourg," says Karuna.

What weighs the most?

Article 8 in the European Convention on Human Rights states that everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life. Inverted it says that a state may interfere if it is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. The final decision will depend on what counts most: a family life or a state's right to refuse. When the Danish Immigration Service or the Ministry reject a case, the public servants write that it is the official position of the Ministry that the Danish Law is in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights. Inge Bruhn Thomsen from the Danish Immigration Service formulates it in the following manner: "We keep ourselves updated about the rulings from the European Court of Human Rights. Until now, there has been no verdict that could show that the rejections in general conflict with the Convention on Human Rights. I am unable to say whether one or the other decision is too restrictive. It is

possible. But we can only say like the Minister of Refugees, Integration and Immigration, Bertel Haarder: Let us have it tried in the courts," she says.

Court case is welcome

And this is exactly what the Minister says "I welcome that one or several cases will be tried by the courts, also so we can have them tried at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg." Niels Erik Hansen from the private organisation The Advisory and Documentation Centre for Racial Discrimination (DRC) expects that the couple from Ikast will win the case in Strasbourg. Bertel Haarder do not want to comment on this specific case, but says: "When 10 years have passed – first seven years to obtain a residency permit and then another three years to obtain the right to apply for family reunification -, the refugees, who are rejected, can apply for family reunification as if they were ordinary immigrants or Danes." But that is of no use for Karuna and Raji presently. In fifteen days she will be sent out of the country and the couple is faced with the difficult choice: where should their daughter remain? Is she to be separated from her mother and stay with the father? The uncertainty leads them to bring the case to court. But it will take a long time: before the case has gone through the Municipal Court, Courts of Appeal, Supreme Court and the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, typically 6-8 years have gone by. "But we have to try to take it to court. Someone has to do it," says Karuna.

(Jyllands-Posten, 1 August 2004, p1)

## **Norwegian press**

### **Police accused of racism**

Complaints of systematic harassment by the Police Immigration Unit (PU) in Oslo have made the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seeker (NOAS) ask law-enforcement authorities to step in. Police stand accused of stripping applicants naked and mistreating immigrants trying to register. NOAS said that they became convinced of the gravity of the situation after sporadic complaints grew to a steady stream of similar tales. Now the organisation has sent the PU a letter with a copy to police commissioner Knut Holen. NOAS said the incidents had occurred in connection with registration of asylum seekers at the immigration unit in Oslo and the organisation saw no reason to doubt the stories.

"This is so serious that we have asked police management to intervene. Clear breaches of the law have occurred," said NOAS secretary general Morten Tjessem. "From the information we have these complaints are credible. In several cases they have been subjected to extremely serious and illegal treatment. Even if some of the asylum seekers turn out to be exaggerating it is clear that police have behaved shamefully," Tjessem said. "I choose to believe that individuals are behind these excesses, not the police in general. But I am surprised that the administration has not reacted independently. It indicates a lack of quality control routines," Tjessem said. The PU would not comment on the

charges but information chief Roar Hanssen said that they have invited NOAS to a meeting in early August to discuss the situation.  
(Aftenposten, 30 July 2004, Frontpage)

## **Swedish press**

### **Respond to Darfur as genocide**

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Laila Freivalds, and Minister for Development and Cooperation, Carin Jämtin, write in Dagens Nyheter's *Debatt* that the international society should have reacted faster to the crimes committed in Darfur. According to the ministers, the obligation to stop the assaults in Darfur is the same, no matter what they are called. The Swedish Government regards the situation in Darfur as having characteristics similar to genocide and should be responded to in the same manner. Furthermore, the ministers write that the government in Sudan has betrayed their population as it has failed to interfere in the killings, the rapes and the persecutions. They conclude that if the government does not honour the demands of the Security Council, the UN must interfere, as it is one of the obligations of the international society.  
(Dagens Nyheter, 5 August 2004, p4, *Debatt*)

### **The Aliens Appeal Board will not deport Iraqis**

In June this year the Swedish Migration Board decided to send back two teenage girls to Baghdad and Najaf in the south of Iraq. This decision signified a change in practice; earlier this year it has been seen as too dangerous to go back to southern Iraq. However, this summer the Swedish Migration Board made the decision that asylum-seekers from southern Iraq can be sent back. The decision is seen as very controversial and has been severely criticised by many, also internally. The Migration Board in western Sweden refuses to follow the instructions. Moreover, the Aliens Appeal Board will not deal with any asylum applications from Iraq and will consequently not send asylum-seeking Iraqis back to southern and central parts of Iraq. They will not send any asylum-seekers back to southern or central parts of Iraq until the situation in the country is more stable than it is now. Amnesty International as well as the Red Cross argue that the situation in Iraq is very dangerous and that asylum-seekers from Iraq should be given temporary resident permits. But according to Anna Wessel from the Swedish Migration Board the board will continue to make decisions based on individual cases. She also argues that it is important that decisions are taken promptly so as to shorten the period of uncertainty for the asylum-seekers. Gunnar Sommarin from the Aliens Appeal Board on the other hand states: " We can not know when the situation in Iraq will improve. It can take half a year, or more, or less than that. Of course there are limits to how long a person should have to wait but where that limit is I can not say". Approximately 1900 asylum applications from Iraqis have been turned down by the Swedish Migration Board and are now awaiting a decision from the Aliens Appeal Board. Asylum-seekers from the northern part of Iraq can however be sent back to the Iraq.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 5 August 2004, p8 and [www.svt.se](http://www.svt.se), 4 August 2004)

**Refugees conned by false UN-official**

Iranian asylum-seekers, whose applications have been rejected, have been promised permanent residency in Sweden by a false UN-official. The man has told refugees in Sweden that he is employed by the UN and therefore has connections that can be utilised to help the refugees obtain permanent residency. By paying the man SEK 50, 000, or in some cases SEK 100,000, asylum-seekers have been promised residency. Many refugees feel threatened by the man and are worried about what he might be able to do to their families in Iran.

(Metro, 4 August 2004, p6)

## **Nordic Headlines 13 August 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **Haarder arranges for internships**

Last Monday, 120.00 employers received a personal letter from Bertel Haarder, Minister for Refugees, Integration and Development Affairs encouraging them to take on interns with other ethnic backgrounds than Danish. The campaign aims at ensuring 100 possible internships over a period of 100 days and has already received 34 positive answers. Among the critics of the Minister's letter is Bjarne Laustsen, working with labour market issues for the Social Democrats. He believes that the contemporary situation is caused by the government's own policy of cutting down the number of internships. This has contributed to a situation, where young students with immigration backgrounds find it hard to get an internship.

(Politiken, 12 August 2002, [www.politiken.dk](http://www.politiken.dk))

#### **The Social Liberals in favour of 18 years age limit**

The Social Liberal Marianne Jelved wants to lower the age limit for family reunification from 24 to 18 years. Earlier on, the party settled with an age limit of 21 years resembling the rest of the European Union. However, the Social Liberals do not want the EU Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, to have another reason to point fingers at the Danish rules. Jelved says, "The Danish law system should not be criticised for violating human rights. Therefore, the age limit should be 18 years". This is also the party's condition for entering into a government with the Social Democrats. A change in law will simultaneously create some space of tolerance for other criticised rules, for example the rule that one must have 50 000 DKr in the bank in order to be entitled to family reunification. The Social Liberals are working on a proposal that will change the 24-years rule while trying to prevent forced and arranged marriages.

(Politiken, 10 August 2004, p2)

#### **Immigration tops political agenda**

Immigration is once again at the top of the political agenda as parties gear up for what looks likely to be an election year. This was the message from the Liberal Party's annual summer get together over the weekend, 7-8 August, where party leaders were invited to a public debate with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Danish People's Party leader, Pia Kjaersgaard, used the occasion to send out a warning that the first action of a new centre left coalition would be to ease the government's much criticised immigration restrictions. "Shock and horror. Think if we had the same conditions today as we did under the Social Democrat/Liberal coalition in the 90's," said a provocative Ms Kjaersgaard, listing how many less immigrants arrive here today compared to then. Social Liberal leader Marianne Jelved stated last week that an easing of the contentious 24-

years of age restriction for immigrants seeking residency via family reunification would be a pre-requisite of her party entering into a governmental coalition with the Social Democrats. At the debate she said that she could not understand how the Liberal Party, which is well known for its international involvement, could accept such harsh criticism from the Council of Europe for its immigration policy. The PM replied that the government will very soon be presenting a full account of the situation to parliament refuting the council's criticism.  
(Politiken, 8 August 2004, p2. NE translation)

### **Danish People's Party: the government breaks the agreement of sending back Iraqis**

The Danish People's Party threatens to neither support the new annual budget bill nor the presence of Danish soldiers in Iraq, if the government does not send back rejected asylum-seekers to Iraq. The party believes that it is "unreasonable that Danish soldiers jeopardise their lives while Iraqi men are smuggled up in Denmark, denying to go back". Pia Kjærsgaard, leader of the Danish People's Party, does not think that Bertel Haarder, Minister for Refugees and Development Assistance, has done enough to speed up the return of asylum-seekers from Iraq. Therefore, the Danish People's Party is now turning to the Minister of Finance, Thor Pedersen, in order to put pressure on the government by refusing to join the negotiation process for the new annual budget bill. Peter Skaarup, the Danish People's Party political chairman, suggests that a representative from the Danish government, for example Bertel Haarder, should travel to Iraq and Afghanistan and put pressure on the Iraqi government to accept rejected asylum-seekers.  
(Politiken, 6 August 2004, p4)

### **Lykketoft highlights centre-left division**

The division between leading opposition parties, the Social Democrats and the Liberals, has become greater after the last few weeks dispute about immigration policy. Social Democrat leader, Mogens Lykketoft, admitted yesterday that the two former coalition partners are unable to reach agreement on the much disputed 24-years-of age rule for immigrants seeking residency by family reunification. At the same time he aired the possibility of him becoming the Prime Minister of a minority, one-party Social Democrat government. Social Liberal leader, Marianne Jelved, is now demanding that the age requirement be lowered to 18, and not 21 to fall in line with EU rules, a demand that Mr Lykketoft is refusing to accept. "I can not say it more directly – the 24 age-limit has to be maintained", said Mr Lykketoft. "We can not afford to cause more uncertainty about our immigration policy." At the left-wing Socialist People's Party's summer get together party leader Holger Nielsen offered unequivocal support for Ms Jelved, signalling even more division in the left of centre ranks.  
(Jyllands Posten, 4 August 2004, p4, NE translation)

## **Norwegian press**

### **Quota refugees cause split in the government**

The UNHCR has suggested that Norway should double the number of quota refugees from 750 to 1500. The Socialist Left Party and the Christian Democratic Party agree with UNHCR's suggestion, arguing that it is natural to increase the number of quota refugees as the number of asylum-seekers has decreased. However, the Conservative Party and the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg, say no. Solberg argues that the number of asylum-seekers has to be reduced further for the number of quota refugees to increase. Moreover, she says that housing for refugees in the districts has to improve before more refugees can be allowed to come to Norway. (Aftenposten, 11 August 2004, p. 3)

### **10.500 immigrants to be deported from Norway**

10.500 immigrants are to be deported from Norway this year. 4700 of these are asylum-seekers. It is mostly Serbs, Russians and Afghanis who are sent back. Afghanis are not sent back to Afghanistan but to the country where they first applied for asylum. 30 persons are at the moment working with transporting immigrants away from Norway. The costs for deportations for this year alone amount to approximately NOK 100 millions. (Aftenposten, 8 Augusti 2004, front page and p.3)

## **Swedish press**

### **Swedish Kurd risks deportation to Turkey**

The Kurdish man was granted political asylum in Sweden 21 years ago. Now he risks deportation to Turkey, by Estonia. The man travelled to Estonia in June to see his fiancé but was imprisoned for being in the country illegally. When he was caught it was found out that he was wanted by the police in Turkey for murder and attempted murder. These crimes were allegedly committed in 1980-81 and the Turkish State argues that the man was a member of the Kurdish organisation Kawa, which according to the Turkish State is a terror organisation. The Turkish government declared on 4 August that they wanted the man handed over to Turkey. Now he risks deportation to Turkey from Estonia as the Estonian court has decided that he might be extradited. The Minister of Justice in Estonia will make the final decision on his case by the end of August, at the earliest. Amnesty International has now sent a fax to the Minister of Justice in Estonia asking him not to extradite the man. "If he is sent back to Turkey he will be tortured until death", said the man's father. The Swedish government has not yet officially made a statement in the case as the Minister of Foreign Affairs is on holiday. "That the man is a Swedish citizen does not hinder Estonia from deporting the man to Turkey, but they should not deport someone to a country where the person might face torture or an unfair trial", says Henning Envall at the Foreign Ministry.

(Dagens Nyheter, 11 and 12 Augusti 2004)

### **Number of Swedes is increasing thanks to immigrants**

The Swedish population has now reached 9 million people. However, without immigrants the country's population would not have reached 9 million in many years. Two out of three new Swedes are today immigrants and hence only one out of three is a new-born Swede. Most immigrants come from Finland, the former Republic of Yugoslavia and Iran. Last year most immigrants arrived from Iraq.

(Dagens Nyheter, 11 Augusti 2004, p. 6 and Svenska Dagbladet, 11 August 2004, p6)

### **Human Rights Watch criticises Sweden**

A new report from Human Rights Watch is criticising the United Nations for disregarding the human rights in the fight against terrorism. Sweden is mentioned as one of the five countries having disregarded human rights. In the report Sweden is criticised for the deportation of the two Egyptians in 2001.

(Dagens Nyheter, 11 August 2004, p. 8 and Svenska Dagbladet, 11 August 2004, p9)

### **Numbers of asylum-seekers decreasing**

Statistics from the Swedish Migration Board show that the number of asylum-seekers dropped with 21 percent during the first seven month of this year. The Board expects that 23,000 people will apply for asylum in Sweden this year. They also expect the number of people being granted asylum to decrease. Last year 15 percent were granted asylum, this year it is believed that only 10 percent will obtain asylum. "There are less people that really needs asylum arriving", says Lars-Gunnar Lund from the Migration Board.

(Dagens Nyheter, 9 Augusti 2004, p6)

## **Nordic Headlines 19 August**

### **Danish Press**

#### **Bridge to residency**

The Swedish immigration authorities report a 100 per cent increase in the number of Danes who, denied residency for their foreign-born spouses in this country, are forced to relocate to Sweden where immigration legislation is more accommodating. Although there are no official figures as to how many couples have been forced across the *Øresund*, the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenskan* estimates that around 1,000 are currently residing in the Malmö area.

(Information 18 August 2004, front page, NE translation)

#### **Internal division in Liberal Party**

The much disputed 24-years-of-age requirement for immigrants seeking residency through family reunification, which is at the core of a split between the Social Democrats and its potential coalition partners, the Social Liberals, is also creating division in the ruling Liberal Party's own ranks. A number of politicians, mayors, and local county chairman are now openly criticising the ruling, which is primarily aimed at stopping arranged and forced marriages. Mayor of Randers Michael Aastrup Jensen says: "It seems fundamentally wrong to me that adult people cannot get married because they have not reached a required age. It's against the philosophy of our party." He was backed by Mayor of Århus Louise Gade who said the state has no reason to get involved when two people intend to get married, a statement echoed by a number of local Liberal Party politicians. In response to the criticism, Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder stressed that he has examined alternatives to the ruling. "Too many critics believe we can just implement a set of rules that target arranged marriages alone, but it's impossible. It would be a breach of conventions and increase discrimination", he said.

(Jyllands Posten, 17 August 2004, front page, NE translation)

#### **Immigrants to learn about equal rights**

One of newly appointed Minister of Social Affairs Eva Kjer Hansen's initial priorities will be to teach immigrants about equality and women's rights. "Immigrants have to learn about the values and democratic principles regarding equality that Danish society rests on. I'm concerned when I hear about children being sent home to be 're-educated' and the problems that young immigrant girls face when they demand the right to choose", she said. Hansen announced on 16 August that she will shortly be presenting a plan of action to prevent violence against women from ethnic minorities. "41 per cent of all women who seek help from crisis centres are from ethnic minorities and many are unaware that they have equal rights in our society," she said.

(Politiken 17 August 2004, p17, NE translation)

#### **The Danish Refugee Council starts operation in Darfur**

The UN has given the Danish Refugee Council the assignment to help refugees in the Djebel Marra area in western Darfur. The UN estimates that

approximately 150,000 people are in desperate need of help in the Djebel Marra, situated on the highland that normally is very fertile for farming. However, due to the conflict in Darfur, the population has not been able to maintain their land properties.

(Danish Refugee Council, 16 August 2004, <http://www.flykting.dk>)

### **Social Democrats ready to go alone**

Despite the last few weeks' public dispute with the Social Liberals about immigration policy, Social Democrat leader Mogens Lykketoft says that he would still prefer to see the two parties form a centre-left government coalition after the next election - but at the same time warned that he is quite prepared to head a minority one-party government if the two are unable to reach agreement. Speaking at the Social Democrats summer get together, Lykketoft did however offer an olive branch to Social Liberal leader Marianne Jelved. He said that he would, as Prime Minister, revoke the contentious 24 age limit demand for immigrants seeking residency through family reunification if the requirement was deemed to be a breach of human rights, as claimed by the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner, Alvaro Gil Robles. Commenting on the composition of a new government if successful at the next election, Lykketoft said: "We are aiming for a broad-based coalition government, not a minority Social Democratic government, because we have had positive experiences of forming governments with the Social Liberals. We share the same thoughts about many issues, including better integration, abolishing the low start rate of welfare for refugees, economic policies and tax policies."

(Jyllands Posten 15 August 2004, p2, NE translation)

## **Norwegian Press**

### **Immigration agency may be split**

A private consulting firm is recommending that Norway's immigration agency be split in two, to speed integration. The cabinet minister in charge of immigration affairs has already called for such a move. Minister Erna Solberg, who also heads Norway's Conservative Party, earlier has criticised the organisation of the agency, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, UDI. It currently is charged with both approving or rejecting immigration applications, while also trying to promote integration of those allowed to reside in Norway. Solberg thinks many immigrants view that as a paradox, because UDI both controls them and is supposed to integrate them. "UDI has an image problem," Solberg told newspaper *Bergens Tidende*. Rambøll Management was to deliver a report to Solberg on 17 August, in which it recommends that UDI retain responsibility for regulating immigration, while a new "competence centre" be established to handle integration. Solberg's department will study the proposal and likely take the matter up in Parliament next spring.

(Aftenposten, 17 August 2004, web edition)

### **Increased number of quota refugees**

As reported earlier the UNHCR suggests that Norway double their number of quota refugees. The Norwegian government has now decided that they will

double the number of quota refugees from 750 to 1500. However, Norway will only start receiving these refugees in 2006.  
(Aftenposten, 14 August 2004, p. 4)

### **Huge differences between immigrant groups**

The immigration population in Norway consists of people from 200 different countries. These groups are very different from each other according to a survey from the Statistics Norway. Immigrants from Somalia belong to a group that in general is very young. Most of the 14 000 immigrants from Somalia are under the age of 20 and one out of four had a job at the time the survey was conducted. Immigrants from Iraq and Somalis cover 60-70 percent of the total immigration population in Norway.  
(Aftenposten 12 August 2004, p2)

## **Swedish Press**

### **New law will protect refugee children**

Refugee children who arrive to Sweden alone will be given greater protection by a new law that the government is going to suggest this autumn. It will be suggested that each child is to be given a representative who will make sure the child is treated right, does not disappear and is not abused in prostitution. The new law is an answer to criticism from the human rights commissioner from the Council of Europe regarding the treatment of refugee children arriving alone to Sweden.  
(Dagens Nyheter, 18 August 2004, p. 8)

### **Saddam's cousin seeks asylum in Sweden**

Saddam's cousin is seeking asylum in Sweden according to the tabloid Expressen. The man, who during Saddam's reign was a general in the Iraqi military, has been granted a temporary resident permit and is now awaiting a decision from the Migration Board. The Migration Board has contacted Säpo who is making an investigation.  
(Svenska Dagbladet, 17 August 2004, p. 6 and Dagens Nyheter, 17 August 2004, p. 6)

### **The Foreign Ministry will appeal for the Swedish Kurd**

The Swedish Foreign Ministry will appeal to Estonia not to send the Swedish Kurd, who is imprisoned in Estonia, to Turkey. The Foreign Ministry will tell Estonia that the man was considered a refugee in Sweden and will also give the reasons to why Sweden has not sent the man back to Turkey.  
(Dagens Nyheter, 17 August 2004, p. 6)

### **The Ministry for Foreign Affairs admits bad governance**

The Swedish Agency for Public Management has in a report directed criticism against the Swedish Migration Board and the Government for bad governance. The main criticism in the report is directed towards the former Secretary-General for the Migration Board, Lena Häll Eriksson, for bad governance. Moreover, the government is being criticised for setting up too many diverse and high-level objectives for the Migration Board to meet. One

of those objectives that were not achieved is the six-month time limit for processing an asylum application. The Swedish Migration Board has ignored the time limit set by the government and has set its own limit of ten months, which they have not been able to achieve. Charlotte Svensson, State Secretary responsible for asylum and migration issues at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, agrees to the criticism and says that the ministry will limit the number of objectives set for the Migration Board. Furthermore, there will only be a few but important issues that will set the agenda. However, she continues, it is important that the government can trust the Migration Board to have control over its activities and that the ministry do not need to interfere in all the details. The government will continue the reorganisation process of the Migration Board that was initiated by former Secretary-General at the Migration Board, Barbro Holmberg before she became Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy.

(Dagens Nyheter 15 August 2004, p5)

## **Nordic Headlines 26 August 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **Afghans line up to leave the country**

Just as the Danish People's Party demands a speedier return of rejected asylum seekers, the immigration trend has turned: There are now more Afghans leaving the country than there are entering it. 285 have left, 132 have arrived, according to the latest figures from the Danish Immigration Service. The Danish People's Party has the return of rejected applicants as a condition of their votes for a government 2005 budget proposal, saying that this was already agreed upon in last years budget. "We need to clear up the 2004 budget before we move on to 2005," says vice chairman of the party Peter Skaarup.

(Politiken, 26 August 2004, p. 6, NE translation)

#### **More young immigrant criminals**

New figures from Copenhagen Magistrates Court show that its young immigrants who continue to dominate the crime statistics. Of 63 juveniles brought before the magistrates during the first seven months of the year for serious crimes such as muggings or stabbing, 53 were from ethnic minorities and just ten were Danish.

(Jyllands-Posten, 25 August 2004, p. 3, NE translation)

#### **Less discrimination**

Racial discrimination in Danish society isn't as widespread as believed. A new survey of immigrants, refugees, and descendants of immigrants reveals that just 27 per cent feel discriminated against, compared to 43 per cent four years ago. One integration expert said that better integration in the workplace could be a cause of the positive development.

(Jyllands-Posten, 24 August 2003, p. 4 – Catinet Research, NE translation)

#### **Focus on local refugee aid**

If Denmark really wants to help the world's refugees it should provide more aid to local regions close to where from they are fleeing from. That is the view of the Danish Refugee Council, which alongside humanitarian and aid organisations will be meeting with Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder in his new role as minister of development today, to demand more money for local projects. The government has earmarked DKK 200m to set up refugee camps and aid projects in regions close to countries that have experienced a mass exodus of refugees, but the refugee council's general secretary Andreas Kamm is demanding at least DKK 1bn more. 'The government has on a number of occasions stated that we get more for our money by spending it in local regions, but is not prepared to pay what it costs. We have to think long-term,' said Mr Kamm.

(Jyllands-Posten, 23 August 2004, p. 4, NE translation)

### **Human rights: Denmark balancing on a knife's edge**

The Danish Government is balancing on a knife's edge in human rights by forcing hundreds of Iraqis onto a lunch box regime. As such, the lunch box regime does not constitute any direct pressure against the Iraqis (to return), but it is an indirect form of pressure. "We do not agree with any tactics involving pressure, designed to induce people to return. In case this lunch box regime amounts to putting pressure on Iraqis to return, we have to take exception to it," says Mans Nyberg, UNHCR spokesperson in Stockholm. UNHCR's guidelines on Iraq state that "UNHCR is requesting Governments not to adopt any measures which are intended to encourage voluntary returns, including of rejected cases". According to UNHCR, the use of financial or other inducements, especially "deterrent or punitive measures" in order to encourage Iraqis to return "is not consistent with international refugee and human rights law and practice". A large number of Iraqis have been put on the lunch box regime, and are called to the police station twice a week, to sign a document stating that they agree to voluntarily return to Iraq. Minister of Integration Bertel Haarder emphatically denies that there is anything wrong with the lunch box regime. "This issue was discussed before and at that time UNHCR did not have any objections to our food and accommodation regime – by some people referred to as the lunch box regime. That discussion clarified the issue and all accusations were found to be groundless. UNHCR are not interested in pocket money issues. Their concern is to prevent people from being sent back to face persecution. If some junior UNHCR officials want to raise this issue again, then I wish to tell them: You have no right to do this", says Bertel Haarder. "I will go to Geneva on 13 September for a meeting with High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers. At that meeting, I will request an authoritative answer, and I hope they will correct this statement. There has to be a limit to what junior officials are allowed to say just in order to make themselves interesting". Mans Nyberg's reply: "It is true that the lunch box regime is the same for all rejected asylum seekers. In that context, the Government could legitimately ask why Iraqis should get special treatment. The answer is of course that UNHCR has given specific guidelines regarding Iraqis, because under the given circumstances Iraqis should not be put under pressure".

(Berlingske Tidende, 22 August 2004, p. 3)

### **Grass roots support for immigration laws**

Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder has received widespread support from the party's local constituency chairman for the controversial 24-years-of age stipulation for immigrants seeking residency through family reunification. In a Berlingske Tidende survey, 48 local chairmen supported the ruling, with just four against. Carsten Bo Nielsen of the Ryvang constituency said: "I wish the age requirement was not necessary, but unfortunately it is to ensure proper integration and to prevent arranged and forced marriages which violate family reunification rules."

(Berlingske Tidende, 22 August 2004, p. 6, NE translation)

### **Ministry blocks the way for court case**

The Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration blocks the way for the Danish governments' rules on family reunification, to be tested in the

European Court on Human Rights in Strasbourg, according to Niels-Erik Hansen from the Advisory and Documentation Centre for Racial Discrimination (DRC). The court case has been blocked by the Ministry's decision to reassess the case of family reunification that supported the court case in the first place. The family reunification in question concerns a 32-years old Tamil refugee from Sri Lanka who wants to reunite with his wife in Denmark. The Ministry has denied the family to reunite based on the fact that they have stronger connections to Sri Lanka than to Denmark, even though the UN High Commissioner for Refugees advises against repatriation of Tamil refugees to Sri Lanka.

(Politiken, 21 August 2004, p. 2)

### **Inbreeding causes problems**

A growing number of Copenhagen children from ethnic minorities have special needs in school because they suffer some form of deformity caused by inbreeding. According to psychologist Bjørn Glæsel, the number of children requiring extra teaching and special training in Copenhagen schools has risen by 50 per cent over the past ten years, mirroring the rise in inter-family marriages. "It is a fact that many of these children are genetically deformed as a result of first cousin marriages, whether it be deafness, blindness, or some form of mental illness", Glæsel says.

(Jyllands-Posten, 21 August 2004, p2, NE translation)

### **Social Liberals propose ban on first cousin marriages**

A prohibition of all marriages between first cousins is one of the proposals by the opposition Social Liberal Party, designed to stop forced marriages among the immigrant population. The proposals are welcomed by the other main opposition party Social Democrats, but rejected by the government.

(Jyllands Posten, 19 August 2004, p. 5 & Berlingske Tidende, 19 August, p. 5, NE translation)

## **Norwegian press**

### **Slight growth in immigrant unemployment**

The growth in the unemployment rate among immigrants was only 0.1 percentage points last year, from 9.7 per cent in May 2003 to 9.8 per cent in May 2004. The rate was stable at 3.7 per cent for the population as a whole. All figures are calculated as a fraction of the labour force. Immigrants from Africa had the highest unemployment rate at 18.2 per cent in May 2004, compared with 13.2 per cent for immigrants from Asia. Unemployment among immigrants from South and Central America and Eastern Europe was 10.9 and 10.3 per cent respectively. Immigrants from the Nordic countries had the lowest unemployment rate at 4.2 per cent, followed by immigrants from other western European countries at 4.4 per cent.

(Statistics Norway, 26 August 2004)

### **Immigrant crime can lead to 'Mafia'**

A Norwegian researcher warns that ethnic gangs can give Norway the kind of immigrant-related organized crime that accompanied waves of migration to

the USA. Dr. Inger-Lise Lien has just finished a report commissioned by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and concludes that the ethnic groups themselves are worried. "Ethnic-based gang crime can give Norway the same problems that the USA has had with the Mafia. Society, and most of all the immigrants themselves, will be hit hard," said Lien, researcher at NIBR (Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research). "If we look at youth under the age of 19 charged with crimes in Oslo, immigrants are unfortunately largely overrepresented. In certain Oslo districts - Furuset, Stovner and Gamle Oslo - gang criminality has a grip. Criminal gangs becoming solid organizations is a sign in international research of an incipient Mafia structure being built," Lien said. She said that while the reporting of this type of ethnically based crime increases Norwegian scepticism towards immigrants, gang crimes tend to be inwardly focused, with violence taking place within the ethnic community. Lien said that there is already great concern about the problem within the respective immigrant communities and that authorities should hurry to create constructive co-operation. "My suggestions for action are to aim crime fighting work more directly at the target group, that is, those who have already started on the path of a criminal career. Furthermore, it is important that recruits meet reaction at once and not after they have carried out a series of crimes," Lien said. "Last, but absolutely not least, it is important that immigrants' sense of belonging and trust in Norwegian society is strengthened. If the parallel and separate societal development of Norwegian and foreign culture continues I believe this will only strengthen the worrying development," Lien said. (Aftenposten, 25 August 2004, p. 4)

### **Top model helps Sudan**

Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik handed over Norway's contribution to the refugees in Darfur Wednesday to top model Sonja Wanda. Bondevik met with the Norwegian-Sudanese model Sonja Wanda outside his office and placed a check of NOK 110 million (USD 16 million) in the collection box Wanda was holding. Present were also representatives from the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and the Red Cross, the organizations heading the collection effort to raise money for the refugees in Darfur. "Norway's contribution will be given through the UN and other charitable organizations," Bondevik said. "The main responsibility remains in Africa, and pressure must be applied on the Sudanese government." He urged the Norwegian people to contribute money to the campaign. "I'm from Sudan, and this is just something I had to get involved in," said Wanda. "If we don't do anything now, people will continue to die." (Nettavisen, 25 August 2004)

### **Pakistani politician makes the rounds**

A controversial Pakistani politician has been busy meeting both Pakistanis in Norway and top government officials this week. He has tried to mend fences and even scolded fellow Muslims, but on Tuesday he would not listen to a human rights appeal. Qazi Hussain Ahmed, leader of Pakistan's largest religious party and a Member of Parliament, arrived in Norway over the weekend after government minister Erna Solberg allowed his visit. Both Belgium and the Netherlands blocked his entry earlier this year, calling him a

threat to national security. But Solberg, after meeting with the Islamist, said they had to “agree to disagree” on the subject of invoking Sharia law in Pakistan or anywhere. While Ahmed supports it, Solberg calls it a “threat to democracy.” In remarks to Pakistani immigrants in Norway, Ahmed seemed to try to be politically correct, avoiding any mention of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden and being careful not to harshly criticize Pakistani President Musharraf, who has supported the US. Qazi Hussain Ahmed “knows that he will travel home again, and he doesn't want to make problems for his own (people) by making crass comments in Norway,” one observer who attended the meeting of more than a thousand people in Oslo said. The Islamic politician even lashed out at his own followers, saying “we're the ones who give Islam a bad name.” He claimed that Christians do not read the Koran, “they only see you. If we set a good example, Islam will be viewed as good.” He told Norwegian officials that he condemned terrorist attacks and he said Islam forbids murder. “No one can kill anyone,” he said, referring specifically to so-called “honour killings”, of which women often are the victims. Ahmed, whose daughter is a member of Pakistan's national assembly, also promoted education for women, noting that “the prophet said education is a duty.” He refused, however, to discuss human rights with the head of Amnesty International in Norway. “I especially wanted to take up the position of women, who often live under difficult conditions and are subjected to violence,” said Petter Eide of Amnesty International. “He didn't want to listen.” Eide said Ahmed interpreted a discussion of human rights in Pakistan as “an attack on Islam.”

(Aftenposten, 24 August 2004)

### **Fewer immigrants to Norway**

Immigration to Norway in the first half of 2004 was at its lowest level in the past three years, according to figures from Statistics Norway (SSB). The decline is mainly due to the halving of net immigration from Asia, SSB said. The net immigration to Norway in the first half of 2004 was 4,300 persons, down 1,800 compared to the same time frame last year. Somalians still make up the majority of immigrants, but the total is halved compared to the first half of 2003. Net immigration from Somalia in the first half of 2004 was 438 persons, with 406 from Liberia, 354 from Poland and 328 from Thailand.

(Aftenposten, 19 August 2004)

### **Dangerous refugees go loose**

Asylum seekers that pose a lethal threat roam freely in Norway because no authority has responsibility for them, Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK) reports. A source at an asylum centre said repeated warnings have been ignored. Five months ago Minister of Justice and the Police, Odd Einar Dørum was personally notified about a Somali asylum seeker with a criminal record that had threatened to kill residents and staff at an asylum reception centre. The subject became headline news after a Norwegian-Somalian with a history of psychiatric problems was released from treatment days before a stabbing spree on an Oslo tram that ended in one death. The NRK source wanted to remain anonymous since the asylum seeker remains at large, and she fears for her life. The woman said that the health service ignores early cries for help and that no authority is ready or equipped to step in. Mentally ill refugees

without rights in Norway are wandering loose, she said. Last November the refugee threatened to stab someone if not granted medical assistance but received no help. He was arrested and charged with violence after knocking down a random person the next day. Now his whereabouts are unknown to police, health authorities and the asylum centres. "I am afraid that he will come back to the centre and kill someone," the woman said. "The tram murder should not surprise anyone. I believe we will see some dramatic event in coming months," said Elisabeth Håland at Hero, the country's largest operator of asylum centres.

(Aftenposten, 18 August 2004)

### **Bishops speak out against Norway's refugee policy**

Norwegian bishops criticise the Government's decision to not accept any more UN quota refugees until 2006. "We must act now. It's too long to wait until 2006", says the Bishop of Moere, Odd Bondevik. I understand the argument about the need for having time to prepare the municipalities (for receiving more refugees), but if there is political will, it is my opinion that it must be possible to do something right now, Bishop Bondevik says. The Norwegian bishops expressed their view by signing an appeal launched by the Norwegian Refugee Council and Amnesty Norway.

(NRK, 18 August 2004)

## **Swedish press**

### **The Migration Board punishes Iraqis who chose to stay**

The Swedish Migration Board reduces allowance for Iraqis who do not want to return to Iraq on a voluntary basis. According to Måns Nyberg at the UNHCR Regional Office in Stockholm, this is against UNHCR recommendations, which states that no one should feel pressed return to Iraq, a country where not even international aid organisations or the UN are secure. Out of 6,500 Iraqis, 560 persons have since February been declined asylum in Sweden by the Migration Board and the Aliens Appeal Board. According to Anna Wessel at the Board, most of the asylum-seeking Iraqis in Sweden have stated that they flee the regime under Saddam Hussein and since the regime does not exist anymore, that reason is no longer valued. There have been a couple of cases where the Migration Board has reduced the daily allowance for a declined asylum-seeker, if the applicant has refused to return on a voluntary basis. The Swedish law also supports this arrangement. However, UNHCR recommendations are not only a simple thought or a wish, says Måns Nyberg. "Since the Swedish government has ratified the UN Refugee Convention, they are also obliged to follow UNHCR's recommendations. UNHCR will now raise this issue with the Migration Board", says Nyberg. "We have to ask whether this is an indirect punishment of the Iraqis in order to get them to return to Iraq voluntarily", he says.

(Swedish Radio – 'Ekot', 26 August 2004)

### **Egypt will not investigate**

Sweden has demanded an independent investigation of the deportation of two Egyptians in December 2001, but Egypt believes such investigation is

unnecessary. Whether Sweden will renew its demand for an investigation is further complicated by the fact that one of the two men does not want an investigation, as he believes that he then will have less chances of being granted amnesty by the Egyptian authorities. The Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights is willing to initiate an independent investigation if the Swedish and Egyptian Governments agree to it.  
(Svenska Dagbladet, 21 August 2004, p. 8)