

Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Tuesday 2 May 2006

Swedish press

Fewer apathetic refugee children

On today's Dagens Nyheter's debate page government-appointed investigators Nader Ahmadi and Marie Hessle write that there will soon be no apathetic asylum-seeking children in Sweden. The investigators show that the number of children overcome by apathy is declining dramatically. Between 2003 and 2005, 424 children were suffering from apathy, while the amount last April was 178. At the moment, there are 65 asylum-seeking children suffering from apathy. Ahmadi and Hessle write that the children seem to recover shortly after asylum has been granted and that the recovery is not affected by the amount or the nature of the care the children have received or the parents' ability to take care of their children.

(Dagens Nyheter p.6, SPR translation, SVT online www.SVT.se, 2 May 2006)

Housing for asylum-seekers with mobility impairments

The debate over the Swedish Migration Board's housing facilities for the asylum-seekers with mobility impairments in Hedemora is making it difficult for the municipality. The director of the municipal executive committee, Gun Drogge (c) said that it is the Migration Board's duty to find appropriate housing for the asylum-seekers with mobility impairments.

(Radio Sweden online www.sr.se, 2 May 2006)

Norwegian press

Hundreds with false papers

A 49-year-old Kurd from Iraq is accused of human trafficking and the forging of documents between 1998 and 2005. According to the Criminal Police, Kripas, the main group using these documents are Kurds from Iraq. These people are tied the well-discussed UDI-issue concerning the granting of citizenship to a number of people despite the use of false identification documents. An additional 500 people got residence permits since they had a job. The 49-year-old is also said to have produced false documents claiming that these people had a job in Norway. The man claims that he has had a political purpose with his actions and that he hoped to be caught in order for the authorities to see what desperate people are willing to do and so the authorities will understand the serious nature of the situation. (Source: Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, TV2 online www.tv2.no, 2 May 2006)

Sharia laws in to Norway

Today's immigration politics can result in Sharia laws coming into force in Oslo, amongst other places, if according the coming vice-chairman of the Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*), Per Sandberg. "If we are going to have an uncritical immigration and if we let different cultures and traditions grow in Norway, something we as a starting point are completely against, then I see big challenges and problems. If the most extreme and fundamentalist Muslims are allowed to act within the Muslim environments

it can rapidly result in that individual parts of our country is placed under Sharia laws. And that is something which is in no one's interest, "said Sandberg. (Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, 2 May 2006)

Danish press

Conditions for children at the asylum centres to be examined

The Danish National Institute of Social Research, SFI, will examine the living conditions for children living at Danish asylum centres. The examination will involve children to parents that have got their asylum application denied as well as children that are waiting for a decision to their application together with their parents.

(Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, Politiken online www.politiken.dk, DR online www.dr.dk, 2 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Thursday 3 May 2006

Swedish press

Report on apathetic children criticized

Pediatricians Henry Ascher and Göran Bodegård strongly criticize the report released yesterday showing a decrease in the number of apathetic refugee children in Sweden. The pediatricians are calling the report political rather than scientific: the results do not have a medically stable basis since the study was led by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, not by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. According to the report, during the last six months only five asylum-seeking children have been reported with apathetic symptoms. The report does not explain the previously large number of apathetic children or the reason why many of the children recover after the families have been granted residence permits. At the same time, police are investigating nine cases where sick children are suspected of having been manipulated or influenced in some way. (Dagens Nyheter p.12, & Svenska Dagbladet p.6, 3 May 2006. Source: SPR translation)

Danish press

Return ticket to Denmark

Norway and Iceland can send asylum-seekers back to Denmark if they have first traveled through Denmark. From the first of May their case may be handled in Denmark since it is seen as the first safe country the asylum-seekers came to. The three countries have made an agreement together with the European Union to halt so called asylum-shopping between the countries. Until now the Nordic countries have not been able to send asylum-seekers back unless the neighbors could document that the refugees came directly from Denmark. Especially Norway has been discontent with the old rules. (Politiken online www.politiken.dk, Berlingske Tidende online www.berlingske.dk, Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, 2 May 2006)

UNHCR criticizes Danish law proposal

The Danish government's proposals concerning new deportation rules for refugees who have committed crimes conflict with the UN Refugee Convention, according to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, when replying to the Danish Minister for Integration Rikke Hvilshøj (V). "This is unfortunate and we hope that the law will not be adopted in its current form, said Paal Aarsaether, spokesperson for UNHCR's office in Stockholm. According to the Refugee Convention refugees can only be deported in a few cases and only if the level of criminality of a very serious nature. The Danish government now wishes to equal refugees with all other foreigners who commit crimes. The deportation rules are based on the principal that the longer a foreigner has been in the country the harsher the punishment must be before one gets deported. The Minister for Integration rejects the critique. "It is a misunderstanding. We do not deport anyone who is in need of protection. If a refugee gets a decision about deportation the person's case will be judged by the Refugee Board" said Rikke Hvilshøj. "I think it is frustrating that UNHCR apparently comments on a faulty basis," said Hvilshøj. Paal Aersaether denies the criticism: "The truth is that the law lowers the threshold for deportation of the refugees to

a level that goes against the Refugee Convention. When you open the door there are big possibilities that people go in through the door,” he said.

(Sources: Politiken online www.politiken.dk, NE translation & SVT online www.svt.se, 3 May 2006)

PM does not bend for criticism

Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen is firm about that the children at asylum centres are the responsibility of their parents because they do not return to their home countries. “An essential problem is that we are talking about rejected applications. That means that the parents have the responsibility to leave so that the children can grow up under different circumstances. The PM argues that it can not help to bend just because the asylum-seekers and their children have been in the asylum centres for a long time.

(Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, 3 May 2006)

Finnish press

Swedish report: Residence permit cures refugee children’s apathy

Helsingin Sanomat writes about the newly published Swedish report stating that the apathetic refugee children seem recover as soon as the family receives a residence permit. The report seems to disprove the political and medical theories on the phenomenon, but does not take a position to the possible manipulation by the parents. The temporary law giving a right for a renewed handling of asylum application and a residence permit dropped the amount of apathetic children from 424 to 65 in one year. (Helsingin Sanomat online www.hs.fi, 3 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Thursday 4 May 2006

Swedish press

Swedish authorities ignore integration

A survey of Swedish state authorities shows that most of them are not fulfilling the government's targets for integration of refugees and immigrants. The report is especially embarrassing since the government has declared this year as a special year of multi-cultural events – trying to promote more contacts and cooperation between native Swedes and people born outside of Sweden.

(Radio Sweden online www.sr.se, SVT online www.svt.se 4 May 2006)

Chinese couple denies accusations

The couple accused of the trafficking of 46 Chinese asylum-seeking children denies committing any crime. Secretly filmed videos and recorded telephone conversations were showed in the Stockholm District Court on the first day of the trial yesterday. The District prosecutor Hans Ihrman presented evidence he claimed not only tied the couple to the actual human trafficking but also to the act of organizing the smuggling of the Chinese children. The defence will present their case on Monday.

(Dagens Nyheter p.15, 4 May 2006)

Norwegian press

Want fined foreigners expelled

The Oslo police want Norway to toughen its policies towards lawbreaking foreigners. "We want to get those who commit criminal acts out as quickly as possible," deputy Oslo police commissioner Hans Halvorsen told newspaper Dagsavisen. The Directorate of Immigration (*Utlendingsdirektoratet*), UDI, is in the process of developing new guidelines for the expulsion of criminals who come to Norway from the European Economic Area (EEA). The UDI stance is that foreigners should only be deportable from Norway if they receive prison sentences. The Oslo police believe a greater emphasis should be put on protecting the public from crimes of profit, and that expulsion should be based on the crime rather than the punishment. Police argue that they need to be able to react quickly to crimes like purse snatching, shoplifting and other types of organized theft. Last year police expelled 3,000 foreigners, about half of which had committed crimes.

(Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, 4 May 2006)

Danish asylum-seeking children escape to Norway

Children who disappear from asylum reception centres in Denmark escape to Norway. "It is easier to get a residence permit in Norway than in Denmark," said a Danish reception centre worker. Last year 57 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children disappeared in Denmark. Such a number equals to 60 per cent of all the asylum-seeking children. 44 of these were of Chinese origin and the rest came from different countries. All the children disappeared within four weeks after they entered Denmark. "Human trafficking is very common. Most of them come since the parents or the family has paid the human smugglers in order to give the children a better future in Europe. We see an

increasing tendency for children to disappear after a short period of time. Human trafficking has become part of the work with asylum,” said Gitte Nielsen at the Gribskov asylum centre. The Directorate of Immigration (*Utlendingsdirektoratet*), UDI, cannot confirm that the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have come to Norway from Denmark.

(Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, NRK online www.nrk.no, 4 May 2006)

Review of UDI takes more time

The Commission that is assigned to review UDI's treatment of temporary residence permits without the right to family reunion will not be able to finish their initial report until 15 May. The Commission needs more time since it argues that it is difficult to separate the mandate's two parts when it comes to the gathering of information. Additionally, the commission needs more time since it will also look into the case of the UDI practice concerning homosexual Iranian asylum-seekers.

(NRK online www.nrk.no, 4 May 2006)

Danish press

Government rejects critical immigration report

The government is furious about a new report from the European Committee against Racism and Intolerance, ECRI, to be published on the 16th of May, which is highly critical for Denmark's immigration legislation and specifically its treatment of asylum seekers. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has now fired off a letter of complaint to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis, in which it lists a number of mistakes in the final draft of the report that the government received last December and demands that ECRI, and '...other bodies under the Council of Europe, substantiate their criticism with impartial and correct information and refrain from advancing political evaluations that undermine the council's credibility.'

(Jyllands-Posten p.4, 4 May 2006. NE translation)

Fogh will not visit asylum-seeking children

The children who live on 12 square metres for years together with mentally ill parents should not expect a visit from the Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (V). The request for the PM to visit the asylum centres come among other from members of the Parliament's Integration Committee.

(Politiken online www.politiken.dk, 4 May 2006)

UN wants a closer eye on the expulsion of refugees

Danish politicians ignore criticism from the United Nations about the expulsion of convicted refugees. The spokesperson of the UN Refugee Council, UNHCR, in Stockholm, Paal Aarsaether, said: "We expect the Danish government to listen to our comments and admit the role that UNHCR has been given by the international community – and of Denmark itself – as a monitor of the implementation of the Refugee Convention. And that they admit that we have the leading expertise in the area". The government, supported by the Danish People's Party and the Social Democrats, holds on to tightening the expulsion rules, so that these rules will also include criminal refugees. UNHCR perceives this as clearly breaching the Refugee Convention, which Denmark has signed.

(Politiken online, www.politiken.dk, 4 maj 2006)

Government reintroduces exile

First the government appointed a working group made up of only state representatives to examine existing rules for the expulsion of criminals from Denmark. After that the organizations that know about refugees, conventions and human rights were given 12 working days between Christmas and New Year's to comment on the government's proposal to partly tighten, partly expand the rules for expulsion to also include criminal refugees. Most recently the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, has notified the Danish government that the new regulations will be in breach of the Refugee Convention. By signing this proposal, the government is making itself historical as the one to reintroduce exile, which was popular during the times of absolute monarchy. By accepting this law, one takes a first step towards making refugee's stay in Denmark temporary. Yet again Denmark displays its cynical and speculative double standards: On one hand we are profiting on the neat UN convention community, on the other hand we are proving that we are breaching the membership rules. (Politiken online, www.politiken.dk, 4 maj 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Friday 5 May 2006

Danish press

Kjær: Rejected asylum-seekers will not go home

The scene has been set for new clashes in the Danish government's asylum politics. Henriette Kjær from the Conservatives is not content with the current asylum system. Integration Minister Rikke Hvilshøj (V) has said that the harsh asylum strategy is motivating asylum-seekers whose applications have been rejected to leave Denmark, but Kjær does not agree. "I don't know how much I believe in that motivation promoting arrangements. We can see that the current conditions in the country's asylum centres do not make people return home. The rejected asylum-seekers do not want to go back home even if they live in bad conditions," Kjær said. The Nordic Council has made several analyses of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish immigration politics concerning Bosnian refugees. All reports confirm that bad conditions in the asylum centres do not make more refugees go home. Rather the opposite.
(Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, 4 May 2006)

Norwegian press

A need to review own integration politics

The Progress Party wishes to examine its own integration politics. The demands surrounding Norwegian schools in Spain should harmonize to a greater extent the language requirements put on foreigners in Norway. Carl I. Hagen, Vice President of the Norwegian Parliament has said that it is natural for the Norwegians in Spain get to attend an own, Norwegian school. Per-Willy Amundsen, the party's spokesperson for integration politics, is not as positive to the issue as Hagen and has said that the issue will be discussed. Lena Jensen from the Socialist Left Party is critical. "Here in Norway they discuss an obligatory language test for immigrants and are against education in the mother tongue. That does not go along with the requirements for an own, Norwegian school in Spain," she said.
(Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, 5 May 2006)

Finnish press

Finnish attitudes towards immigrants more positive

Finnish attitudes towards immigrants as a whole have become more positive. "The native Finnish population's attitudes towards various nationalities, however, vary greatly", according to the Finnish League for Human Rights annual report Racism and Ethnic Discrimination in Finland 2005, edited by project leader Annamari Salonen. For example, attitudes towards the Swedes or the Ingrian returning migrants are generally positive, whereas attitudes towards the Russians or the Somalis are mainly negative. The most reserved with their attitudes are young men and pensioners. According to the report by one out of four Finnish youngsters consider themselves racist, or at least in some way give their support to activities directed against immigrants. Sahra Abdillah from Somalia feels the attitudes towards the Somalis have toughened. "I don't know

why. Many of us work, study, and make an effort to integrate, but it seems there are always problems when people talk about us," she said.
(Helsingin Sanomat online www.hs.fi, 5 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Saturday 6 – Monday 8 May 2006

Swedish press

Sweden welcomes Darfur agreement

Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Jan Eliasson has welcomed the peace treaty signed between the government of Sudan and the main rebel faction in Darfur. In a commentary on the ministry website Eliasson points out that the negotiations have lasted two years while the fighting has continued, which has led to an unacceptable humanitarian situation. Eliasson says he hopes the other rebel groups will also sign the agreement. He adds that Sweden is already providing humanitarian aid to Darfur, and is ready to help in reconstruction. The conflict in Darfur has killed tens of thousands of people and driven more than 2 million from their homes.

(Radio Sweden online, www.sr.se, 8 May 2006)

Parents of apathetic children suspected of child abuse

The parents of apathetic children in Swedish Sundsvall have been given notice of suspicion of child abuse. The parents plead not guilty. Several families around the Sundsvall area are suspected to have contributed to their children's syndromes of dejection. The parents, who were heard on Friday, are accused of having misled the medical doctors regarding their children's health. The Migration Board reported to the police in December that nine apathetic children in the Stockholm area would have been consciously hurt by their asylum seeking parents. Some of the pre-investigations will be called off, in some cases the suspicion remain.

(Dagens Nyheter, p.8, 7 May 2006)

Danish press

Danish politicians reject more flexible approach towards asylum-seeker children

Integration spokesmen of the ruling Liberal Party (*Venstre, V*) and its ally the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti, DF*) have given the thumbs down to any leniency as regards the plight of the 1.400 asylum-seeker children stranded in miserable conditions in Danish refugee centers. Neighboring Sweden has announced sweeping plans to reform immigration procedures and make it easier for asylum-seekers to gain residence permits. Some 12,000 asylum-seekers, whose applications had been rejected by the authorities in Sweden, have now been granted permits to stay and a further 18.000 are expected to follow. The reform in Sweden is designed to help stranded asylum seekers from Iraq and Kosovo, where the authorities refuse to take the refugees back. In Denmark V and DF dismiss the Swedish move and insist that the solution to the problem is to make deals with governments to take back unwanted asylum-seekers in their countries of origin.

(Politiken front page & p. 2, 6 May 2006, News Ex-press translation)

Hvilshøj dismisses UN convention breach accusations

Minister for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Rikke Hvilshøj (V) rejects charges that Denmark has breached UN's Children's Convention over the question of the asylum-

seeker children in refugee camps. The latest accusations, referring to UN Children's Convention article 39, come from Denmark's own Children's Council and UNICEF. "Of course Denmark abides by the children's convention," Ms Hvilshøj told the daily broadsheet *Politiken*, citing close cooperation between the local authorities and the Danish Red Cross on children's welfare.

(*Politiken* p. 2, 6 May 2006, News ex-press translation)

Municipalities to employ "blindly"

A pilot project will decide, whether Copenhagen Municipality are sorting out job applications with foreign sounding names, women or older people. This will happen by making the applications anonymous. All information about the ethnic origin, mane, age or gender of the applicants will be censored. Thereafter it will show, if several people of different ethnic origin are called for interview. The suggestion will come to the political agenda in June.

(Jyllands-Posten online, www.jp.dk, 8 May 2006)

Meet the asylum children from Kongelunden

One cries every time that she is alone, another dreams about living like a princess, and many wish the most for their parents to become well. Therefore, many of them want to become medical doctors. Danish daily *Politiken* has visited the Kongelunden Asylum Center and asked the children about their dreams, their lives, their hope, their fears, and about what can make them the most happy in the whole world. Here, you meet one of them. On <http://politiken.dk/VisArtikel.iasp?PageID=452144>, you can meet nine more.

Mariam, 10 years old, Iraq. Has been in Denmark for six years with her mother, father, big sister, big brother and little brother.

What're your interests?

"I like playing football. It's fun to play with my friends"

What's the best movie you've seen?

"Cartoons. I watch that every day. I like Tom and Jerry the most."

What's the worst thing you know?

"I cannot stand when there's war in our country."

What's the best thing about staying in this camp?

"It's fun going to school. We play, and we read. Have Danish class and such things.

What's your biggest wish?

"For my birthday I wish a teddy bear. For my last birthday I got a Barbie. I still have it."

What would you like to do when you grow up?

"A medical doctor".

(*Politiken* online, www.politiken.dk, 5 May 2006)

Norwegian press

Envoy Egeland forced to flee refugee camp in Darfur

The Norwegian head of the United Nations' emergency aid program, Jan Egeland, was forced to flee a refugee camp in Darfur on Monday. Jan Egeland wasn't allowed to visit Darfur earlier this spring as the Sudanese authorities claimed that he wouldn't be safe. Egeland was visiting the Kalma refugee camp in Darfur which has long been the scene of uproar and despair. Jan Egeland was among a group of aid workers and journalists who were evacuated after a demonstration at the Kalma camp spun out of control. One aid worker was attacked during the demonstration, while a UN vehicle was attacked by angry residents wielding stones and axes. A UN spokesman, however, denied Egeland's

group had "evacuated." Rather, she said, "the program was cut short because tensions were too much." Egeland issued an appeal on Sunday for more resources for humanitarian aid to Darfur "from the entire world." Many aid workers in Darfur, however, are constantly being threatened with expulsion from the area, and stymied in their efforts to extend assistance. Egeland said he hoped his visit would pressure the other rebel leaders into agreeing to the peace initiative.

(Aftenposten online, www.aftenposten.no, 8 May 2006. Also covered in Dagens Nyheter (S), Jyllands-Posten (DK), Politiken (DK), Berglinske Tiderne (DK))

Need the most, get the least

A big number of traumatized refugees, unmotivated, analphabets and women with many children are struggling to get integrated in Norway. Municipality employees think they are the hardest to help. This is seen in a new report about the integration order for immigrants and refugees, that is presented today at a IMD-conference (The Directorate for Integration and Pluralism, *Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet*) in Oslo. The introduction order came into force as an obligatory, economic support from 1 September 2004. It aims to contribute to easier and quicker integration of newly arrived refugees and immigrants. The objective is to give basic skills in the Norwegian language and insight to the Norwegian societal life. Small municipalities struggle the most with making individual plans, while big municipalities see their biggest challenge in traumatized refugees. The survey reveals that the attitude of the municipality employees that work with newly arrived people, is highly decisive for how the refugees will end up. 60 per cent of the employees answer that they most often succeed with individual assistance. As many as 40 per cent experience this as risky.

(Aftenposten online, www.aftenposten.no, 8 May 2006)

Finnish press

Denmark breaks against refugee convention

Denmark has broken against international refugee regulations, states UN Refugee Agency UNHCR. The tightening of Denmark's integration law makes it easier to deport refugees sentenced for crime, which is not in accordance with the UN refugee convention, said the spokesperson for UNHCR.

(Helsingin Sanomat online www.hs.fi 6 May 2006)

Relief personnel abused children in Liberia

Girls already at the age of eight are exposed to sexual abuse in refugee camps in Liberia, states the newly published report by Save the Children. Those abusing children include relief personnel, peace keeping forces and police, people who should instead be protecting children. Girls in many refugee camps and villages are often demanded sex in exchange to food, money or even a car drive. Save the Children encouraged the new government of Liberia, UN and relief countries to quickly interfere in the matter.

(Helsingin Sanomat online www.hs.fi 8 May 2006. Also covered in Berlinske Tiderne (DK), Jyllands-Posten (DK), Politiken (DK) & Aftenposten (NO))

Returned refugees in Afghanistan poor but hopeful

Many of the refugees returning to Afghanistan are short of clean drinking water, have poor living facilities and many children do not go to school, states a recent survey conducted by UNHCR. Despite of the problems however, 80 percent of the 8000 interviewed refugees claim to have hope for a better future and 83 percent said they

were happy to be home again. The biggest worries are related to job opportunities, housing and clean water. Only four percent stated security as a major concern, even though the situation in Afghanistan remains insecure.
(Yle online 7 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Tuesday 9 May 2006

Swedish press

Smugglers earned 782.000 SEK (105.000 USD)

Prosecutor Hans Ihrman states that he can prove that the two Chinese citizens accused of smuggling children earned between 17.000 and 18.000 Swedish crowns (2.300-2.400 USD) per child. The evidence is taken from SMS messages from a confiscated mobile phone. Both deny all the crimes they are accused of.

(Dagens nyheter, Svenska dagbladet, SPR translation, 9 May 2006)

Nigerian woman's case gets re-examined

The woman who was to be deported to Nigeria despite the risk that she will be stoned to death is to have her case re-examined. The woman fled Nigeria after her husband reported her to the *Sharia* court for infidelity. She had left him after repeated mistreatment but had been unable to get a divorce. The Swedish Migration Board has been reported to the Equality Ombudsman for revealing the woman's present place of residence to her husband. It has now come to light that the board had communicated with the husband, and that he had made threats against her life.

(Dagens nyheter, SPR translation, 9 May 2006)

Danish press

Majority will give more aid to Africa

The poorest countries in Africa can look forward to receiving more money in Danish development aid – at the cost of Asian and Latin American recipients. The ruling Liberal Party has proposed a new, geographic distribution of aid in which more money is given to Africa and less to countries in Asia and Latin America. According to the Liberal Party's foreign affairs spokesman Troels Lund Poulsen, the economic growth in a country such as Vietnam will make aid money superfluous, and this should instead be given to a new country or an existing aid partner in Africa.

(Berlinske tiderne, News ex-press translation, 9 May 2006)

Prime minister offers no help to rejected asylum-seeking children

The conditions that asylum-seeker children face in Danish asylum centers are the rejected parents' responsibility, Anders Fogh Rasmussen states. He encourages the parents to return home. The prime minister calls the situation in the asylum centres "highly regrettable". But there is no immediate help under way from Anders Fogh Rasmussen to the children. He lays down that the families' asylums have been rejected because they lack reason for staying in Denmark. The conditions for the asylum seeking children have been classified as inhumane by members of government and of opposition alike. Many of the asylum-seekers come from Iraq, and it can take years before families can return back home. All the same, Anders Fogh Rasmussen is not set to ease the rules. He means that rejected asylum children do not stand above the law.

(Politiken online www.politiken.dk, 9 May 2006)

Norwegian press

More bad news for immigrants seeking work

There's been a lot written about joblessness and underemployment among immigrants in Norway lately, despite the country's booming economy and demand for employees. A new study suggests the situation is not likely to improve. The study was conducted by a research company MMI for the state labor department. It showed that a stunning 94 percent of Norwegian companies questioned haven't put forward a single measure aimed at recruiting workers who have immigrated to Norway or who aren't ethnic Norwegians. Only 20 percent of company managers said they have a goal of diversifying the workplace by employing more immigrants or people of non-Norwegian background. 70 percent said they weren't interested in receiving any counseling on how they might attract immigrant workers.

(Norwaypost online www.aftenposten.no, 8 May 2006)

Employees at asylum receptions threatened daily

Threats and fear of violence are every day issues at Norwegian asylum receptions. The security routines are poor, the employees warn. Threats are seldom reported, and there is no other way of registering them. Now the labor union fears that there will be more violent attacks on the employees. Therefore, the Norwegian association for asylum reception workers (*Norsk forening for asylmottaksarbeidere*) has asked for a meeting with the Minister for Labor and Inclusion. An earlier report from Norwegian people's aid (*Norsk Folkehjelp*) shows that powerlessness and hopelessness are factors that can lead to violence and assaults. The report also says that the violence especially targets at women and children in the reception centres.

Violence against asylum reception workers since 2000

March 2006: One employee at the asylum reception Dale outside Sandnes is taken hostage by an Iraqi asylum-seeker

April 2005: One asylum seeker from Camerun threatens the police with a knife at the Sandmoen asylum reception in Trondheim

February 2005: Two Afghans suspected for manslaughter of a compatriot at an asylum reception in Vadsø

January 2003: One Somali cut with a knife and killed in Movegen asylum reception at Nesna in Nordland. One asylum seeker from Georgia arrested for the manslaughter

January 2003: Two men knife-cut at an asylum reception in Gausdal

February 2003: One asylum-seeker killed the Congolese asylum-seeker Christian Baloky at Lundeskogen Asylum reception in Vestre Slidre. Thereafter he cut and killed bus driver Audun Bøland.

August 2002: Mass fighting at an asylum centre in Mo in Rana. One policeman cut in the face with a broken glass bottle

January 2000: One Palestinian asylum-seeker killed another Palestinian with a knife at the asylum reception Os in Østerdalen

August 2000: One asylum-seeker from Iraq killed an Iranian at an asylum reception in Sand in Ryfylke

(Dagsavisen online www.dagsavisen.no, 8 May 2006)

Finnish press

Chechen leader's family request asylum in Finland

The family of the Chechen leader Aslan Mashadov has requested asylum in Finland. Their Russian passports have expired and they are afraid to renew them for fear of official reprisals. Former independence fighter Mashadov was elected president of Chechnya in 1997, but was killed by Russian forces last March. The Finnish-Caucasus Associations says that his family has made a plea to President Tarja Halonen, saying that they fear persecution from Russian authorities. They are believed to reside in the Azerbaijan capital Baku, but say they no longer feel safe there.
(Yle online www.yle.fi & Helsingin Sanomat online www.hs.fi, 9 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Wednesday 10 – Thursday 11 May 2006

Swedish press

Accommodation shortage for refugees

Around 16,500 refugees that have been granted permanent residency are still without a home. Municipalities have so far only agreed to take 13,000. "The municipalities have so far received refugees much faster than expected. But we need more mobilization and more places to meet the increasing need created by the temporary asylum act," said Andreas Carlgren, Director General of the Swedish Integration Board (*Integrationsverket*), to the Riksdag's committee on social insurance yesterday. (Svenska dagbladet p.6, SPR translation, 10 May 2006)

Chinese children came via Moscow

The man suspected of smuggling Chinese children out of Sweden traveled to a friend in Russia at least once a year to fetch 100,000 Swedish crowns in dollars. The suspect said that the money was for selling clothes. Police and the prosecutor are not sure where the Russian money comes from but a pattern is emerging that suggests many of the Chinese children that disappeared traveled via Moscow. An additional investigation on the disappeared children is ongoing. Swedish police are working with police from France, Italy, Greece and China on the case. (Svenska dagbladet p.11, Dagens nyheter p.10, SPR translation, 10 May 2006)

Risk of racism in election campaign

Kristina Boréus, senior lecturer in political science at Stockholm University and commissioned by the government to look at the rhetoric of discrimination, warns in daily *Dagens Nyheter* that there is a risk that racism will have a role to play in this year's election campaign. She suggests that politicians' rhetoric has become more and more discriminating over the past few years and in the run up to the general election in 2002 the Moderates and the Liberals in particular in their rhetoric associated problems in society with immigrants. Immigrants as a group were given the blame for many negative aspects of society - the oppression of women, criminality and for dependency on social welfare. (Dagens nyheter p.6, SPR translation, 11 May 2006)

Danish press

Dispute about racism report

No other country has reacted so strongly to the upcoming racism report from the Council of Europe's Racism Committee, ECRI, as Denmark. According to ECRI's chairman Eva Smith, the new report has been generally well received by governments, who have added their own comments, but it's the Danish government that has responded most vociferously. The report is highly critical of Denmark's treatment of refugees and immigrants, but the government has already rejected a number of the findings as mistaken and unsubstantiated and has fired off a letter of complaint to the Council's Secretary General. (Jyllands-Posten front page, News ex-press translation, 10 May 2006)

Denmark backs US Darfur initiative

Denmark has placed itself firmly behind a US effort to speed up the deployment of an UN peacekeeping force in Darfur, where 200,000 people have been killed since 2003 and millions displaced. Prior to a meeting of the UN Security Council, Tuesday, Minister of Development Cooperation Ulla Tørnæs characterized the situation in Darfur as 'deeply concerning' and said that Denmark, as a member of the UN Security Council, would be strongly supporting the resolution put forward by the USA's UN Ambassador John Bolton. "Alongside our EU colleagues we want to see the rapid deployment of a UN force, but firstly it's important to support AMIS, the African Union's Mission in the Sudan, which can pave the way for the UN's planning team."

(Jyllands-Posten p. 8, News ex-press translation, 10 May 2006)

Aid organization backs off

The Danish wing of Save the Children is refusing to investigate the possibility that Danish aid workers could have been involved in the sexual abuse of children in Liberia. A new report published by the British Save the Children organization, based on evidence obtained from over 300 children and adults who were in refugee camps both during and after the civil war in Liberia, states that male aid workers often misused their position of power to obtain sex with young girls, who in return received food or clothing. Despite the rather disturbing claim, Save the Children's head of programmes in Denmark, Niels Hjortdal, says that it's up to the local authorities to investigate whether Danish aid workers were involved in the abuse.

(Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, News ex-press translation, 10 May 2006)

Dramatically fewer Somalis to Denmark

Immigrants and their descendants now make up 8.6 per cent of Denmark's population, according to Statistics Denmark, but it's Poles who are responsible for the biggest influx right now. 513 Polish nationals have immigrated into this country since the New Year, twice as many as new arrivals from any other country. Immigration from the Ukraine, India and the Philippines is also on the rise, whilst the number of Somalis arriving here has fallen drastically. Turks and Iraqis dominate the growth in the number of descendants of immigrants.

(Jyllands-Posten p.6, News ex-press translation, 10 May 2006)

Medical doctors: Asylum centers make people ill

Danish asylum centers are a mixture of suicide attempts, happy pills and mental suffering, as shown by the numbers from The Danish Immigration Service (*Udlændingestyrelsen*). From 2000 to 2004, the number of suicide attempts increased heavily, at the same time as medication expenses for asylum seekers exploded. 43 asylum seekers attempted to commit suicide in 2000, whilst the number for 2004 was 72. Numbers shall be seen in the light of that asylum seekers living in the Danish centers declined from 8.145 in 2000 to 4.361 in 2004. During the same period the expenses for medication rose to 64 per cent. Senior physician in the Red Cross asylum department, Ebbe Munk-Andersen, is now warning that people are falling ill from living in the asylum centers. Minister for integration Rikke Hvilshøj comments that a lot is done to make asylum seekers' lives easier.

(DR online, www.dr.dk, 10 May 2006)

Refugees earning their own living can stay in Denmark

If refugees can support themselves and their family, they have the possibility to stay in Denmark. The Danish visa regulations shall be applied so that it will be easier for Chinese and Indian business people to have friends and family visiting, whilst they are in the country. Moreover Denmark will introduce an annual "diversity day" for dialogue between religions and cultures. These are three of the eight suggestions presented by the Social Liberals (R) on Wednesday, aiming to reinstall the Danish reputation after the Mohammad crisis.

(Jyllands-posten online www.jp.dk, 10 May 2006)

Norwegian press

Young immigrants often accused

17 per cent of non-western immigrants between 15 and 24 years of age have been accused of crimes. Corresponding number for young Norwegians is 10 per cent. Numbers from Statistics Norway (*Statistisk sentralbyrå*) show that it is 2.7 times more probable for immigrants to be accused of crimes than for Norwegians. Taking into account that criminality is related to social factors, such as education and economy, the difference decreases drastically. Ratio is 1.3 when social factors are taken into account. Statistics Norway also says that other factors can explain why young immigrants are over represented in crime statistics. Examples of such variables are traumatic experiences from the home country, language difficulties and discrimination.

(NRK online www.nrk.no, 9 May 2006)

Every fourth Oslo citizen of immigrant background

Oslo is on top when it comes to citizens with immigrant background. Oslo, with 23 per cent, is clearly before Drammen with 17.6 per cent and Lørenskog with 14.3 per cent. By the beginning of 2006, 386.000 people were of immigrant background in Norway. That represents 8.3 per cent of the population. People with immigrant background live in all communes of the country, and 14 communes have more than 10 per cent. All of Oslo's city parts are above the national average. The immigration population increased with 21.900 people, 6 per cent, in 2005. 6.1 per cent of the Norwegian population is of non-western background today. People of Pakistani origin also this year account for the largest single group of 27.700 people, followed by Swedes 23.500, Iraqis (20.000) and Danes (19.100).

(Verdens gang online, www.vg.no, 11 May 2006)

Latvian press

Latvian society integration minister to visit Russia's Latvian community in June

Latvia's special assignments minister for society integration Karina Petersone is scheduled to visit Russia in June to meet with ethnic Latvians residing in this country, the minister's secretariat said. Petersone inquired about possibilities to support non-governmental organizations and projects of Russia's Latvian community. The ambassador assured the minister that there would be no legislative obstacles for Latvia to support its compatriots in Russia. Petersone and Kalyuzhny also touched upon society integration issues, such as possibilities for minorities organizations to participate in decision-making and political processes, as well as ways of speeding up naturalization process in Latvia. The integration minister is planning to visit Russian capital Moscow, as well as Siktivkar and Inta, where she is scheduled to take part in a commemorative event honoring the victims of the Communist genocide.

(Baltic News Service 10 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Friday 12 to Monday 15 May 2006

Swedish press

Human traffickers arrested

Police in Stockholm, Uppsala and Falkenberg arrested nine persons on Friday on suspicion of human trafficking. On Saturday a 35-year-old Iraqi citizen from Uppsala was remanded in custody. Police believe that the gang is based in Uppsala and has helped around 1,000 people to enter Sweden on forged papers. According to Thord Modin, head of the police's national criminal intelligence unit, smuggling refugees to Sweden is a popular and lucrative business.

(Svenska Dagbladet p.6, 13 May; Radio Sweden online www.sr.se, 12&13 May; Dagens Nyheter p.8, 14 May; Sveriges Television online www.svt.se, 14 May; Svenska Dagbladet p.8, Metro p.4, 15 May 2006. Also in Danish media: DR online www.dr.dk. SPR translation)

Official calls asylum seeker "a dog"

An official at the Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) has insulted an asylum seeker from Iraq, describing him as "a dog". The incident occurred in March when the man was called to the immigration office in Örebro to discuss his family's application for asylum. Following an exchange of words, the official told the man in Arabic to "leave you dog". Janna Valik, director general of the Migration Board, says in a letter to the parliamentary ombudsman that the official acted in an unacceptable manner and has since quit his job.

(Dagens Nyheter p.8, 14 May 2006. SPR translation)

Bringing apathetic children back to life

The refugee department of the children and youth psychiatry in Stockholm, BUP, wishes to stimulate the senses of the apathetic children in order to bring them back to life. BUP has set up three new exercise rooms in which the children together with their parents are exposed to light and sound. All children have so far reacted positively. On 2 May 2006 an investigation was presented about the reasons for the apathy among the around 400 asylum seeker children in Sweden. The inquiry pointed out that the number of these children started to decrease substantially in November 2005, at the same times as the police started an investigation into suspected affecting factors. According to BUP in Stockholm the decrease in new cases started before that, namely in September 2005. Lotta Wiberg and Sten Lundqvist at BUP argue that the inquiry lacks a deeper analysis and that the discussion about possible manipulation of some of the children has been negative for the whole group of apathetic children.

(Dagens Nyheter p.12, 15 May 2006)

Danish press

"New Danes" don't apply

The "New Danes" do not apply for jobs in the small and medium sized enterprises according to a recent survey. The majority of these firms have never received an

application from a “New Dane”. Torben Møller-Hansen, director for the organization Nydansker said that the problem is that the “New Danes” do not know that there are available positions since the businesses advertise in sources which they do not look into. (Berlingske Tidende online www.berlingske.dk, DR online www.dr.dk, 15 May 2006)

Finish press

IDPs are the invisible parties in conflicts

At the same time as the number of refugees is at its lowest level in 25 years, the number of internally displaced persons, IDPs, has risen to almost 24 million. IDPs are often left without international protection in their own countries. “Most of them are very poor and have neither means nor resources for crossing the border”, states Dennis McNamara from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, on his visit to the Wider Institute in Finland. Even though the phenomenon is not a new one, the IDPs have remained the invisible victims of conflicts. “The problem is that they have never had their own agency, unlike refugees who have UNHCR to look after them”, said McNamara.

(Helsingin Sanomat online www.hs.fi, 9 May 2006)

Estonian press

Estonian integration program under review

Estonia is drawing up a new integration program that is putting more emphasis on the social and economic aspects. "All residents' knowledge of the official language remains an essential consideration", Population Minister Paul-Eerik Rummo said today after the first meeting of the expert commission coordinating the drafting of the program. Members of the commission proposed to increase support for the emergence of a common media sphere and drew attention to the need to ensure the quality of education for Russian-speaking young people, in order to give them equal opportunities to succeed in the labor market and in the society.

(Baltic News Service, 12 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Tuesday 16 May 2006

Swedish press

UNWRA director appeals to Swedish Minister

Karen Koning AbuZayd, Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East (UNRWA), met with Carin Jämtin, Swedish Minister for Development Aid, in Stockholm on Monday and appealed to the Minister to ensure that overdue Palestinian salaries be paid swiftly. And, in an interview with daily *Svenska dagbladet* today, the Commissioner General urges EU governments to make use of the existing channels to pay the salaries to some 100.000 Palestinian government workers. "There is a system that allows the money to go straight into the employee's own bank. It would work. Let the people receive their money," says Karen Koning AbuZayd.

(Svenska dagbladet p. 16, SPR translation 16 May 2006)

Raft man identified

A man that was found floating on a raft between Denmark and Norway in April of this year, and who was taken care of by the Swedish Police, has finally been identified. The 49-year-old claimed to be of South African origin and have the name of George Williams. After nearly a month's investigations, it is now confirmed that he is from the Czech Republic. The man has earlier spent some time in England, and now wanted to go to the US. However, he will most likely be sent back to his native country. How the man ended up on the raft is still a mystery.

(Radio Sweden online www.sr.se, 16 May 2006)

Six remanded in custody for trafficking

Six men were remanded into custody on Monday in what is described as one of the largest human trafficking cases in Sweden's history. On Saturday a 35-year-old man from Uppsala was remanded into custody. Swedish, Dutch and Belgium police have been keeping the group under surveillance since last autumn though suspicions first arose in 2003 when an Uppsala resident on his way to Egypt was arrested at Arlanda Airport carrying 10 false visas.

(Dagens nyheter p. 9, Svenska dagbladet p. 8, SPR translation, 16 May 2006)

Danish press

New report critical of Denmark

Despite protests from the government, a new report to be published today by the Council of Europe's Committee on Racism (ECRI) maintains its strong criticism of Denmark's treatment of refugees and immigrants. Whilst citing progress in some areas, the ECRI claims that the immigration and integration climate has become worse since the last report in 2001 and certain politicians, alongside parts of the national media, '...continue to conjure up a negative image of minorities, particularly Muslims.' The report specifically criticizes the country's harsh immigration legislation that has placed excessive obstacles in the way of members of minority groups can become Danish citizens, achieve family

reunification and prevent new immigrants from being granted access to the social system on an equal footing with the rest of the population. The report also claims that Denmark has failed to accept many recommendations from the last report in 2001, including a clear and cohesive policy that ensures minorities' equal access to employment, housing and education. However, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, criticizes the report claiming that the government has found 20 fact faults and more than 20 undocumented claims. "We cannot take this criticism seriously", he said on his weekly press meeting.

(Jyllands-Posten online, www.jp.dk, News-ex press translation, Berlingske tiderne online www.berlingske.dk, 16 May 2006)

Finnish press

Social marginalization increases immigrants' risk of committing crimes

Poverty, lack of skills, and linguistic and cultural alienation increase the likelihood for an immigrant to be convicted of a crime. According to a study by Juhani Iivari, head of research at the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES), the number of criminal convictions, the degree of unemployment, and low income status tend to pile up on the same individual foreign-born residents. During the period examined in the study, the late 1990s and the first half of this decade, immigrants received relatively more criminal convictions than native Finns. Young immigrants had significantly more convictions than their Finnish contemporaries. Criminal convictions for immigrants appear to correlate with social problems and cultural factors. Iivari's study also examined the impact of racism and discrimination. Those with criminal records had experienced more racist behavior in Finland than immigrants in other studies.

Helsingin Sanomat online www.hs.fi, 16 May 2006)

Lithuanian press

Belarusian ambassador to Lithuania denies info about wave of political refugees

The new Belarusian ambassador to Lithuania, Vladimir Drazhin, has denied information that Belarus is facing a wave of political refugees leaving for neighboring countries. "I think that this information is inconsistent with reality, as I have no other data at present," Drazhin told reporters on Tuesday. Russian news agency Interfax has reported that some 100 Belarusian citizens left their country about 10 days ago and asked for political asylum in Ukraine. During a press conference in Kyiv on Monday, refugees asked Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko for a possibility for students to study in Ukraine and support in fighting for human rights in Belarus. According to information available to Dmitry Dashkevich, a Belarusian opposition representative, refugees also intend to apply for asylum in Lithuania and in Poland. However, Lithuanian border and migration service officers told Baltic News Service on Monday that the wave of political refugees had not reached Lithuania yet. Migration Department Director Almantas Gavenas told that he had not received information about Belarusian citizens seeking asylum in Lithuania in recent days. No such cases have been reported at Lithuanian border checkpoints, where refugees can ask for asylum.

(Baltic News Service, 16 May 2006)

Latvian press

Latvian Minister asks to help Belarusian students

Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs Artis Pabriks sent a letter on May 15 to all Latvian universities asking them to enroll Belarusian students who had been prohibited from pursuing their education in their home country due to their beliefs. Since the Belarusian presidential elections on March 19, authorities in the country had expelled many students from universities, the ministry said. The students had been required to attend political events.

(Baltic Times online www.baltictimes.com, 16 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Wednesday 17 May 2006

Swedish press

Government proposal against smuggling of children

"The proposal that is being debated today increases the possibility for the police to get people's travel documents directly after check-in. Targeted efforts can be made for instance on the flights that Chinese children are arriving with", writes the Swedish Minister for Migration, Barbro Holmberg, in a debate article in Swedish *Göteborgsposten* today. This information would be stored for 24 hours and comprise name and birth date but also number and type of travel document used, border crossing point at arrival and name of airport the journey had started at. In cooperation with airliner Air China on 2 September last year, Swedish authorities managed to get copies of three adolescents' travel documents and could thus sort out their identity. These are the only children that have been able to return to their families in China. Since end of 2004, 96 Chinese children have come to Stockholm Arlanda airport applying for asylum. Shortly, 90 of them have disappeared from Sweden, probably to different parts of Europe. (Sundsvalls tidning online www.st.se, 17 May 2006)

Danish press

Fogh bins racism report

Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (V) said yesterday that the report from the Council of Europe's racism commission, ECRI, which strongly criticises Denmark's immigration and integration policies, should be thrown in the trashcan. 'This report is based on nothing more than hearsay,' said the PM at his weekly press conference. 'They've heard a little bit here, a little bit there, and then put it in the report as fact. It's so full of mistakes that it can't be taken seriously.' The report claims, amongst other things, that the government's dependence on the Danish People's Party (DF) has resulted in an anti-immigration agenda and legislation that is particularly hard on minorities. Leading immigrant politician Kamal Qureshi (SF) believes that Denmark's blatant rejection of the report will affect the country's possibility of being listened to internationally when criticising other countries. (Berlinske Tidende 17 May, News ex-press translation)

Muslims look left

There would be a significant left-wing majority in parliament if it were Danish Muslims who decided the outcome of the next election. A new poll of Muslims only shows that a 'red' coalition of Social Democrats, the Socialist Peoples Party and the Unity List would grab over half of the votes of Muslims, and the Social Democrats would emerge as the big winners with 39 per cent. The current government Liberal-Conservative coalition, alongside its partners the Danish People's Party, would win no more than a collective 3.8 per cent of the vote. Election expert Hans Jørgen Nielsen of The Institute of Political Science at Copenhagen University says he isn't surprised by the findings of the new poll. 'To me it's an expression of the social and economic conditions experienced by immigrants, more than an ethnic division of society. Many Muslims in this country are

dependent upon welfare and social services and this often leads to a vote for parties on the left,' he said.

(Jyllands-Posten 17 May, News ex-press translation)

Youth knows too little about Middle East

Some young Muslim girls may be very interested in Ann Frank's diary, the journal of a young Jewish girl's life in Nazi-occupied Holland, and there are also Muslims who, alongside their classmates, visit the gas chambers of Auschwitz, but according to a new report about anti-Semitism, anti-Islamism, and the holocaust by the Danish Institute for International Studies, there are many Muslim pupils who bring the conflicts from their parents' homeland in the Middle East into the classroom. They believe that 9/11 was a Jewish conspiracy, sympathise with Hizb-ut-Tahrir, and rip Israel's flag out of their atlas. The report, based on replies from 50 educational institutions in this country, concludes that the 11th of September has radicalised many young Muslims, who are greatly influenced by the Arab media's portrayal of 9/11 and the Iraq war as 'the work of Jews.' At the same time, young peoples' knowledge of actual conditions and events in the Middle East – such as the Six Day War – is extremely lacking.

(Berlinske Tidende 17 May, News ex-press translation)

Foreign prostitutes held as slaves

Oslo has become a major destination for foreign prostitutes believed to be victims of organized crime leagues active in human trafficking. Like others in her situation, 19-year-old "Gloria" had fled poverty in Nigeria and was looking for a better life. She landed in a refugee camp in Morocco, and thought she was lucky when a man she calls "Mister" took interest in her and said he would help her get to Europe. She and several other women were smuggled over to Spain in a small boat. A bigger boat took them to Italy and from there the women eventually were sent to Norway, where police claim there's a large market of men willing to pay for sexual services. Now "Gloria" is living in a shelter in Norway, hopes to win political asylum and become a social worker.

(Aftenposten online, www.aftenposten.no 16 May 2006)

Finnish press

Thousands of people flee from Southern Sudan

According to UN refugee agency UNHCR, more than 10,000 refugees have been registered in the Kakuma refugee camp in North Kenya after the peace agreement of January 2005. At the same time 3,000 refugees have expressed their will to return home, but only 555 have returned. The situation in South Sudan remains insecure due to the conflicts between tribes, rebels and to existing landmines.

(YLE online www.yle.fi, 16 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Thursday 18 May 2006

Swedish press

Vietnamese granted residency after 9 years

A migration court in Gothenburg has granted 43-year old Vietnamese Chinh Vu Doc a permanent residence permit. His case is one of the first to be heard after the new aliens' act came into effect. The court ruled that Chinh Vu Doc would be allowed to stay because the Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket) had been lacking in its handling of the case and had not tried hard enough to get him out of the country. According to the court, the case also falls under the statute of limitations because Chinh Vu Doc has lived in Sweden for 9 years. Both the Migration Board and the Aliens Appeal Board (Utlänningsnämnden) has denied Chinh Vu Doc a residence permit several times. In 2002, Chinh Vu Doc was supposed to be deported by the police. Three years later the Migration Board interrupted the execution of the deportation when they discovered that they did not know if the action order was valid. Some time later the Appeal Board invalidated the deportation claiming that the Migration Board had not followed procedure. The Migration Board made a last attempt to deport Chinh Vu Doc by calling in the police when the court was deliberating its decision. (DN I: 13)

Greens want new asylum authority

The Green party (Miljöpartiet) wants to close the Swedish Migration Board and build a new authority to deal with asylum applications. In the refugee policy program that is presented today, the Green party's spokesman for refugee issues, Gustav Fridolin, says that they also want to make the UN Child Convention directly applicable in court as a law. Those who have waited longer than a year for final asylum decision should automatically get permanent resident visa.

(Sundsvalls tidning online www.st.se, 18 May 2006)

Danish press

Council of Europe: Fogh should be grateful

Terry Davies, General Secretary of the Council of Europe, says he is surprised at the Danish government's outright rejection of the ECRI's racism report that is highly critical of immigration and integration legislation in this country. According to Mr Davies, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (V) would be better off listening to the findings of the report instead of threatening to throw it in the trashcan. "I have to say that I'm shocked at some of the things that have reportedly been said by the Danish government," says Mr Davies in an interview with daily *Berlingske Tidende*. "The report makes it quite clear that ECRI is only passing on allegations and complaints made by Danish resident themselves. A report like this provides the possibility of clearing the air and answering criticism instead of just rejecting it".

(Berlingske Tiderne p.7, News ex-press translation 18 May 2006)

Politicians know too little about asylum conditions

Politicians have simply not enough knowledge about asylum issues to be able to take decisions about the children and their families. There is a lack of impartial investigations, says the Danish Psychologists' Association (Dansk Psykolog Forening). Chairman Roal Ulrichsen criticises the politicians' dealings with the issue for neglecting professional medical knowledge in order to focus on withholding political ideology.

(Berlingske tiderne www.berlingske.dk, 18 May 2006)

More money to asylum children

Following harsh criticism about the conditions for children at asylum centers, minister for integration Rikke Hvilshøj (V), wants to give yet 37 million Danish kroner (over 6 million USD) to improve the conditions. The intention is to further motivate the asylum seekers to return home. "I have prepared this proposal for quite some time", Rikke Hvilshøj says. She rejects that the proposal should blame the asylum centers for conditions at the asylum centers.

(Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, 18 May 2006)

Liberals do not believe in asylum investigation

"I do not give a thing for such an investigation and I would very much like you to quote me on that", said the spokesperson for integration Irene Simonsen (V), commenting an investigation showing that a big majority of the Danes want to help the rejected asylum seekers' children to a better life outside the centers. Irene Simonsen thinks that people do not understand that the issue concerns rejected refugees. "When one says asylum seekers, people think that it is about some one who is followed.[...] In reality, the biggest problem is the parents. It is the parents that have chosen that the children should sit waiting that long. And that is not the intention, because they can go back home"

(Politiken online www.politiken.dk, 18 May 2006)

Norwegian press

Low confidence in development aid

All the results that follow from Norwegian development aid shall hereafter be documented, says Danish Poul Engberg-Pedersen, director of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). All of 63 percent of the Norwegians says they do not know where the development aid goes, according to a survey from this February-March. Basically, the state provides too little information. 59 percent even lack trust in that the money reaches those who need it the most. 33 percent do not know if the authorities are doing a good job with the developmental aid budget of, 18 billion Norwegian kroner (USD 3 billion).

(Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, 18 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Friday 19 May 2006

Swedish press

Adopted EU directive breaches Refugee Convention?

The Swedish Parliament yesterday adopted an EU directive that will call on airlines to submit passenger data to the National Police Board (Rikspolisstyrelsen) immediately after check-in. The rules will apply as of 1 September and mean that airlines carrying passengers from outside the EU and Schengen must communicate details of arriving passengers, passport numbers and itinerary to the Police Board upon request. Airlines that fail to do so or submit incorrect data will face fines of up to SEK 46,000 (USD 6400). The purpose of the legislation is to tighten border controls and prevent illegal immigration and terrorism. Several of the Riksdag parties have opposed the bill, warning that the legislation will lead to an increase in human trafficking. Critics also say that the legislation breaches the UN Refugee Convention.

(Svenska dagbladet p.16, SPR translation, 19 May 2006)

Raft man deported to native Czech Republic

The man found on a raft off the coast of Sweden last month was deported to his native Czech Republic on Friday morning by Swedish authorities, police in Gothenburg have said. The man had not applied for asylum in Sweden, nor was he suspected of a crime. His identity was confirmed a few days ago by Interpol. The man is a Czech citizen, born in 1957. He was put on a plane at Gothenburg's Landvetter airport, with police and staff from the prison service in attendance.

(The Local online www.thelocal.se, 19 May 2006)

Refugees can get own medical care center in Gothenburg

A special medical care center will be set up in the Gothenburg area for refugees who have been granted asylum via the temporary legislation. The center will get started already in 2006. Approximately 1,100 persons in Gothenburg have been granted permanent residence visa by via the temporary asylum legislation. There are fears that this group of refugees, whereof many have been living in hiding for a long time, is in big need of medical treatment.

(Göteborgsposten online www.gp.se, 19 May 2006)

Danish press

Pre-school integration plan unveiled

The newest integration plan intends to mix bilingual children in nurseries and daycares to counteract ethnic divisions. Some 85 nurseries and daycares in the Copenhagen area will be receiving a letter on Friday containing plans for mixing 'white' and 'black' children in the municipality's childcare institutions. "It's not about an enforced quota, but a voluntary offer to ensure a better mixing of children. That will benefit all children, also ethnic Danes," said Bo Asmus Kjeldsgaard, deputy major for youth affairs. The 'Diversity in Copenhagen's Daycares' is a part of the Socialist People's Party integration strategy, and has a budget of DKK 6.6 million (USD 1.13 million).

(The Copenhagen post online www.copenhagenpost.dk, 19 May 2006)

Interview with UNWRA:s General Commissioner

Daily newspaper Berlingske tiderne today features an interview with the General Commissioner for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Karin Koning AbuZayd. The article, headlined "Suddenly 25,000 people asked for help" stresses that the bill for the international economic boycott of the Hamas government is passed on to the Palestinian people. Karin Koning AbuZayd is on a two day visit to Denmark as part of a tour to UNWRA:s largest donors.

(Berlingske tiderne online www.berglinske.dk, 19 May 2006)

Parents of asylum children need help

The government wants to pay for the treatment of asylum children, but it is hard to help the children if not the parents are treated as well, experts say. Children can get help with their traumas. Parents have to make do with 12 visits to a psychologist. This is just not enough and the help for asylum children will not be of use, if adults remain traumatized, several experts say. Although praxis is that children should not be helped without including the parents, this has been going on for many years. According to the experts it is most often the parents' situation that decides whether the children will be doing well, but that it normally is virtually impossible for parents to get the help that is needed.

(Politiken online www.politiken.dk, 19 May 2006)

Norwegian press

Asylum to homosexual Iranians under criticism

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) gave all Iranian asylum seekers residency if applicants claimed to be homosexual. The UDI granted asylum even if the testimony often had little backing or appeared to be patently false, newspaper Verdens gang (VG) reports. The information emerged in connection with documents submitted to an investigatory commission examining how the UDI functioned in the period under former Minister of Local Government and Regional Development Erna Solberg until today. While UDI leadership assured Solberg that asylum seekers were being handled on an individual case-by-case basis, and keeping in mind the danger of persecution in their homeland, caseworkers were instructed to grant asylum "as long as the applicant gives being homosexual/lesbian as the reason". According to VG, UDI representatives have presented a range of cases in the Iran asylum affair where caseworkers clearly note their skepticism towards the applicant testimony given, but asylum was granted. Homosexuality is punishable in Iran, but according to experts the demands of proof are extremely high, making punishment rare in practice.

(Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, 18 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Saturday 20 – Monday 22 May 2006

Swedish press

The Green Party wants modified refugee politics

The Green Party demands that before the next mandate period the Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) should be removed and a new first instance for the trial of refugee's asylum cases should be implemented. Sweden should open its borders, according to the party.

(Göteborgsposten in Radio Sweden online, www.sr.se, 22 May 2006)

Municipalities takes responsibility from Migration Board

On 1 July the municipalities will take over the responsibility from the Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) for many of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Time is limited and many of them are forced into temporary homes, according to the Swedish Radio (Ekot). Despite the fact that the asylum housing facilities will close in a month there are no agreements in place with the municipalities concerned.

(SVT online www.svt.se, 22 May 2006)

Danish press

ECRI dismisses critique

Eva Smith from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, ECRI, dismisses much of the critique by the Danish government directed towards ECRI's report concerning the situation for refugees and immigrants in Denmark. The Danish government lists 24 points which it thinks are faulty in the report. Smith dismisses most of them. "It is annoying that there are two faults [in the report] but the government can not come around that we have some problems with racism and discrimination in Denmark," she said.

(Source: Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, 21 May 2006)

Bosnian refugees having break-downs

Even though the Bosnian refugees in Denmark are described as well integrated an increasing number of them are suffering a break-down because of traumatic memories, according to a report from the Centre for Rehabilitation and Research for the Victims of Torture, RCT. They have fought to be able to have an everyday-life but that has only worked for certain periods of time. Additionally, the fear of being sent back Bosnia-Herzegovina affects these people.

(Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, 22 May 2006)

Norwegian press

Refugee Council returns to Darfur

The authorities in the war-torn Sudanese region of Darfur have agreed to allow the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to return to the province to resume its work in Darfur's largest refugee camp. This was announced by the UN Emergency

Relief Coordinator, Norway's Jan Egeland. In April, NRC's mandate to work in Darfur was not renewed by the authorities, and the Norwegian aid organization had to leave the refugee camp which is the home to 100,000 internally displaced persons. "As soon as we get the official go-ahead, we are ready to return. Our people are waiting in the capital, Khartoum, and will be able to return to the Kalma Camp immediately," said NRC's spokesperson Astrid Sehl.

(NRK in Norway Post online www.norwaypost.no, 20 May 2006)

UDI 'broke the law' - new director resigns

The Directorate of Immigration (*Utlendingsdirektoratet*), UDI, violated both the law and political directives when it granted residency permits to nearly 200 Iraqi Kurds last fall. A commission that has probed the controversial permits blasted the former head of UDI, and his successor has resigned. The commission unveiled its findings Monday morning, and they were harsh in their evaluation of practices at the agency, which was headed at the time by Trygve Nordby. He later resigned to take over as head of the Norwegian Red Cross and was succeeded by UDI's second-in-command, Manuela Ramin-Osmundsen. The commission held Nordby primarily responsible for the illegal granting of the permits, but concluded that Osmundsen was aware of the situation and failed to object. She has now resigned. It later emerged that around 50 Iranian asylum seekers also were granted residency in Norway after they had claimed they were homosexual and would be persecuted back home in Iran. Among the Iraqi Kurds granted residence permits was the mother-in-law of Mullah Krekar, Norway's most controversial refugee who has been deemed a threat to Norway's national security and is appealing an expulsion order. Ramin-Osmundsen's resignation comes as a disappointment to those who were encouraged to see a woman and immigrant herself rise to the top post at UDI. Ramin-Osmundsen is critical of the commission's report.

(Sources: Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, VG online www.vg.no, the Norway Post online www.norwaypost.no, TV2 online www.tv2.no, 22 May 2006)

Icelandic press

Red Cross investigates poverty in Iceland

Handicapped persons, single mothers, immigrants, the aged and the mentally disabled are the main groups afflicted by poverty in Iceland, according to a report published by the Icelandic Red Cross this weekend and which is covered in all the main media.

(Iceland Review online www.icelandreview.com, 22 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Tuesday 23 May 2006

Swedish press

Adult refugees classified as children

Every year 300-400 asylum-seeking children enter Sweden without an adult companion. Last March the Swedish Parliament decided that municipalities would take over responsibility for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from the Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) starting 1 July. The goal was to refine the Board's role so that it would no longer have the dual role of managing accommodation and making decisions regarding residence permits. Several municipalities have written to Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Barbro Holmberg, criticizing the tight timeframe. Christina Malmgren, working for a housing facility for asylum-seeking children says that municipalities lack organization and housing. Another problem is the change in rules regarding the establishment of the asylum-seekers' age. The new rules can lead to several adults who enter the country alone being classified as children and placed in homes meant for small children.

(Svenska Dagbladet p.6, 23 March 2006. SPR translation)

Danish press

DF politician backs down

The Danish People's Party's spokesman on education, Martin Henriksen, has been forced to back down from his public statement, made with reference to a court case in Slagelse involving immigrants in a death of honor murder, that "...we will rejoice when these men are deported to face torture and political persecution". Mr Henriksen said yesterday that he regretted his actions and the statement would be removed from his website. "It was just an expression of the frustration I was feeling at the time about this murder case in Slagelse and wasn't meant as a political proposal," he said yesterday. (Politiken p.3, 23 May 2006)

No consequences following Henriksen's statement

Martin Henriksen's comments on deporting immigrants to face torture and persecution are not expressions of the politics of the Danish People's Party, and the comments will not have any consequences, according to the party's Deputy Chairman Peter Skaarup. He said that the statements will not affect Henriksen's position as the party's spokesman on education.

(Jyllands-Posten online www.jp.dk, Politiken online www.politiken.dk, Berlingske Tidende online www.berlingske.dk, 23 May 2006)

Amnesty has its eyes on Denmark

Amnesty International mentions that even Denmark can be criticized for their breach of human rights in their fight against terrorism and for their bad treatment of asylum-seekers. Amnesty International published their annual report today. "The fact that Denmark is not mentioned in the annual report is not mean that the situation is not open

to criticism,” said Lars Normann Jørgensen, Secretary General of the Danish section of Amnesty International.

(Berlingske Tidende online www.berlingske.dk, 23 May 2006)

Norwegian press

Red Cross mum on charges against its secretary-general

The scandal at the Directorate of Immigration (*Utlendingsdirektoratet*), UDI, immigration puts the Norwegian Red Cross in an awkward position. Trygve G. Nordby won the top spot at the Norwegian Red Cross last fall, after its former Secretary General, Jonas Gahr-Støre, was nominated as a Foreign Minister. Nordby is charged with snubbing instructions from government ministers, breaking laws and overlooking UDI's own regulations when he approved residence permits for 197 Iraqi Kurds. Questions are raised about whether Nordby, who is also under police investigation, is an appropriate person to lead the Norwegian Red Cross. Its chairman -- former Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg -- has refused to comment. Ironically, one of Stoltenberg's fellow board members is Manuela Ramin-Osmundsen, who succeeded Nordby at UDI and felt compelled to resign from her post in the wake of the UDI scandal.

(Source: Aftenposten online, 23 May 2006)

Stop sick foreigners at the border

In a proposal to regulations to the new Aliens' Act the Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, Bjarne Håkon Hanssen (Ap), wants to open up for the possibility to deny sick foreigners to enter Norway because for public health's sake. The Department of Labour and Social Inclusion said that it is not modeled in a way that means that the officials do not have a duty to deny entry to foreigners they believe are sick but only that they will have the possibility to do so.

(Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, 23 May 2006)

Immigrants unemployed

While the job market is in desperate need for manpower a survey made by the Nordic employment agency Proffice states that the employment rate among immigrants are three times as high as among the rest of the population. “Many business managers ignore measures against discrimination,” said administrative director Per Bergerud from Proffice.

(NA24 in TV2 online www.TV2.no, 23 May 2006)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Wednesday 24 May 2006

Swedish press

Amnesty criticises Sweden

In its 2005 report, Amnesty International, AI, criticizes Sweden for its refugee policies. Sweden's treatment of asylum-seekers in two cases has also been criticised by the Court of Justice of the European Communities. The first is the case of a Bangladeshi woman who sought asylum together with her daughter in 2000. The Swedish authorities believed that she had been sent to prison, tortured, and raped by a policeman. Despite this, they were deported to Bangladesh. The other case involves a Syrian family. The man was sentenced to death in absentia. However, the Swedish authorities asserted that Syria would try the case again and therefore the man did not need protection. In the end, the man was able to stay in Sweden. AI also criticises Sweden's practice of immediately deporting asylum-seekers whose claims are "obviously unfounded". At a press conference yesterday, Madelaine Seidlitz of AI also criticised the Swedish government for not responding to AI's letter regarding the two Egyptians deported in 2001. (Svenska Dagbladet p. 6, Dagens Nyheter p. 8, SPR translation; Radio Sweden online www.sr.se, 24 May 2006)

Two years since he took his life

Today, it is exactly two years ago since Kiann Fatemeh Ghaemzade took his own life at the Carlsund refugee centre in Sweden. Kiann was a transsexual Iranian. He was a teacher, politically active and deeply critical to the Iranian regime's view on women. He came to Sweden in September 2001 and immediately applied for asylum because of persecution based on his transsexuality and political views. His asylum application was denied. In February 2004 it was decided he was going to be deported. The Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) claimed that 'it is known to the Migration Board that it is allowed in Iran to perform a sex change and that it exists' and that 'solely the fact that you are characterized by a male identity does not act as probable reasons that you upon return would risk punishment by the authorities'. (City Stockholm debate pages, 24 May 2006)

Danish press

War on ghettos

Copenhagen is slowly developing into a city divided along social and ethnic lines, where immigrants and welfare recipients are huddled together in ghettos whilst 'white' Danes create pockets of prosperity in more attractive areas – and local Copenhagen politicians are now determined to do something about it. A centre-left coalition at Copenhagen Town Hall, consisting of the Social Democrats, the Unity List, the Socialist People's Party and the Social Liberals, yesterday unveiled what they called the 'most ambitious integration plan ever unveiled by a local council.' According to Integration 'supremo' Jakob Hougaard, unless something is done very quickly, a new proletariat of poorly educated immigrants with no work will dominate the capital.

(Politiken p. 4, NE translation; Berlingske Tidende online www.berlingske.dk, 24 May 2006)

Norwegian press

In the name of the Red Cross

The reputation of the Red Cross is in danger with Trygve Nordby as the person in charge, according to sources that NRK has been in contact with. "Those who hired him should have examined more closely how he performed his job as director of the Directorate of Immigration (*Utlendingsdirektoratet*), UDI," said Trond Blindheim, principal of the Oslo based School of Marketing. Further, he believes that it can be negative for the Red Cross having his successor Manuela Ramin-Osmundsen being a board member of the organization.

(NRK online www.nrk.no, 24 May 2006)

Fired if not resigned

Manuela Ramin-Osmundsen would have got fired if she would not have resigned, according to sources TV2 has been in contact with. Ramin-Osmundsen herself has claimed she had experienced unfair treatment during the process and that there would have been no reasons for her to be dismissed. She has been offered a new job in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(TV2 online www.tv2.no, 24 May 2006)

Latvian press

Repatriation bill irresponsible

The Special minister for society integration, Karina Petersone from Latvia's Way, said that the repatriation bill prepared by the nationalist alliance Fatherland and Freedom (FF)/LNNK is an irresponsible step. FF/LNNK parliament faction has proposed a repatriation and emigration bill, which would promote Latvians to return to the country and the disloyal people who have come to Latvia during its Soviet occupation years to emigrate. FF/LNNK believes that the repatriation law adopted in 1995 ignores the fact that about 700,000 citizens of the former Soviet Union have come to Latvia during its occupation years. Many of them still do not want or are not able to integrate in the society and learn the Latvian language.

(Baltic News Service, 24 May 2006)

On 25-30 May there will be no Baltic and Nordic Headlines sent out. Major news during the break will be included in the 31 May issue.

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

Thursday 25 – Wednesday 31 May 2006

Swedish press

Deportee escaped at Stockholm Arlanda airport

An Iraqi man who was to be deported from Sweden escaped this morning from the Swedish Migration Board's personal at Arlanda's check-in desk. The man had been transported from the Migration Board's facilities to be put on a plane to Düsseldorf, when he suddenly ran away and out of the terminal. He ran towards a parking lot and has not been seen since. Police has looked for him in the area, without result. The man is now declared wanted.

(Radio P4 Uppland online www.sr.se, 31 may 2006)

Danish press

EU: Danish immigration regulations invalid

The EU Commission has declared strict Danish immigration legislation concerning residency via family reunification invalid, thereby paving the way for hundreds of Danish citizens with foreign spouses, who have been forced to live in Sweden, to relocate to this country. According to the Commission, Denmark has misinterpreted legislation that ensures free movement within the EU and provides EU citizens with the right to reside in another EU country with their foreign-born (non EU) spouse.

(Jyllands-Posten/News ex-press, 27 May 2006)

Writing competition for immigrants add a new accent to Danish literary voices

The borders of Danish literature have been opened to immigration with a writing contest sponsored by two of the nation's oldest and largest producers of the written word. The idea for a literature competition for people with a different cultural background than Danish came about after daily newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* ran a series of articles that cast a light on the lack of foreign voices in Danish media. "In neighbouring countries, such as in Sweden and in Britain, there are lots of authors with different ethnic backgrounds. We don't have that in Denmark," explained Jacob Høyer, cultural editor for *Berlingske Tidende*. "We are missing out on some interesting stories concerning life, love, loss, globalisation, and the meeting between Islam and Western cultures."

(Copenhagen post online www.cphpost.dk, 29 May 2006)

Immigrants commit more crimes

Whilst the number of crimes committed by ethnic Danes has fallen slightly over the past three years, there has been a sharp rise in criminality by immigrants. New figures show that the "crime rate index" for male immigrants from non-Western countries was 36 percent higher than the average for the rest of the male population and 63 percent higher for violent crime. Out of 143.000 people found guilty by the courts in 2004, 12.4 percent had an immigrant background, even though they only make up 8.2 percent of the population.

(Politiken/News ex-press, 31 May 2006)

Afghans will be removed

Oslo's city council will remove the roughly 60 hunger striking Afghans lying outside the capital's Domkirken (Cathedral), protesting their failure to gain asylum in Norway. Ehsani Farhad was one of the first to begin a hunger strike, and the protest has gradually gained strength. "We are not ready to move. If the police come they will have to remove us by force," spokesman Zahir Athari said. The Norwegian government, in cooperation with Afghan authorities and the UNHCR have organized a return program for the approximately 2,000 Afghan refugees in Norway without permission to stay. Less than ten refugees have taken the offer. Oslo city council leader Erling Lae told Aftenposten that the council was now asking police to remove the demonstrators, pointing out only that there is a single toilet for them, and that is closed at night. (Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no, 30 and 31 May 2006)

Would rather die than go home

The attempt of sending Afghans home has been a failure. Only three have said yes to the Norwegian authorities' voluntary return programme. Another group has started a hunger strike in protest against the possibility of a forced return to Afghanistan. Divisional director Sissil Pettersen at the Department of Employment and Comprehension is hoping more people will use the offer of a voluntary return. In a party tent outside Oslo Cathedral about 20 young Afghan men are hunger striking. They say they would rather die in Norway than going back to Afghanistan. There they will be killed anyway, they say. The banners around the camp tell Afghanistan is an unsafe country. The hunger strike is a last desperate attempt to avoid being sent back to Kabul with the police.

(Norway post online www.norwaypost.no, 30 May 2006)

Wants a new migration department

After the Graver commission's report came on Monday, 46 journalists wanted an interview with Trygve G. Nordby, the former director of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). The report states that the UDI acted against the immigration laws in order to give residence permit to Iraqis. Nordby does not regret what he has done. "I disagree with the Graver commissions' interpretation of the laws. I was very sure of what we did, and I still believe we were right in using the humanitarian paragraph".

(Norway post online www.norwaypost.no, 29 May 2006)

Another UDI boss steps aside

A departmental director at Norway's immigration agency, who admitted in writing that the agency's liberal interpretation of asylum rules "stretched the boundaries" of the law, is leaving her post. Paula Tolonen is stepping aside as head of UDI's asylum division, after facing severe criticism in an investigation of the agency. Former UDI boss Trygve Nordby defends his judgment in granting residence permits to scores of Iraqi Kurds. The main focus of the report was the granting of residence permits to nearly 200 asylum seekers from northern Iraq. Tolonen was heavily involved in the granting of the permits, which defied instructions from the government ministry at the time. Nordby has defended the permit-granting and denied that he and his fellow UDI officials had their own liberal political agenda. In interviews over the weekend, Nordby also defended Tolonen.

(Aftenposten online www.aftenposten.no , 29 May 2006)

More will get asylum in Norway

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) reports that 64 percent of asylum seekers will get residence permit this year. Last year the number was 45 percent. The numbers are given in an internal note previously secret from the public. The note states that 64 percent of the expected 5.500 asylum seekers in 2006 and 56 percent of the asylum seekers in 2007 will receive permanent residence permit. UDI states that it gives residence permits to an increasing number of people because a larger amount of the applicants are real seekers. In reality the number of asylum seekers this year and next year will be reduced. "Less people have groundless asylum applications now than previously", says communication director Agnar Kaarbø at UDI. Numbers show that most persons getting asylum in Norway last year came from Somalia and Eritrea or were stateless. Around 365.000 persons from foreign countries have permanent residence permit in Norway.

(Norway post online www.norwaypost.no, 29 May 2006)

Finnish press

Amnesty report: Treatment of refugees become harsher in EU countries

In its recently published report, Amnesty International accuses the developed countries for using security needs resulting from the so called war against terrorism, as an excuse for violating human rights. The agency states that human rights violations were reported in 11 EU member states last year. Especially the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers has become harsher in the EU member states.

(Yle online www.yle.fi, 30 May 2006)

Baltic press

Russian State Duma chairman raises issue of Baltic Russians

Chairman of the Russian State Duma Boris Gryzlov once again called attention to what he said was violation of minority rights in the Baltic countries. "As before, Russia does not see Latvia and Estonia listening to recommendations presented by the United Nations, the Council for Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe," Russian news agency *Interfax* reported Gryzlov as saying. He said Estonia and Latvia should be required to ensure a solution to mass statelessness, a problem unprecedented for Europe, and ensure political and socio-economic rights to ethnic minorities. Plans of the state integration program set the aim of at least 5.000 persons annually naturalized in the period 2004-2007; last year the number of those granted Estonian citizenship by naturalization amounted to 7.072.

(Baltic News Service, 29 May 2006)

Estonian press

Refugee registration centre to start work in Estonian capital

Estonia's interior minister and the head of the Citizenship and Migration Board will today open a centre for the registration of asylum-seekers in Tallinn. The purpose of the centre is to accept applications from asylum seekers process them and make decisions. From now on all proceedings of the asylum process can be carried out in one place with the help of modern technology. The board now has interviewing rooms meeting today's requirements at its disposal. The facility provides asylum seekers with a separate waiting room, rest room and accommodation. The centre will start accepting applications for

asylum and conducting interviews with applicants. Asylum seekers have as a rule stayed at the refugee centre of the Social Affairs Ministry which is situated at Illuka in the north-eastern Ida-Virumaa. The long distance and problems with public transport were among the reasons why the Citizenship and Migration Board established the Tallinn centre. Twelve people are at present seeking asylum in Estonia. Three applications are being processed by the citizenship authority and nine, in a court proceeding.
(Baltic News Service, 25 May 2006)

Lithuanian press

More than quarter Lithuanian people view immigrants as national threat

Over a quarter of Lithuanian people consider immigrants to be posing threat to the state. An opinion poll conducted by market analysis and research group RAIT on March 30 - April 2 has showed that 27.5 percent of the country's population believe that immigrants are a threat to Lithuania. Another 38.7 percent of the people polled are positive that immigrants are crime-prone, thus adding to the country's overall crime rate. Yet another 46.8 percent of the respondents say that Lithuania is a recipient country for a lot of immigrants and 52.9 percent believe that immigrants represent cheap labour. The survey has showed that the people in Lithuania lack information about the immigration situation in Lithuania. More than one half of the people polled believed that the immigration flow was immense, however, according to the Lithuanian Statistics, foreigners account for as little as 1 percent of the population total.
(Baltic News Service, 31 May 2006)

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