

Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Thursday 30 October to Friday 31 October 2008

The deteriorating circumstances in the Eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo have been widely covered in all of the Nordic Countries. On Friday 31 October, there were reports of a cease-fire apparently holding, even though the humanitarian situation remained difficult, media say.

Denmark

Cease-fire holds?

Cease-fire seems to hold around the city of Goma in Eastern DR Congo. The situation is tense, but there seems to be no fighting. Rebel leader Laurent Nkunda says fighting has been stopped for humanitarian reasons, but the situation is so volatile that aid organisations can't help the fleeing people.

Earlier there was panic in Goma, as people were trying to escape in all directions and the city was being looted.

(Dr, 30 October, DR 31 October

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Udland/2008/10/30/105421.htm>,

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Udland/2008/10/31/104721.htm>)

Finland

45 000 fleeing IDP camp

UNHCR sources say that 45 000 people have fled a camp for Internally Displaced Persons, just outside of Goma, when they saw government troops retiring. UN forces say they are in control of airport and other strategic points but they are finding it very hard to stop fighting from becoming a full-fledged war.

(YLE, 30 October,

<http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=299318&search=Kongo>)

New asylum-centres in the Northern parts of Finland

The cities of Kemi and Pudasjärvi will start to receive refugees and asylum-seekers during November. There are around 40 places for children initially, but if needed, 100 children can be accommodated. The number of asylum-seekers has increased this year, by the end of September around 2100 asylum-seekers had arrived, compared to 1500 last year. Especially the number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum has increased.

(YLE, 31 October <http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/oikea/id106151.html>)

Norway

Humanitarian catastrophe impending

While tens of thousands of people are fleeing, international efforts to get the parties talking are made. More UN-soldiers as well as a EU-force have been mentioned as alternatives to stop the forthcoming catastrophe. The UN is patrolling the streets but cannot stop snipers and looters who have emptied hospitals from medicine and valuables. Thousands of people are fleeing from the country, at the same time residents of Goma are fleeing the city. Many aid organizations have now left the city. (NRK, 31 October, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/utenriks/1.6288904>)

New reception centre for children

A new reception centre for unaccompanied 15-18 years olds seeking asylum is to be opened in Nordland, Sandnessjøen. This is the first reception centre of it's kind in that area, it will open it's doors on 30 December and expects to accommodate 30 persons. (NRK, 28 October <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/nordland/1.6284250>)

Sweden

Guiding rule on unaccompanied children from Somalia

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Somalia capital Mogadishu are allowed to stay in Sweden, the Migration Board decides in a guiding rule that affects around 100 children. Since last year the number of unaccompanied minors has doubled, so far 243 have applied for asylum. The majority come from Mogadishu.

(SVT 30 October,

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1295582&lid=is_search527895&ipos=0&queryArt527895=asyl*&sortOrder527895=3&doneSearch=true&sd=47225&from=siteSearch&pageArt527895=0)

Number of unaccompanied children rising

The Migration Board raises its estimate on number of unaccompanied children who seek asylum. The board now estimates that the number of unaccompanied minors will be around 1400 persons. Almost 80 per cent of these children come from Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan, the majority from Iraq. The trend has been rising the last two years. The Migration Board will now need around 300 more places to place the children.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 30 October,

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1970757.svd)

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

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Tuesday 28 October to Wednesday 29 October 2008

Finland

Police in Tampere stopped deportation of Iranian Kurd

The police stopped Ibrahim Palani, a Kurd from Iran, from being sent back to Iran after his asylum-application had been rejected. Palani has filed a new asylum-application on the grounds that a new law proposal in Iran states that Muslims who have abandoned their faith can be sentenced to death. Palani has converted into Christianity. The Lutheran church, the Pentecostal Church in Finland as well as the Christian Democrats have pleaded to stop the deportation of Palani, who now is very relieved and glad to be able to stay.

(Helsingin Sanomat 28 October 2008,

<http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Tampereen+poliisi+keskeytti+kristityn+Iranin+kurdin+karkotuksen/1135240622244>)

Norway

Asylum-hunters to limit number of asylum-seekers

Nine special representatives of the Police and the Foreign Ministry will be sent out to asylum-seekers' countries of origin as well as along strategic routes of people-smuggling to Norway. The task of these representatives is to limit the amount of asylum-seekers. All of them will have diplomatic status. The representatives will assist in sending rejected asylum-seekers back to their respective countries. The vast majority lack passports and other important documentation, and without these documents the original country will not accept them. Ingrid Wirum, chief of The Foreign Department of the Police, says special representatives have been placed out before with good results. She says they are important in achieving the goal of sending back 3400 asylum-seekers, about 25 per cent of the total, this year. The representatives will also gather information to expose people-smugglers.

(Aftenposten 29 October 2008, Verdens Gang 29 October 2008,

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2739144.ece>,

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=521818>)

NB: This story was also covered in Denmark

Berlingske Tidende Jyllandsposten 29 October 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081029/verden/810290328/>,

[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1498095&eceExpr=asyl*"%20/>&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1498095&eceExpr=asyl*)

Actions to limit immigration only next year

It will take a long time to implement the Governments actions to limit the number of asylum-seekers, since many of the actions require changes in legislation. The controversial suggestion that under-age asylum-seekers risk being thrown out when they turn 18 will also be sent to hearing and will not come into force on this year's side. Some of the changes will be implemented soon, for example new instructions to the Directorate of Immigration on persons from South Somalia and Iraq, who will be individually assessed in the future. The Directorate of Immigration and the Police will also move in together to enable faster handling of applications from Iraq. So far this year half the applicants from Iraq have been rejected.

(Aftenposten 29 October 2008,

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2739145.ece>)

Sweden

Devastating floods

180 people have died and more than 10,000 have had to leave their homes after recent days devastating floods in Yemen, says UNHCR. Numbers of those hit by the disaster are, however, hard to confirm, according to UNHCR spokesperson, as parts of the country still are difficult to access. Around 2,000 homes, electricity, phones lines, roads and water resources have been destroyed. UNHCR has sent trucks with water, mosquito nets and other necessary utilities. Yemen is one of the world's poorest countries and struggles with rebels and disturbances in parts of the country and large influx of Somali refugees.

(Svenska Dagbladet 28 October 2008, Sydsvenskan 28 October 2008,

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1958729.svd,

<http://sydsvenskan.se/varlden/article383593.ece>)

Tens of thousands fleeing fighting

Fighting between Tutsi rebels and government forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo has forced around 30,000 people flee according to UNHCR. The rebels have taken the town Rutshuru and the United Nations is evacuating aid workers from the city. Eye witnesses' report of tens of thousands of people fleeing on foot and UNHCR spokesperson for refugee camp near Goma describes the situation as chaotic.

(Svenska Dagbladet 28 October 2008, Sydsvenska Dagbladet 28 October 2008,

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1956231.svd,

<http://sydsvenskan.se/varlden/article383577.ece>)

NB: This story was also covered in Norway and Finland

Dagbladet 28 October 2008, Verdens Gang 28 October 2008, Helsingin Sanomat 28 October. <http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2008/10/28/551903.html>,

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=521787>

<http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/artikkeli/Tuhannet+pakenevat+Kongon+taisteluita/1135240598460>

Men smuggled to Sweden disappeared

The sixteen men that were found walking along the motorway in Halland on Friday have now disappeared. The men, who said they were Kurds from Iran and Iraq, had been

taken to a reception-centre outside of Göteborg and been informed of how to apply for asylum. None of the men had any identity documents and had all stated they were heading for Norway and Finland.

(Göteborgsposten 28 October 2008,

<http://www.gp.se/gp/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=360&a=454554>)

Sweden deports to Greece in spite of UN 'no'

In opposition to UNHCR guidelines the Migration Court of Appeal decided in a precedent setting decision that adult asylum-seekers are to be sent back to Greece as according to the Dublin II Regulation. UNHCR does not consider the Greek asylum system to be able to ensure the legal safeguards of asylum-seekers and has called upon EU countries not to send asylum-seekers back to Greece. The Migration Court of Appeals, however, argues that Greece is safe as it has a new law for asylum-seekers in place and that UNHCR is working with authorities in the asylum process. UNHCR spokesperson for the Nordic and Baltic Countries Hanne Mathisen says that though UNHCR is working with Greek authorities and also through the EU to reach a common asylum policy at a high level, there is much left to do.

(Dagens Nyheter 29 October 2008, SR Ekot 29 October 2008,

<http://www.sr.se/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=2406902>)

Record development budget creates fight

Since the year 2000 Sweden's spending on development aid has risen from SKr 14 billion to SKr 34 billion. The reason for this is that Sweden has approved an amendment whereby 1% of GDP is set aside for development aid. The economic slowdown may provide an argument to do away with the 1% target but political opposition is not about the target, but the way in which the funds are used. The opposition argues that more and more development aid goes to debt write-offs, refugee costs and embassy costs and less and less to fighting poverty. Gunilla Carlsson, Minister for Development Cooperation, defends the government's spending and that fact that debt write-offs are included in development aid. She also points out that the reason refugee costs have increased is due to the increase in refugees. And, the fact that certain Swedish embassies are paid for with development aid is nothing unusual.

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

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Saturday 25 October to Monday 27 October 2008

Denmark

46 demonstrators arrested at tear gas-filled demonstration

The demonstration on Saturday against the Sandholm Red Cross camp for asylum-seekers was given much attention in Danish media both before and after the protests. It was the group 'Close the Camp' (Luk Lejren) that arranged the demonstration against the camp that according to protestors legitimises the government's 'racist asylum policy'. Many of those staying in the camp moved to another location in anticipation of the demonstration. 1,500 demonstrators showed up and it was when they stormed the fences around the camp that the police used tear gas. 46 persons were arrested and four of them have been taken into custody. 'Close the Camp' said on Sunday that the demonstration was a success as it put the asylum-seekers and the circumstances under which they live on the agenda. Criticism has been raised against that claim, saying that it will only gain the Danish People's Party. The debate online was intense after the protests.

(Berlingske Tidende 27 October 2008, Politiken 26 October 2008, Berlingske Tidende 26 October 2008, DR 25 October 2008, Berlingske Tidende 25 October 2008.

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081025/danmark/81025024/>,
<http://politiken.dk/indland/article588507.ece>,
<http://politiken.dk/indland/article588450.ece>,
<http://politiken.dk/indland/article588501.ece>,
<http://politiken.dk/indland/article588521.ece>,
<http://politiken.dk/indland/article588477.ece>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081026/danmark/810260306/>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081026/danmark/810260306/>,
<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/10/25/142703.htm>,
<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/10/25/180000.htm>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081025/danmark/81025018/>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081025/danmark/81025014/>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081025/danmark/81025012/>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081025/danmark/81025011/>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081025/danmark/81025008/>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081025/danmark/81025004/>)

NB: Above story was also covered in Norway and Sweden

Aftenposten 25 October 2008, Verdens Gang 25 October, Dagens Nyheter 25 October 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 25 October 2008, Sydsvenska Dagbladet 25 October 2008,
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/uriks/article2733666.ece>,
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=538710>,

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=844274>,
http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1944827.svd,
<http://sydsvenskan.se/danmark/article382784.ece>

Denmark houses 18 unwelcome foreigners

Denmark houses 18 unwelcome foreigners that cannot be deported as they risk torture in their home countries. It is against UN rules to send someone back to a place where they risk being tortured. Six of those waiting to be deported have been sentenced for heavy crimes and some are suspected for war crimes and for crimes against humanity. (Berlingske Tidende 27 October 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081027/politik/810270319/>)

Norway

200,000 have fled in Eastern Congo

During the past two months 200.000 persons have fled their homes in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, new figures show. The situation is now worse than ever before since the the war officially ended five years ago, different aid organizations say. Most of the persons who have fled are moving within the region of Kivu, where up to two million persons are displaced, but several thousands have also crossed the border to Uganda the last few days. UNHCR is planning to set up camps to accommodate 100.000 persons in the near future. The unrest in the east of DR Congo has led to fears of a new war breaking out.

(VG 24 October 2008, Dagsavisen 26 October 2008,

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=538649>,
<http://www.dagsavisen.no/utenriks/article377027.ece>)

Few Norwegians want to work for the UN

Under tens of years Norway has been one of the most important UN-donors, but few Norwegians are interested in working for the organisation, so few that UNHCR now is putting in extra effort to recruit more Norwegians. Only 20 out of more than 6,000 staff at UNHCR are Norwegian nationals. Nada Merheb, Head of Career Planning Unit says in an interview that UNHCR wants not only Norwegian funds, but an input of values and ideas, and for Norwegians to play a role in the organisation.

(Verden på L rdag 25 October 2008,

http://www.nrk.no/tjenester/nrk_nettradio/3220264.html?kanal=p1)

Negotiations on return treaty with Iraq

Rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers, who Norwegian authorities have not been able to deport, have for years been a dilemma for Norwegian politicians. Norwegian authorities have nonetheless for long avoided discussing a return treaty to Iraq with Iraqi authorities. In May this year, the first contact was taken. By then, Sweden had already had a return treaty for three months. The effect of Sweden's return treaty with Iraq was immediate – drastically cutting down the number of Iraq asylum-seekers in the country. In contrast, only 30 to 50 Iraqi criminals have been deported from Norway and Iraqis are the largest group of new asylum-seekers in 2008. As one of the 13 measures introduced last month, the return treaty is designed to decrease the number of asylum-seekers coming to Norway.

(Aftenposten 25 October 2008,
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2732833.ece>)

Asylum centre seeks 'Woman with balls'

The Transit Asylum centre Nordbybråten placed an ad in Aftenposten 16 October, where they were looking for a "woman with balls" to work at the centre. The centre seeks women with a background in the police or as security guards. The Norwegian Asylum-seekers Association says the ad may seem like a parody but that it reflects the view of the centre's management that emphasizes guarding and keeping the asylum-seekers in order rather than creating a pleasant environment. The centre's manager Ole Morten Lyng says that a transit centre is a work environment where you must be prepared to handle upset persons, but that they will refrain from using words referring to genitalia in their ads in the future.

(Verdens Gang 25 October 2008,
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=538719>)

Sweden

Risk of female mutilation gives right to asylum

The Migration Board decided to grant a one-year old girl from Eritrea asylum as she risks female mutilation if she goes back, in spite of the fact that female mutilation is illegal in Eritrea. This is a practice-changing decision, meaning that the risk of female mutilation is considered to be gender-based persecution and that persons at risk have the right to protection in Sweden.

(SVT 24 October 2008,
http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1290118&lid=is_search549588&lp_os=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Female refugees and Swedish legal safeguards

Swedish Radio's Konflikt broadcast a programme on Saturday focusing on female asylum-seekers and sexual and gender based violence as a ground for asylum. Two women were interviewed, one from Belarus and one from Kongo. The woman from Belarus was arrested for her political involvement and raped by uniformed police. She is now wanted in her home country but her asylum claim has been rejected in Sweden. In the studio Cecilia Gyllin-Lindqvist from the Migration Board, Maria Bexelius from Swedish Refugee Advice Centre and Rebecca Stern – researcher and lecturer in public international law at Uppsala University discussed current legislation and practice. Canada was discussed as a country that forbade discrimination of gender early and has also extended that to refugee law. UNHCR Senior Protection Officer Hy Shelow in Canada was interviewed about the Canadian system and was amongst other things talking about the Canadian immigration services focus on individuals and not on country of origin.

(Sveriges Radio P1 25 October 2008,
<http://www.sr.se/webbradio/webbradio.asp?type=latestbroadcast&ld=1300&BroadcastDate=&IsBlock=1>)

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Denmark

Large police presence at demonstration against Sandholmslejren

The police have forbidden fly-over at the demonstration against the refugee camp Sandholmslejren on Saturday, for tactical reasons. This action is part of a planned large police presence during the demonstration arranged by the group Close the Camp (Luk Lejren), but the police do not want to go into detail, except to say that “many are involved”.

The arrangers are expecting some 500 people to take part in the demonstration. (Berlingske Tidende 23 October 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081023/danmark/810230381/>)

Government wants tough stance on deportation

The government is investigating the possibility of tightening deportation policy after a Tunisian national, who was given a deportation order for planning to murder JyllandsPosten illustrator Kurt Westergaard, ultimately was allowed to stay in Denmark on a so-called limited residency permit. Conservative Party leader, and former Minister of Justice, Lene Espersen, called the Refugee Appeals Board’s refusal deport the man because of fears that he would be tortured in his native country as “absurd and unacceptable. We have to send a signal to those who have been given deportation that we don’t want them in Denmark. We will protect our own citizens and do everything we can to combat terrorism”. In a new report presented on Thursday, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture expresses concerns over the government’s plans to return immigrants who risk torture.

(Politiken 23 October 2008, Partly translated by News ex-press, Berlingske 23 October 2008, 23 October 2008, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article586850.ece>,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081023/politik/810230374/>,

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/10/23/005513.htm>)

The government in breach of UN convention?

The Social Liberals have accused the government of violating the UN’s Child Convention by allowing rejected asylum-seeker families to remain in asylum centres for years. Many of the children suffer emotional trauma from being kept in confinement for so long and, according to integration spokesman Morten Østergaard, the government has a responsibility to take better care of them. After being urged to live up to her responsibility instead of ignoring the problem,

(Berlingske Tidende 23 October 2008, Translated by News ex-press,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081023/danmark/810230468/>)

Birthe Rønn rejects European asylum criticism

They are politicians - not experts, states Minister for Refugee, Immigration and Integration, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, thereby rejecting the validity of the criticism raised by the European Parliament's Committee for Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs regarding the long period of time that rejected asylum-seekers spend in Danish asylum centres. Hornbech further responded that it is deplorable that rejected asylum-seekers live for years in the centres, but that "the parents of these children have defied efforts to send them home. It's the parents' decision alone".

(Berlingske Tidende 23 October 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081023/danmark/810230455/>)

Amnesty: Denmark should receive prisoners

In an open letter to Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Amnesty International and the Danish Refugee Council urge Denmark to receive at least three prisoners from Guantánamo. The organisations argue that Denmark, in order to set a good example, should sign a treaty with the US regarding former prisoners of Guantánamo.

(Berlingske Tidende 23 October 2008, DR 24 October 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081023/danmark/810230484/>,

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/10/24/001058.htm>)

Women are harassed in asylum centres

Sexual harassment and gender based violence is part of everyday life for the around 150 single women living in asylum centres in Denmark. The Danish Red Cross thinks there should be separate centres for women, saying that some women are very scared. During the last year the Police have received four reports of rape and harassment, in all cases both victim and perpetrator were living in the refugee camp Sandholmslejren. Both the Socialist People's Party and the Social Democrats want to bring up gender-based violence at refugee camps with Integration Minister Birthe Rønn Hornbech of the Liberal Party.

(Berlingske Tidende 24 October 2008, DR 24 October 2008, Politiken 24 October 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081023/danmark/810230485/>,

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/10/24/025134.htm>,

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article587458.ece>)

Norway

Influx of Iraqis to Norway

The numbers of asylum-seekers from Iraq are increasing in Norway and decreasing in Sweden. The overall number of asylum-seekers in Norway has dropped, although the numbers of asylum-seekers from Iraq has increased, all this according to a UNHCR six-monthly report. The report also says that during the first six months of 2008, 19,500 Iraqis applied for asylum in the industrialised countries.

(Verdens Gang 28 October 2008,

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/irak/artikkel.php?artid=530823>)

Sweden

Deported to get residence permit

Dadkoda Lindström from Afghanistan is to be deported to Afghanistan, even though he is married to a Swedish woman. The reason is that Swedish family reunification law says one has to apply for family reunification in the country of origin. Thabo Muso, Dadkoda Lindström's legal counsellor, says that there is no one to handle the application for a residence permit in Afghanistan and it may take a long time, up to two years, to receive an Afghani passport. Dadkoda Lindström says he is afraid for his life. UNHCR does not recommend deportations to Afghanistan of individuals that do not have family or network there. UNHCR spokesperson for the Nordic and Baltic countries, Hanne Mathisen, says the security situation in Afghanistan is very difficult and that individuals are dependent on family and network to survive.

(TV4 Nyheterna 24 October 2008,

<http://anytime.tv4.se/webtv/?proglid=389036&treeld=901&renderingdepartment=2.757>)

Swede arrested for human smuggling

A Swedish man has been arrested in Uganda for telling Somali refugees in Uganda that he, for money, can arrange permanent residence permits for them in Europe. The man has been contacted by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and offered legal council.

(Dagens Nyheter 24 October 2008, SVT 24 October 2008,

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=843074>

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1287556&lid=is_search549588&lp os=0&queryArt549588=flykting*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Arrested after walking along the motor way

Six men were arrested after walking along the motorway in Halland. The men say they are from Iraq and the police say they think they may be asylum-seekers. The police also say they think it may be a case of human smuggling as many smugglers leave the smuggled at halting-places. The police are searching for more people as they have been told there may be more.

(Dagens Nyheter 24 October 2008, SVT 24 October 2008,

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=843795>

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1289724&lid=is_search549588&lp os=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

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Denmark

Asylum families hesitate to move out

Only 13 of 31 families that have had their asylum applications rejected have taken up the offer to move out of the reception-centres and into their own homes while waiting to be deported. The Red Cross says this is because the families are afraid of losing the network they have created in the centres and that the insecurity and fear of what the future will hold would still prevail even if they did move into to their own homes.

(DR 22 October 2008,

<http://www.dr.dk/Regioner/Kbh/Nyheder/Hovedstadsomraadet/2008/10/22/083041.htm?rss=true®ional>)

Action group 'Close the Camps' demonstrates against start-up-help

The action group 'Close the Camps' (Luk Lejren) is planning a demonstration against the sum of money in the start-up-help. 'Close the Camps' argue the money given is discriminating as it is less than the cash benefit.

(Politiken 22 October 2008, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article586202.ece>)

Latvia

30 persons have applied for asylum in Latvia since the beginning of 2008

30 persons have applied for asylum in Latvia since the beginning of 2008. 15 of the asylum seekers are Georgians. The rest of the applicants are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Russia, Cuba, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Turkey, Ukraine, Tadjikistan, and Belarus.

(Vesti Segodnya 21 October 2008, Translated by Integration and Minority Information Service, <http://www.humanrights.org.lv/html/29659.html>)

Norway

Asylum centers are unsafe for women

Amnesty International demands 24-hour staff presence in reception centers, due to the fact that especially single women experience sexual harassment, even if they live in a separate part of the centre. The demand is based on interviews the organization has conducted in several reception centers, which show that women are in a difficult situation. Sylo Taraku, Department Manager the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum-seekers, supports the demand. Siri Rustad, Department Manager of Directorate of

Immigration, says they want to focus on women and safety in the reception centres in 2009, and that Amnesty's report will be helpful to them in doing that.
(VG, 21 October 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=521361>)

Separate asylum centers for women?

Dag Terje Andersen, Minister of Labour and Inclusion of the Labour Party, says it is possible that there would be separate reception centers for women in the future. According to the minister there is reason to investigate if the measures taken today to ensure women's safety are enough. Bjørg Tørresdal, representative of the Christian Democratic Party, has asked the Minister to consider the possibility of separate reception centers. The Minister agrees there have been unfortunate episodes recently and that it is unacceptable that women are harassed in the centers, and that he will now ask the Directorate of Immigration to look at the matter.
(Dagsavisen 21.10 2008 <http://www.dagsavisen.no/innenriks/article375792.ece>)

Sweden

Think about the implications of the constitution

Director of the Migration Board Dan Eliasson replies to last weeks op-ed by five members of the parliament. Dan Eliasson maintains there is no space in the law for granting residence permit for Adil Hakimjan, the uighur asylum-seeker. The members of parliament, amongst others Alf Svensson, reply that they cannot understand how Dan Eliasson cannot see the space in the law for Adil Hakimjan.
(Svenska Dagbladet 21 October 2008,
http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/artikel_1916277.svd)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Saturday 18 October to Monday 20 October 2008

Denmark

More asylum-seekers in western countries

UNHCR expects the number of asylum-seekers in the industrial countries to increase with 10 per cent to 360,000 this year. The estimate is based on the 165,100 asylum applications the organization already has registered during the first six months of this year. Iraqis head the list with a total of 19,500 asylum applications in 44 countries. Out of these, 60 per cent applied for asylum in Sweden, Germany, Turkey and the Netherlands. UNHCR said there is a distinct increase in the number of asylum-seekers from Mali, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

(Jyllands-Posten 17 October 2008, DR 17 October 2008,

[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1488304&eceExpr=unhcr*"%20/>&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1488304&eceExpr=unhcr*),
http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Udland/2008/10/17/150521.htm?wbc_purpose=updatehttp%3ab.dkk)

Christians are fleeing from northern Iraq

Almost 10,000 Christians have fled from the village Mosul in northern Iraq during the last week, says UNHCR, half of the Christian population of the town. The majority has left the village following 'direct and indirect threats and assaults', says a spokesman for UNHCR. Written threats have been sent to the university in the village, to people's home addresses and in text messages to mobile phones. It is not clear who is behind the threats but according to Iraqi authorities and American military sources al-Qaeda is still active in Mosul.

(Jyllands-Posten 18 October 2008,

[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1488832&eceExpr=unhcr*"%20/>&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1488832&eceExpr=unhcr*))

NB: Above story was also covered in Sweden.

(Svenska Dagbladet 17 October 2008, Dagens Nyheter 17 October 2008,

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1903143.svd,
<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=841254>)

Finland

One fifth of Georgian refugees have returned home

According to UNHCR about 20,000 Georgians have returned to their homes, out of an estimated 100,000 persons who fled during the armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in the beginning of August this year. The return to Georgia started when the

Russian troops began their withdrawal from the buffer zone surrounding South Ossetia on 8 October. The UNHCR warns the people who are returning about mines in the area. The agency is building permanent housing for about 5,000 persons who cannot return. (Yle 18 October 2008,

Underage asylum-seekers flooding to Finland

This year more than 300 underage asylum-seekers have already arrived in Finland. The estimated number for the whole year is more than 400, which is the highest number ever and an increase with almost 300 per cent compared to last year. Last week 47 underage asylum-seekers arrived, most of them from Somalia and Iraq. Jorma Vuorio, chief director for the Finnish Immigration Service, believes that one reason for the situation is the stricter asylum procedure in Sweden. Following this the asylum-seekers have increased in Finland and Norway. The increase has raised suspicions about organized crime and parents sending their children to apply for asylum in the western countries.

(Helsingin Sanomat 18 October 2008,

Norway

Conference on internally displaced persons in Oslo

As they are not protected by international law, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are considered the world's most vulnerable group. On Wednesday last week UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres spoke on the difficulties on protecting the internally displaced: "The responsibility to protect as a concept has had some difficulties to be accepted by many countries, even democracies, in the developing world. This idea that the international community has a right to intervene, when states are not willing or able to protect their citizens, is not uncontroversial. Developing states tend to believe that the concept brings with it some hidden agendas and that big powers will use it as a pretext for strategic interventions". Furthermore, Guterres especially on the "humanitarian drama of displacement" of African IDPs.

(NRK Urix 16 October 2008,

Congolese refugees are fleeing to Uganda

Almost 6,000 people have fled into Uganda after fighting between governmental forces and opposition forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. A UNHCR spokesperson says that refugees have been crossing the border for days. The conflict in eastern DR Congo has been going on for several years and many inhabitants in the area have on several occasions fled to Uganda - to later return when the situation has improved.

(Verdens Gang 18 October 2008,

Reception centre on fire

Late Sunday night a fire broke out on Sandnessjøen, where 170 asylum-seekers live. One person was treated for burn wounds. The cause of the fire is as yet unknown. (Verdens Gang 20 October 2008, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=521182>)

Sweden

Asylum policy a hot issue in party leader debate

The debate on asylum policy was heated when Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Moderate Party for the fourth time in a week met opposition leader Mona Sahlin of the Social Democrats. The government wants to implement demands on economic self-contingency in cases of family reunification, as well as facilitate labour immigration. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, demand a change in policy on family reunification: "The Moderate Party's proposition means that children will not be able to reunite with their parents from day one", said Sahlin, who called the proposition "disgusting". Furthermore, in contrast to Reinfeldt, Sahlin proposes that refugees should not be able to choose in which municipality they will live, as a means to avoid high refugee concentration in some municipalities. However, Sahlin does not want to talk about "municipality arrest", instead she speaks of "responsibility sharing" and "solidarity" between wealthy and poor municipalities.

(Svenska Dagbladet 17 October 2008, http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1904325.svd, http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1903405.svd)

The Swedish Immigration Board consults the company McKinsey

In an op-ed in Dagens Nyheter Dan Eliasson, director-general for the Swedish Immigration Board, writes that the board has chosen to consult the global private company McKinsey to be able to achieve the objective that no asylum application should take more than six months to try. Today the waiting period for getting a decision on an asylum application is nine months in average. The Migration Minister, Tobias Billström, supports the decision to consult McKinsey, while Lars Ohly, leader for the Left Party, says he is doubtful and that it may be possible to acquire the same knowledge from the employees. According to SVT the costs for consulting the company during October and November will be 1,2 million SEK and both the government and the opposition have given their support for the decision.

(Dagens Nyheter 19 October 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 19 October 2008, SVT 19 October 2008, <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=841502>), <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=841802>, http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1908371.svd, http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1282948&lid=is_search549588&lp_os=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Court wants to stop deportations to Greece

Sweden should not deport asylum-seekers to Greece, according the migration court in Göteborg through eight new rulings concerning asylum-seekers that have come to EU via Greece and according to EU-regulations should apply for asylum there. According to the migration court in Göteborg there is reason to question the fairness of the

assessment that asylum-seekers receive in Greece. Because of this there is reason for making exceptions by letting these refugees apply for asylum in Sweden instead. Since May, when the first alarms about the poor asylum system in Greece came, 15 people have been deported from Sweden to Greece. UNHCR recommends that countries do not send asylum-seekers to Greece. "Greece violates the Geneva convention by rejecting asylum-seekers from war-torn countries like Afghanistan", said UNHCR:s head of office in Greece, Giorgos Tzarbopoulos, to Reuters.
(Dagens Nyheter 20 October 2008)

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Thursday 16 October to Friday 17 October 2008

Denmark

Minister has to explain deportation

The Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, Birthe Rønn, has to explain why Denmark ignored a UN decision and tried to send a Tamil family back to Sri Lanka. Opposition parties demand an explanation since it has been revealed that the European Court of Human Rights has stopped the deportation of the family with the aid of the so called Rule 39. Rule 39 is used to prevent that rejected asylum-seekers are sent back to countries where they are in the risk of persecution. It was the second time that the Danish authorities tried to deport the family. Eight months earlier UNHCR stopped the deportation at the airport in Frankfurt. According to the Danish Refugee Council the case may be brought to the European Court of Human Rights.

(Politiken 16 October, Jyllands-Posten 16 October, DR 16 October,

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article583660.ece>,

<http://politiken.dk/politik/article584029.ece>,

[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1486986&eceExpr=unhcr*"%20/>&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1486986&eceExpr=unhcr*),

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Politik/2008/10/16/065031.htm>)

Priests want to close the reception centre in Sandholm

A 'priest initiative' consisting of 200 priests, theologians and retired priests support the activist group Luk Lejren (Close the Camp) that will try to close the reception centre in Sandholm on 25 October. According to rector Bodil Hindsholm the priests want to close the reception centers because of the inhuman conditions there. She has asked her colleagues to participate in the demonstration. At the same time she has explained to the young activists that a violent confrontation would be very unfortunate. The priests want to close all the reception centers except for one, where people are to stay for a limited period only.

(Berlingske Tidende 16 October, DR 16 October,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081016/danmark/810160428/>,

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/10/16/212038.htm>)

Prime Minister's immigration efforts rejected

Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's efforts to put the controversial Metock ruling on the official summit agenda fell on deaf ears at the Brussels summit, Thursday.

According to Danish news agency Ritzau, the French Presidency rejected Mr. Rasmussen's request, which was only discussed unofficially in 'the corridors', but he did receive support from British PM Gordon Brown. During the official meeting, the heads of state and government passed a resolution for a new 'immigration pact'

promoting 'solidarity' between all countries on immigration policy. According to the EU expert Rebecca Adler-Nissen the new pact will also influence Denmark's immigration policy regardless of Denmark's opt-out on justice.

(Politiken 16 October, Berlingske Tidende 16 October, Jyllands-Posten 16 October, Partly translated by News ex-press,

<http://politiken.dk/politik/article584111.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article584131.ece>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081016/politik/810160418/>,
<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081016/politik/810160379/>,
[http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1487687&eceExpr=immigration"%20/>&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1487687&eceExpr=immigration))

Finland

The Finnish Immigration Service wants age tests for young asylum-seekers

According to the Finnish Immigration Service many asylum-seekers that arrive on their own to Finland are older than 18 years, but they lie about their age to be sure to be granted asylum, the news paper Savon Sanomat writes. The Immigration Service would like to start using an age test that would be carried out by the police. The age test would be based on willingness. This year a record number of underage asylum-seekers, about 300, have arrived to Finland, which is 70 per cent more than last year.

(Helsingin Sanomat 16 October 2008, Yle 16 October 2008,

<http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Maahanmuuttovirasto+haluaa+nuorille+turvapaikanha+kijoille+ik%C3%A4testit/1135240285044>,

Norway

Gahr Støre opens conference on internal refugees

On Thursday Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre opened a big conference on Internally Displaced persons in Oslo.

The conference marks the tenth anniversary of the setting up of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. According to Norwegian news bureau NTB 26 million people are displaced within the borders of their own countries. Half of these live in Africa. "Our aim is to get people more involved in the difficulties of those who have had to seek refuge in another part of their country", says Elisabeth Rasmusson, who heads the Norwegian Refugee Council. Both the UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes are taking part in the conference.

(Aftenposten 16 October 2008,

<http://www.aftenposten.no/english/local/article2716472.ece>)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees discusses asylum issues with Norwegian Minister

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres and Norway's Minister for Labour and Social Inclusion Dag Terje Andersen met in Oslo Wednesday to discuss current challenges related to refugee protection, in particular challenges caused by the increased numbers of asylum-seekers in Norway, and the government's tightening of Norway's immigration policy. Mr. Guterres said he understands the concerns expressed by Mr. Andersen, but urged him to meet this challenge without compromising

internationally recognized standards for refugee protection. Minister Andersen underlined that before implementing stricter measures Norway will seek the advice of UNHCR and stated that his government remains committed to put major emphasis on UNHCRs recommendations and guidelines. “Norway has always been a strong supporter of my office. The actions of its government have demonstrative effects. I trust that Norway will tackle the current challenges in line with international principles for refugee protection, and the best practices routed in the Norwegian protection tradition,” the UN High Commissioner said.

(Norway Post 16 October 2008,

<http://www.norwaypost.no/cgi-bin/norwaypost/imaker?id=203153>)

Norway receives criticism from the UNHCR

UN High Commissioner António Guterres is in Norway to inspect the country’s asylum policy. Following the restrictions in Norway’s asylum policy set forward in the ‘13 point plan’, Mr. Guterres comments that “we always regret that governments adopt more restrictive measures , but it is important to say that we had a very constructive meeting with the Minister today, discussing how we can work together”. The new measures include returning asylum-seekers to war-torn countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, which goes against the recommendations of the UN. Mr. Guterres stated that “it is especially important in some delicate situations like Afghanis and Iraqis to make sure that things are organized in a way that people will not be returned against their will”. Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, Dag Terje Andersen, wants to continue the policy of returning Afghanis and Iraqis, yet opens up for an exception. “There are certain areas in Iraq and Afghanistan that we cannot return people to. That is why we have an individual assessment of each asylum application”, says the Minister.

(NRK Dagsrevyen 21.00 15 October 2008, <http://www1.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/423662>)

Refugees in their own country

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, together with Elisabeth Rasmusson, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, urge in an op-ed governments to bring national legislation into line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. “It takes political will, capacity and resources to implement laws, and in countries where national authorities lack these prerequisites, it is up to the international community to aid and protect people who have been forced to flee”, write the authors. The main responsibility for protecting internally displaced persons (IDP:s) lies with the governments in question and the Guiding Principles are not legally binding. However, since the Principles were presented ten years ago, the work to protect IDPs has seen much progress, even though much work remains. Countries such as Colombia, Nepal, Georgia and Angola all have enacted national laws built on the guidelines. The authors further recognized that Norway has played a key role in putting the rights of IDPs on the international agenda.

(Bergens Tidende 17 October 2008,

<http://www.bt.no/meninger/kronikk/article646281.ece>)

New direction for Norway

In a joint op-ed Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of the Labour Party, Kristin Halvorsen, Party leader of the Socialist Left Party and Liv Signe Navarsete, Party leader of the Centre Party, look back at the government’s three years of rule as well as raise issues that still need to be addressed. In a long range of issues, the authors state that they intend to “continue Norway’s humane refugee- and asylum policy”.

(Dagbladet 17 October 2008,
<http://www.dagbladet.no/kultur/2008/10/17/550568.html>)

Sweden

Erroneous facts in the debate on social allowance

The last week's debate between Sweden's party leaders has focused on the costs of the municipalities' social allowance. Mona Sahlin of the Social Democrats claims that the increase in social allowances is an effect of the cut-backs made by the government in the unemployment benefit fund. Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Moderate Party argues that the increase is caused by refugee reception. As it turns out, however, both are wrong. The social allowance has not increased compared to last year, according to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

(Dagens Nyheter 16 October 2008, Sveriges Television 16 October 2008, Sydsvenska Dagbladet 16 October 2008, <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=840609>, http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22620&a=1279955&lid=is_search527895&lp_os=0&queryArt527895=flykting*&sortOrder527895=3&doneSearch=true&sd=47225&from=siteSearch&pageArt527895=0, <http://sydsvenskan.se/sverige/article379310.ece>)

Criticism against the Swedish Prison and Probation Service

The Swedish Police Service is criticizing the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, particularly for taking too long to deport rejected asylum-seekers. The long processing time has consequences for asylum-seekers who the police suspects may go under ground while waiting to be deported.

(Sveriges Television 16 October 2008,
http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=56952&a=1280440&lid=is_search527895&lp_os=0&queryArt527895=asyl*&sortOrder527895=3&doneSearch=true&sd=47225&from=siteSearch&pageArt527895=0)

Timrå is number one in the country on introductory employment

Few immigrants have received employment from the government's introductory employment policy, aimed at establishing newly-arrived refugees in the labour market. The policy has not been a success; today 75 persons in the county of Västernorrland and 21 persons in Jämtland have received introductory employment. In Timrå on the other hand, all 16 who applied for introductory employment got a job.

(Sveriges Television 16 October 2008,
http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=55868&a=1280801&lid=is_search527895&lp_os=1&queryArt527895=flykting*&sortOrder527895=3&doneSearch=true&sd=47225&from=siteSearch&pageArt527895=0)

Sweden gets responsibility for new immigration policy

Sweden gets the responsibility to realize EU:s new migration pact. When Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt leads the union next autumn the base for a common asylum system is going to be set. The objective of the pact is to co-ordinate legal immigration and stop the illegal one. EU will issue a 'blue card' to work immigrants and stop human smuggling by stricter border controls. In addition, a common asylum system is going to be created.

(Sydsvenskan 16 October 2008,

<http://sydsvenskan.se/varlden/article379435.ece>

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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Tuesday 14 October to Wednesday 15 October 2008

Denmark

Red Cross co-workers angry about demonstration

Red Cross co-workers feel offended by the demonstration that the activists in the group Luk Lejren (Close the Camp) are planning outside the Red Cross reception centre in Sandholm. The activists have said that on Saturday 25 October they will 'close the camp' by cutting up the fence surrounding the centre with bolt cutters, since they think the centre is discriminatory and racist. Yesterday Politiken published an open letter from 120 Red Cross co-workers who distance themselves from the planned activity. The author of the letter says that people living in the reception centre feel fear and insecurity about the demonstration. The activists say that the demonstration is not against the Red Cross co-workers and that many residents they have talked to think the demonstration is a good idea.

(DR 15 October 2008,

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/10/15/130836.htm>)

190,000 are fleeing violence in Pakistan

About 190,000 persons have fled fighting between Pakistani troops and members of Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan near the border with Afghanistan, UNHCR says. The number of internally displaced persons in Pakistan has increased as the fighting has escalated the last weeks. UNHCR estimates that about 20,000 persons have fled from the Bajur region where some of the most violent clashes have taken place. In addition, almost 170,000 persons have fled from other areas and it is difficult to help them all, UNHCR says.

(Jyllands-Posten 14 October 2008, Berlingske Tidende 14 October 2008, Politiken 14 October 2008, DR 14 October 2008

http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1485785&eceExpr=unhcr*

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081014/verden/810140419/>

<http://politiken.dk/udland/article583061.ece>

http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Udland/2008/10/14/192411.htm?wbc_purpose=updat%23%2b)

NB: Above story was also covered in Norway and Finland.

(Norway: Verdens Gang 14 October 2008,

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=538121>)

(Finland: Yle 14 October 2008,

http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/haku.php?action=page&id=297899&search=unhcr*)

Anti-EU

One in four of the electorate now believe that Denmark should pull out of the EU if the country's strict immigration policy is eased because of a European Court ruling – a result interpreted as a victory by both pro- and anti- EU factions. Morten Messerschmidt, spokesman on EU affairs for the Danish People's Party, said it was 'extremely positive' that nearly 27 per cent are prepared to give up Denmark's membership of the union. However, Lene Espersen, leader for the pro-EU Conservatives, said she was more pleased about the 'solid majority' of 64,5 per cent who believe Denmark should remain in the EU whatever happens.
(DR 14 October, Translated by News ex-press)

Norway

No traces after threats against reception-centre

The police in Asker and Bærum have few traces or clues after the attack on the reception-centre in Bærum during the weekend. They say there were no witnesses, but that they are taking the incident very seriously. The Directorate of Immigration is leaving the investigations to the police, but say they will inform the residents in the area about the function of the reception-centre. Many residents are concerned and feel they have received too little information. The president of the local council in Gjøttum Vel says he cannot believe this has happened and that he is embarrassed over living in the area.
(Verdens Gang 12 October 2008, Verdens Gang 14 October 2008,
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=527194>,
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=538099>)

Wants fewer Somali refugees in Oslo

In a letter to the Directorate of Integration and Diversity local politician Jøran Kallmyr of the Progress Party writes that he wants fewer Somali asylum-seekers in Oslo. Kallmyr writes they do welcome Somali asylum-seekers but not exclusively. Furthermore, he writes it may be better for Somali refugees to live in another municipality than Oslo as Oslo already has a big locked group of Somali refugees that finds it difficult to integrate.
(Aftenposten 14 October 2008, Dagsavisen 14 October 2008, NRK 14 October 2008,
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/oslo/article2712164.ece>,
<http://www.dagsavisen.no/innenriks/article374635.ece>,
<http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/ostlandssendingen/1.6260015>)

Unwanted in the capital

Reactions have been strong to the Progress Party's claim that Somalis would find it harder to integrate than other groups. One person commenting was the leader of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity who says the claim is not true. The leader of the Directorate also says that Norway should find places for everyone who needs them and not discriminate against people of certain nationalities. A nurse of Somali background says the letter stigmatizes Somalis. The Socialist Left Party also says the Progress Party is wrong and that Oslo only accepts half the number of asylum-seekers they are asked to accept.
(NRK 15 October 2008,
<http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/ostlandssendingen/1.6261276>)

Sweden

Members of parliament fleeing from their responsibility

Dan Eliasson, Director of the Swedish Migration Board, replied on 8 October in Svenska Dagbladet to the op-ed by amongst others Barbara Hendricks and Henning Mankell that the Migration Board has not had the possibility to grant Uighur asylum-seeker Adil Hakim residence permit, according to the laws and regulations instituted by the government. He also adds that he has no understanding for members of the parliament that criticise the Migration Board for following laws instituted by the parliament itself. The authors of the first op-ed replied by naming a number of reasons why they think Adil Hakim should have been granted a residence permit. One of the reasons they mention is the right to family reunification that is a part of Swedish law and the fact that Adil Hakim has no other way of reuniting with his family.

The Swedish Migration Board based their rejection on the fact that he already had been granted asylum in Albania.

(Svenska Dagbladet 8 October, Svenska Dagbladet 14 October 2008,

http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/artikel_1847549.svd,

http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/artikel_1881221.svd,

http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/artikel_1822749.svd)

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Saturday 11 October to Monday 13 October 2008

Denmark

100 boat refugees feared drowned

UNHCR fears that around 100 persons may have drowned in the Gulf of Aden outside Yemen. About 150 persons left Somalia last Monday in a boat navigated by smugglers. They were forced into the sea by the smugglers outside Yemen, says UNHCR spokesperson Ron Redmond. 47 survivors reached land and were able to warn the authorities. Only this year more than 30,000 persons have arrived in Yemen. Many of them have escaped violence and war in Somalia and other countries around the Horn of Africa.

(DR 10 October 2008)

<http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Udland/2008/10/10/10123504.htm>)

NB: Above story was also covered in Norway and Sweden.

(Aftenposten 10 October 2008, Dagbladet 10 October 2008, Verdens Gang 10 October 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 10 October 2008, SVT 10 October 2008,

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/uriks/article2706424.ece>

<http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2008/10/10/549878.html>

<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=527015>

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/artikel_1865479.svd,

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22584&a=1274548&lid=is_search549588&lp_os=0&queryArt549588=flykting*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Estonia

Estonian authorities order integration campaign

The Estonian Population Ministry is planning an 1,1 million EEK (70,000 EUR) advertising campaign intended to urge people to apply for citizenship, the daily Eesti Päevaleht reported. Information will be distributed in public transport in Tallinn urging stateless persons to take the citizenship test. In addition, outdoor advertisements promising integration should arrive in the streets. There were more than 116,000 stateless persons in Estonia at the beginning of this year, and the population minister's office has set itself the aim of reducing their number to below 112,000 by the end of 2009 and to less than 107,000 by the end of 2012.

(Translated by Baltic News Service 11 October 2008)

Fewer asylum-seekers

During the first 9 months of this year the Citizenship and Migration Board has received 7 asylum applications. This is half the number of applications compared to last year. Since 1997 a total of 133 persons have sought asylum in Estonia, out of these 9 have been granted refugee status. Estonia is the country with the lowest number of refugees in Europe.

(ERR Uudised 13 October 2008,
<http://uudised.err.ee/index.php?06139790>)

Latvia

Human Rights Committee criticizes Ombudsman

Head of the Saeima's Human Rights Committee, Janis Smits, criticizes the opinion of the Ombudsman Roman Apsitis regarding the rights of non-citizens. The Ombudsman has admitted that some restrictions on non-citizens are not justified. In an interview with Latvijas Avize, Janis Smits states that it would be better if the Ombudsman dealt with other more important issues than the rights of the non-citizens. Mr Smits believes that the Latvian Law on Citizenship is one of the most liberal in Europe and if a non-citizen would like to be granted the same rights as citizens he or she should receive Latvian citizenship.

(Translated by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights Information Service 13 October 2008,
<http://www.humanrights.org.lv/html/25501.html>)

Norway

Greece is breaching the Geneva Convention

Giorgos Tsaropoulos at UNHCR in Greece says Greece systematically refuses to give asylum to persons from war-torn countries and is therefore breaching the Geneva Convention. UNHCR recommends that other EU countries do not transfer asylum-seekers who first arrived in Greece back there even though it is possible to do so according to the Dublin II Convention. Tsaropoulos also raises criticism towards the Dublin II Convention, saying the many asylum-seekers are a burden for countries with external borders and that these countries should not be penalised for having external borders.

(Verdens Gang 10 October 2008,
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=527036>)

Tags and vandalism at new reception-centre in Bærum

A reception-centre in Bærum with 250 places to open this week was vandalised and threatened during the weekend. The sentences "The next shots fired will land here", "Keep Norway clean" and "UDI pigs" were sprayed on the walls of the reception centre. The police do not yet have any suspects. The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers raises concerns that attacks on reception centres will become a trend if the police does not crack down hard on this.

(Aftenposten 12 October 2008, Verdens Gang 12 October 2008, Bergens Tidende 12 October 2008,
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=527171>,
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2708534.ece>
<http://www.bt.no/innenriks/article643637.ece>)

The Directorate of Immigration installs CCTV at reception centre

Following the attack by 50-60 Chechen men in June this year the Directorate of Immigration installs 11 cameras at the reception centre in Våler. The head of the reception centre says the reason for installing the cameras is to protect asylum-seekers staying in the reception centre. The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers criticises the initiative and says the Directorate of Immigration should be using its resources for more activities for the asylum-seekers, adding that a reception centre is not a prison.

(Aftenposten 13 October 2008, Verdens Gang 13 October 2008, NRK 13 October 2008, <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2709120.ece>, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=527217> <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/ostfold/1.6258871>)

Sweden

Work will be a ticket to Sweden yet again

In November the parliament is to vote on the Labour immigration bill. The bill would mean opening up for labour immigration from outside of the EU and allowing for time-limited work permits to be issued. The initiative of issuing work permits would come from the market and the companies in need of labour, rather than the government, which is the case today. Asylum-seekers that have had their asylum applications rejected would also have the possibility of receiving a work permit, if they are employed. Migration Minister Tobias Billström says the new measures are necessary as Sweden is facing a structural change with an ageing population and large groups of people retiring at the same time.

(12 October 2008, http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1871599.svd)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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

Wednesday 9 October to Thursday 10 October 2008

Denmark

Minister: Sorry!

The Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, admits that her ministry has failed in its duty of information to a Danish-Thai couple and she apologises. The couple was refused family reunion by the Danish Immigration Service. The husband wrote a personal letter to the minister in February in which he asked whether it would make a difference if he moved to Germany. The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration refrained from informing him about this possibility to use his rights as an EU citizen and avoid the strict Danish immigration laws. The Parliamentary Ombudsman has criticized the ministry for not having fulfilled its duty to inform the public. The Immigration Service will now be looking at the case again. (Politiken 8 October 2008, Jyllands-Posten 8 October 2008, DR 8 October 2008, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article580008.ece>, <http://politiken.dk/newsinenglish/article580113.ece>, http://jp.dk/indland/indland_politik/article1480332.ece, <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2008/10/08/154131.htm>)

No safety guarantee for Iraqi asylum-seekers

Refused asylum-seekers shall travel to Iraq after the Refugee Appeals Board has refused them, says the Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration, Birthe Rønn Hornbech. The about 300 rejected asylum-seekers from Iraq will not receive any safety guarantee from the Danish government when they are sent back to Iraq, but Rønn Hornbech says she guarantees the asylum seekers are treated according to Danish legislation. Johanna Schmidt-Nielsen from The Unity List – Red-Green Alliance argues that the Refugee Appeals Board, where the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs is represented, is not so independent and stresses that the Refugee Appeals Board has a much more positive opinion about the safety situation in Iraq than UNHCR has.

(Jyllands-Posten 8 October 2008, [http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1480525&eceExpr=unhcr*"%20/>&eceArchive=o](http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1480525&eceExpr=unhcr*))

Professor criticises the new guidelines

The new guidelines for family reunification that the Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, has published are criticised by the professor Claus Haagen Jensen who is one of Denmark's leading experts in administrative law. The professor admits that the guidelines are legally correct but argues that they are not user-friendly and do not help the citizens much. He also questions that there is no

guiding principle when it comes to how long time you must have stayed in another EU-country to be able to use the EU-rules for applying for family reunification.

(Berlingske Tidende 9 October 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081009/politik/81009127/>)

Red Cross: Demonstration will harm asylum-seekers

The Danish Red Cross appeals to the activists in the group Luk Lejren (Close the Camps) that they should take the interest of the asylum-seekers into account when demonstrating in front of the Red Cross reception centre in Sandholm. The secretary general Anders Ladekarl says that the many children and single mothers in the centre have lived through very unpleasant experiences. The psychologists at the Red Cross are afraid that violent episodes in connection with the action could traumatize these people even more. According to the spokesman of the activists, they will respect the asylum-seekers by not demonstrating too close to the areas where people live. The activists have said that they want to have the centre closed by using civil disobedience, since they think that it is dehumanizing and racist.

(Berlingske Tidende 9 October 2008, Politiken 9 October 2008, Politiken 12 September 2008,

<http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081009/danmark/810090451/>,

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article580911.ece>,

<http://politiken.dk/indland/article566962.ece>)

Finland

Asylum applications in Nordic countries increased

According to the Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2008 the number of asylum applications in the Nordic countries has grown with 60 per cent from 2005 to 2007. In Finland there were 1,512 asylum applications while in Sweden there were 36,207 and in the Nordic countries in total 45,317.

(Yle 9 October 2008,

Norway

Says the government is bluffing about international development goal

The government has increased the international development budget with 17,5 per cent from last year, stating it reached the goal of using one per cent of BNP for international development. Since 1988 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) permits governments to include expenses for asylum-seekers' first year in the development budget. The government is being criticised by various actors for not actually spending more money on international aid but only spending more on asylum-seekers in Norway and some say the government is actually spending less on international aid.

(Aftenposten 9 October 2008, Aftenposten 9 October 2008

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/statsbudsjettet/article2700561.ece>,

<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/statsbudsjettet/article2701742.ece>)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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Tuesday 7 October to Wednesday 8 October 2008

Denmark

Birthe Rønn concedes to criticism

With the Parliamentary Ombudsman rattling his sabre, the Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, has apparently quietly conceded to the criticism and published new guidelines on the ministerial website on Sunday. Among the guidelines is a mention of the ten-week work rule that the Minister has hitherto denied. "This looks like a confession," says Social Democratic integration spokesman Henrik Sass Larsen. Astrid Kragh, integration spokesman for the Socialist Peoples' Party, says the entire process has been completely unsatisfactory. "And now guidelines are sneaked out without telling any of us about it. It all seems a bit shady." The Minister of Refugees, Immigration and Integration has not wished to comment. (Berlingske Tidende 7 October 2008, Politiken 8 October 2008, Translated by News express <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081007/politik/710070041/>, <http://politiken.dk/politik/article579516.ece>)

Married couples from Afghanistan have been wrongly guided

The Danish Immigration Service has in several cases of family reunification guided Afghan couples that got married in Pakistan incorrectly. The information given by the Immigration Service during many years is that the applications may be re-evaluated and approved if the couples register their marriages at an authority in Pakistan called District Councils. Last summer the Immigration Service realised that this information, based on information from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 2003, was incorrect. Following this, family reunifications for 14 families have recently been approved. The Immigration Service says that the procedures regarding the information it receives from the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs need to be reviewed. (Berlingske Tidende, 7 October 2008, <http://www.berlingske.dk/article/20081007/danmark/710070042/>)

Norway

Embarrassing?

The Minister of Labour and Integration, Dag Terje Andersen, responds in an op ed in Dagbladet 2 October to the criticism of the thirteen-point plan. The Minister writes that the government does neither break the Refugee- nor Child Convention and that no children are treated inhumanely. The new policy for 16-18 year olds is aimed at those that do not have a need for protection or subsidiary protection. The aim of the change of policy is to stop youths with no need for protection to travel to Norway. The restricted asylum policy is not aimed at those in need of protection. It is also spectacular that Dagbladet wants a government department, the Directorate of Immigration, not to follow the guidelines of the government, says the Minister.

(Dagbladet 6 October 2008,
<http://www.dagbladet.no/tekstarkiv/artikkel.php?id=5001080081474&tag=item&words=flyktning>)

The Conservative Party settles with the Progress Party

The Conservative Party has presented a list of four non-negotiable demands for the Progress Party to follow, if they wish to form government with the Conservative Party after the next election. One of them is integration policy. The Conservative Party says integration is one of the biggest challenges Norway faces today and that it is necessary to see to the individual and not make generalisations. The Conservative Party is referring to the Progress Party's previous statement that the asylum policy needs to be made even stricter as asylum-seekers hit and circumcise their children. The Conservative Party adds it is hopeless to make such generalisations.

(Aftenposten 7 October 2008,
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/article2696207.ece>)

Strong increase in expenses to asylum-seekers and refugees

The increase in asylum-seekers has made the government spend 5,3 billion NOK on asylum-seekers and integration in next years budget. This is an increase of almost 20 per cent from last year. In order to make it more attractive for the local authorities to accept asylum-seekers, the government increases integration support to local authorities with 11 per cent. The government also increases the budget for the Directorate of Immigration, the Norwegian Appeals Board as well as the budget for unaccompanied minors.

(Aftenposten 7 October 2008,
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/statsbudsjettet/article2697561.ece>)

Breaking promise to asylum children

The government broke its promise from the Soria Moria declaration to move the responsibility of unaccompanied minors ages 15-18 to the Child Welfare in 2009's budget. The Minister of Children and Equality Anniken Huitfeldt says it is not possible to make the change in 2009, and that it would demand opening 20 new care centres to accommodate children aged 15-18 in Child Welfare. The leader of Save the Children's Norway programme, Marianne Borgen, is very disappointed and says the oldest asylum-seeking children are continuously discriminated against. The Ombudsman for Children, Reidar Hjermann, is also disappointed and says the government should at least start to move the responsibility in 2009.

Aftenposten 7 October 2008, Aftenposten 7 October 2008, Dagsavisen 7 October 2008,
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/statsbudsjettet/article2695484.ece>,
<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/statsbudsjettet/article2698579.ece>,
<http://www.dagsavisen.no/innenriks/article372896.ece>)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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Saturday 4 October to Monday 6 October 2008

Denmark

Expert: Ministry broke law

In unusually strong terms, the Parliamentary Ombudsman, Hans Gammeltoft Hansen, has criticised the Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs for failing to inform a Danish-Thai couple, who were rejected family reunification, of their rights under EU law. This is the first time that the Ombudsman has openly criticised the government for not having lived up to its commitments under administrative law in cases of family reunions under EU rules. Furthermore, Claus Hagen Jensen, Professor in administrative law, states that by giving misinformation, the Ministry has broken the law. Demands for Minister Hornbech's resignation have now been voiced from the Social Liberal Party.

(Politiken 6 October 2008, <http://politiken.dk/newsinenglish/article578222.ece>)

Activists: The Red Cross overreacts

Criticism of the Red Cross' management of asylum centres by a local activists group has stirred up negative reactions from the Red Cross, who claims that the group wants to sabotage the Red Cross' fundraising. However, the activists state that the retort is a complete overreaction and that they are merely criticizing the Red Cross' management, who they feel are legitimizing a discriminatory asylum policy, by administering the majority of Denmark's asylum centres, where many rejected asylum-seekers have been living for years in legal limbo. By running the centres, the Red Cross has a serious influence on Danish asylum policy, the activist group states, and demands that the Red Cross shuts down the centres. This, according to them, would make it politically impossible for the government to continue its asylum policy.

(Jyllands Posten 5 October 2008, Politiken 5 October 2008, http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1476400&eceExpr=asyl*%22%20/%3E&eceArchive=o, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article577961.ece>)

Norway

Follows up on asylum issue in Sunndal

A member of the parliament, Asmund Kristoffersen from the Labour Party, wants an investigation into why a seven-year-old girl with cerebral palsy from Kosovo, Elmedina Mahmutovic, and her family were denied asylum. Kristoffersen says he is not familiar with the circumstances of the Elmedina Mahmutovic case but demands that the Directorate of Immigration takes families with disabled and ill children into special consideration and says there have been cases where they have not done so.

(NRK 3 October 2008, http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/more_og_romsdal/1.6245762)

Refuses to insure reception-centre

A reception-centre about to open in Andøy has been denied insurance by Tryg Vesta. The insurance company says the decision is based on reception-centres being high risk. IF Skadeforsikring, another insurance company, does insure reception-centres but has stricter rules for those than for other types of companies. The regional director of the Directorate of Immigration says this is not a new situation and that many reception-centres are forced to turn to foreign insurers, even though, according to him, reception-centres are not high risk. The president of Andøy municipality, Jonni Solsvik of the Conservative Party, demands an explanation from the insurer and adds he is afraid the risk assessment by the insurer is based on xenophobia.

(NRK 3 October 2008, NRK 4 October 2008,

<http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/nordland/1.6246273>,

<http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/nordland/1.6246964>)

The Labour Party steals from the Progress Party

The Labour Party is once again the biggest party and gets 30,5% support while the Progress Party falls and only gets 28,3% in the latest opinion poll made by Bergens Tidende. The researchers believe the upswing for the Labour Party is caused by the tightened asylum policy and the financial crisis.

(Bergens Tidende 4 October 2008, <http://www.bt.no/innenriks/article639602.ece>)

Sweden

Few Iraqi children granted asylum

During 2008, 111 out of 297 unaccompanied minors from Iraq have been rejected asylum in Sweden, compared to only 24 rejected Iraqi children out of 647 during 2006 and 2007. In September a 16 year old boy from Baghdad was rejected in violation of UNHCR's recommendations that all Iraqis from Central and Southern Iraq should obtain protection. The decision was a so called 'clarifying decision' that will become precedent setting unless the Migration Court comes to a different conclusion. According to new reports from UNHCR, the security situation in the area is still frail. However, the Swedish Migration Board has another assessment of the situation in Iraq, claiming that there is no armed conflict in the southern and central areas of the country.

(Dagens Nyheter 5 October 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 5 October 2008, Sveriges

Television 5 October 2008, <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=836196>,

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_1832903.svd,

http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1267051&lid=is_search549588&lp_os=0&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

Easier for children to get asylum in Uppsala

Whether unaccompanied minors are granted asylum or not depends on which part of the country they apply at. Unaccompanied minors' asylum applications are processed in three cities; Malmö, Gothenburg and in Uppsala. Statistics from the Swedish Migration Board shows that 73 per cent of all unaccompanied minors were given protection in Uppsala, compared to 52 per cent and 34 per cent in Malmö and Gothenburg respectively. The greatest difference concerns unaccompanied minors from Iraq. 92 per cent were granted asylum by Uppsala, while Gothenburg merely approved two per cent.

(Sveriges Television 3 October 2008,
http://www.svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=22577&a=1266346&lid=is_search549588&ipos=1&queryArt549588=asyl*&sortOrder549588=0&doneSearch=true&sd=22634&from=siteSearch&pageArt549588=0)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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Thursday 2 October to Friday 3 October 2008

Denmark

Court stops returns

The Refugee Appeals Board has on several occasions tried to forcibly return a Tamil family to Sri Lanka – even though they repeatedly have been warned against it by both the UN and the European Court of Human Rights. Twice has the European Court directly intervened and halted the deportations. The Danish Refugee Council comments that it is totally unacceptable that the deportation has had to be stopped twice.

Researcher Kim U. Kjær of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, states that the Board's action is a clear Convention violation. The family has now been returned to a Danish asylum centre and their status remains that of rejected asylum-seekers.

(Jylland Posten 2 October 2008,

http://jp.dk/arkiv/?id=1475292&eceExpr=asyl*%22%20/%3E&eceArchive=o)

Norway

Wants the right to asylum in the Constitution

Yesterday, the Liberals proposed the right to asylum to be added to the constitution in their proposition of the constitution.

(Dagbladet 1 October 2008,

<http://www.dagbladet.no/tekstarkiv/artikkel.php?id=5001080080598&tag=item&words=asyl>)

Progress Party best on asylum policy

In an opinion poll by Norstat for NRK, 23% say they believe the Progress Party has the best asylum- and refugee policy. The Labour Party is close behind, 20% support their policy. There is a big gap between sexes, 28% of men support the Progress Party and only 18% of women. There is also a difference according to educational background.

One third of persons with only basic education support the Progress Party, whereas the figure is only 10% among those with higher education. The Progress Party's spokesperson in immigration, Per-Willy Amundsen, says the reason for their strong support is that the Progress Party is the only party that dares to talk about the difficult sides of asylum- and refugee policy. Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of the Labour Party says there is an ocean of differences between the two parties' refugee and asylum policies, and is happy to learn that the Labour Party and the government have a high rate of support among citizens.

(NRK 2 October 2008, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.6244585>)

Wants to deport Elmendina

The Directorate of Immigration wants to send a seven-year-old girl from Kosovo with cerebral palsy to Serbia. The family has citizenship in both Serbia and Kosovo, but lacks social network in Serbia. The family applied for asylum in Norway for political reasons and now fears being imprisoned and tortured if they are sent to Serbia. According to the family's lawyer, the Directorate has seriously misjudged Serbia's capacity to aid the child. The lawyer further states that the deportation violates the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, by not taking the child's interest into consideration. According to the Directorate of Immigration, cerebral palsy and being mentally disabled are not criteria for asylum in Norway.
(NRK 2 October 2008, http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/more_og_romsdal/1.6244025)

Money for driver's licence

Refugees will receive 30,000 NOK from the municipality of Åmli in order to obtain a driver's license. The initiative is meant to stimulate integration in the municipality. Concerns have been voiced, however, that the initiative will cause tensions between the refugees and the ethnic Norwegians, who might feel that the refugees are given more aid than they deserve.
(NRK 3 October 2008, <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/sorlandet/1.6246078>)

Sweden

Persecuted, tortured – and innocent

After the Swedish Migration Board rejected a Uighur asylum-seeker, coming from imprisonment in Guantánamo via Albania, several Swedish MPs along with among others Barbara Hendricks of the Foundation for Peace and Reconciliation and author Henning Mankell, demand in an op-ed that the Migration Board grants the Uighur man asylum. According to the authors, granting the man a residence permit in Sweden would set a positive example to other European nations. The Swedish Migration Board based their rejection on the fact that he already had been granted asylum in Albania. However, according to Thomas Hammarberg, the European Council's Commissioner for Human Rights, Uighurs in Albania are in a vulnerable situation and put under surveillance. Mr. Hammarberg further states that the man cannot return to China. The authors of the op-ed now fear that the man will be deported to China from Albania, as China has put significant pressure on Albania not to grant protection to Uighurs.
(Svenska Dagbladet 3 October 2008, http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/artikel_1822749.svd)

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Baltic and Nordic Headlines

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Tuesday 30 September to Wednesday 1 October 2008

Denmark

Minister: Students can take foreign spouse to Denmark

Integration Minister Birthe Rønn Hornbech says more than 700 Danish students living in Sweden with their foreign spouses now can bring them to Denmark. In the future, Denmark will accept that students and Danes who can support themselves can bring their spouses to Denmark under EU regulations. These two groups have so far been denied access. Of the around 2,200 Danes currently living in Malmö with their foreign spouses around a third are students. The Danish People's Party, however, says they will want to renegotiate the deal if hordes of these students want to move to Denmark. (Politiken 30 September 2008, Translated by News ex-press)

Norway

New restrictions - fewer asylum seekers

The number of new asylum seekers arriving in Norway has dropped since the Government last month announced new restrictions in its asylum policy. Last week the police registered 295 new asylum seekers, a 30 per cent reduction over the past four weeks. The Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, Dag Terje Andersen, believes the announced restrictions have already produced results. "However, we must analyze the figures better and wait some time before concluding", the Minister says to NRK. (Aftenposten 1 October 2008, Bergens Tidende 1 October 2008, Norway Post, 1 October 2008, Verdens Gang 1 October 2008, <http://www.norwaypost.no/cgi-bin/norwaypost/imaker?id=198278>, <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2685362.ece>, <http://www.bt.no/innenriks/article637917.ece>, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=517489>)

Sweden

Billström: The current asylum system is a lottery

The EU's current five-year programme is going to be replaced by the new "Stockholm programme" during the Swedish EU presidency, in the second half of 2009. Minister for Migration Tobias Billström states that in this respect Sweden's priority is clear: The Common Asylum System has to be put in place to ensure, as soon as possible, an equal sharing of responsibility between the member states. To this end, the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg would become the instance that will contribute to the harmonization of the varying national practices and procedures. Other important questions include the creation, in cooperation with UNHCR, of an EU level system for receiving quota refugees, as well as a continued discussion about the possibility of filing an asylum application outside the EU.

(Dagens Nyheter 30 September, Dagens Nyheter 1 October 2008,
<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=834620>
<http://www.dn.se/DNet/road/Classic/article/0/jsp/print.jsp?&a=834289>)

EU to agree on stricter border control

In the current charged climate, EU developments in the area of asylum policy lead towards a stricter border control. When the European Parliament was allowed for the first time to make a decision on migration issues on June 18, the vote resulted into a law on the return of “illegal immigrants” that has been criticized by both UNHCR and Amnesty. This vote was contrary to expectations on the Parliaments counter-balancing role. Later developments, including the French proposition for an EU Asylum and Migration pact, have a focus on repressive measures, and humanitarian organizations are concerned about the inability to ensure that a distinction is made between asylum-seekers and other migrants. Frontex, the EU agency working with border security, has launched talks with UNHCR and IOM on what to do with persons rescued from the sea, but no clear rules have been established.

(Dagens Nyheter 1 October 2008,
<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?a=834613>)’

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