

Nordic Headlines 2 April 2004

Danish press

More asylum centres to close

The immigration authorities and Danish Red Cross have decided to shut down two more asylum centres, bringing the number of centres down to 16, from 46 in 2003. 4,500 individual lodgings for asylum seekers have now disappeared over the past 18 months, alongside 600 Red Cross jobs. The news comes at the same time as the EU yesterday moved a step nearer to joint regulation of the refugee flow into the EU, which according to the government will be an advantage for Denmark. "We've always accepted far more asylum seekers than the EU average, but we now take in the same as other countries. The new rules will ensure that we remain at the same level," said Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder.

(Jyllands-Posten, 31 March 2004, p. 2, NE translation)

Finnish Press

New efficiency strategy for UVI

Three new regional offices will be opened by the Finnish Directorate of Immigration (UVI) by the end of this year. The offices will be situated in the city of Lappeenranta in the east, in the city of Kuhmo in the northeast and at the Helsinki-Vantaa International Airport in the south. The regionalisation of the offices of the Directorate is part of a new strategy set out by the Ministry of the Interior, which aims at fostering regional development and employment and making the work of the Directorate more efficient. This efficiency-plan is also aimed at shortening the waiting periods for refugees and immigrants in the asylum seeking process and in the processing for a residence permit and application for citizenship. The duration of the processing time for a residence permit will be shortened from the previous six months to four, the application for citizenship from three years to 18 months and the asylum seeking process from 15 months to an average of seven months.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 26 March 2004, p. A8)

New UVI Director General

Dr. Matti Saarelainen of the Directorate of Immigration (UVI) will resign as Director General and move on to a new assignment at the Finnish Security Police. Until the new Director General has been chosen, Mr Esa Markkanen will be in charge of UVI.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 26 March 2004, p. A8)

300 Slovakian refugees deported

The deportation of some 300 Slovakian asylum seekers, who arrived in Finland this year, has begun. The Slovakian refugees belong to the Romani minority and come from the Slovakian city of Trebisov, where in recent months many disturbances have occurred between the Romani population and the police. 87.5 per cent of the roman population in Slovakia are unemployed, while the corresponding figure for the whole population in Slovakia is 12.4 per cent. Also the educational system is discriminatory, and many are forced to live in segregated slum areas. According to the Finnish Minister of the Interior, Kari Rajamäki, "Slovakia is still a safe country and therefore there is no basis for the asylum applications. It seems more to be a matter of economic refuge." In opposition to this decision, a small demonstration was held in Finland. Three Slovakian families were deported yesterday and more will be deported today. The deportation is slowed down because normal regional flights are used. More Romanis will be deported when charter flights are being arranged.

(Hufvudstadsbladet, 26 March 2004, p.10)

Norwegian press

Mandatory language and social training for immigrants

The Government will propose that in order to receive a permanent Norwegian residence permit, adult immigrants must have a basic knowledge of the Norwegian language and a minimum of social studies. The aim of this scheme is to make the immigrants able to become more active in our society, Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik says. The Government will put forward a proposal making Norwegian and social studies mandatory, but free of charge. The immigrants must attend a minimum of 300 hours of study. Of these, 50 hours will deal with social studies in a language understood by the individual.

(NRK, 1 April 2004)

Swedish Press

Asylum seekers from Belarus found dead

Two men, who have been identified as asylum seekers from Belarus, were found dead in a stretch of woodland in Stockholm. One of them has been living in Sweden for several years, while the other sought asylum only a couple of weeks ago. The police are suspecting a dispute among criminals as the motive of the supposed murder.

(Dagens Nyheter, 2 April 2004, p. 11 & Svenska Dagbladet, p. 6)

Small increase in anti-Semitism related crimes

A new EU report shows that there has been a small increase in anti-Semitism related crimes in Sweden since 1997, from 99 to 131 reported incidents. Most incidents are not serious crimes, but harassment and incitement to racial hatred

as well as vandalism. However, the authors of the report admit that the statistics used in the report is hard to verify and might be out of date.
(Svenska Dagbladet, 1 April 2004, p. 23)

Honour related violence prevalent in all of Sweden

A new report from the County Administrative Boards shows that so called honour related violence is prevalent in all counties of Sweden. The main focus of the report is threats against girls, but also boys might need protection due to their sexual orientation. A protection centre, which will include accommodation for 60 youth, will be built this year. However, the need might be at least double. "Now the next step is preventive: to influence families to protect their girls. In this process, voluntary organisations are important, as well as ethnic and religious organisations, to whom many families listen", says Mona Sahlin, Minister for Democracy and Integration Issues.

(Dagens Nyheter, 1 April 2004, p. 5 & Svenska Dagbladet, p. 15)

Least diversity in teacher education

Students with foreign background are still underrepresented in higher education in Sweden, a new government report shows. There is more diversity within the health care and technology sectors than within the teacher education, where only three per cent of the students are of foreign origin. Several efforts have successfully been aimed at widening the recruitment to higher education, but despite the success, more than half of these projects were closed down three years after the initiative, the report shows.

(Dagens Nyheter, 31 March 2004, Debate, p. 4)

More co-operation to protect victims of trafficking

Only two persons have been sentenced to jail for trafficking since the Law was introduced two years ago. Instead of being allowed to stay and testify as key witnesses in court proceedings, women who are victims of trafficking have immediately been sent back to their home countries. The Regional Prosecution Office, the police and the Swedish Migration Board have now launched a joint initiative which aims at giving support to victims of trafficking. Between 200 and 500 women are brought into Sweden each year in order to be used in the sex industry, and the Swedish authorities have previously been unconfident when it comes to handle victims of trafficking.

(Dagens Nyheter, 31 March 2004, p. 6)

Nordic Headlines 7 April 2004

Danish press

Discrimination at night clubs

Many second generation immigrants are being refused entrance to night clubs in Copenhagen due to their skin colour, but very few report this to the police. In order to combat this, the Copenhagen Municipality Integration Council is about to launch a campaign, in which young people are encouraged to report night clubs which discriminates. "Many second generation immigrants feel like second class citizens in their own country", Manu Sareen from the Council says. Last year, only 50 incidents were reported, but the hidden numbers are probably much higher. "The problem is, that discrimination is hard to prove. A refusal can always be motivated in some way", Niels Lund, criminal inspector at the Copenhagen police, says. Representatives from the night clubs' branch organisation do not think that discrimination is a problem in their business, but would welcome nevertheless an investigation of the matter.

(Politiken, 7 April 2004, p. 6)

Free travel for deportees

The Government has given up all hope of recovering the millions spent on sending rejected asylum seekers back to their native countries. According to immigration legislation, refugees and asylum seekers who are forcibly deported are required to pay their own plane tickets, lodging, and any other costs incurred during their trip home. However, in reality, the authorities have no real chance of ever collecting the debts, and the Government has now proposed that travel should be free for those asylum seekers who willingly leave the country.

(Danish Radio news online, 6 April 2004, NE translation)

Demanding new rules of appeal

The Refugee Board refuses compensation to refugees who have been tortured after repatriation from Denmark. The Danish Red-Green Alliance ('Enhedslisten') does not think that the Board should determine complaints filed against itself. The political party demands a legal change after the Board rejected an Iranian refugee's compensation claim. The refugee was repatriated immediately after a suicide attempt and upon arrival in Iran he was arrested and tortured for a long time. "It is the Refugee Board who made the mistake. That is why it is fair if somebody else determines the question of compensation," says MP Soeren Soendergaard from the Danish Red-Green Alliance. The man who is 23 years today came to Denmark for the second time 29 March last year.

(Politiken, 4 April 2004, p. 2)

Finnish press

More immigration needed in the future

In a recent study made for the Finnish Ministry of Education, Olli Poropudas claims that more immigration will be needed to correct future labour shortage in Finland. Within 15 years, 370,000 highly educated persons will have retired. At the same time the need for skilled labour will increase, which means that there will be some 600,000 vacancies by 2020. The Finnish population is too small to fill these vacancies, therefore skilled labour must come from abroad. According to Poropudas, skilled labour is not only needed in order to keep up the same service level as the Finnish are used to, but also in order to keep “the capital” in the country. Therefore “it is important to welcome more foreign labour and to encourage foreign students to stay in Finland after graduation”, says Poropudas. (Hufvudstadsbladet 7 April 2004, p. 2)

Three Chinese arrested for bringing foreigners to Finland illegally

Three Chinese men have been arrested for illegally bringing in a group of Chinese youngsters to Finland. As the group of Chinese got off the plane in Finland they sought asylum. The police suspects that the three Chinese men were trying to transport the group through Finland to another country for work, as additional visas and journeys had been arranged for the group. According to the police, it seems likely that the youngsters did not know to which country they were heading at nor what kind of work was awaiting them. (Helsingin Sanomat, 6 April 2004, p. A6)

Finnish company discriminates foreign labourers

The executive director of a Finnish stonemasonry company, 'Iittalan Kivijaloste', has been prosecuted for discrimination against twelve Chinese stonecutters. The Finnish Construction Trade Union, who reported the maltreatment to the police in March 2002, maintains that the wages of the Chinese men, were much lower than their Finnish counterparts and that the men worked longer hours and in poorer conditions than labour legislation would allow. (Hufvudstadsbladet 2 April 2004, p. 4 & Helsingin Sanomat, p. A6)

UVI employee took bribes

A person working for the Finnish Directorate of Immigration (UVI) has been indicted for having accepted bribes from foreign residence permit-applicants. The police states that within a period of two years, the employee received up to 20,000 Euro in bribes from over a dozen immigrants. Rumours of a UVI employee accepting bribes became widely known in immigrant circles and soon reached the police's knowledge. The employee did not have any actual decision-making authority, so the bribes are not believed to have had any real significance on the decisions of the Directorate. (Hufvudstadsbladet, 2 April 2004, p. 9)

Finnish Foreign Minister warns against racism

Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Erkki Tuomioja, thinks racist prejudices and discrimination are problems also in Finland. Tuomioja brought up the subject as Finland's Parliament started a debate on the government's human rights policy report. Tuomioja stressed that the obligation – imposed by the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees on any country to provide protection to the racially persecuted – is still topical. The procedure is based on individual treatment of applications, he added. The question of asylum seekers is current for another reason: the Parliament is putting the finishing touches on the revision of the Aliens Act.

(Huvfudstadsbladet, 1 April 2004, p. 9)

Thousands flee conflicts in Sudan

The conflicts in the region of Darfur in western Sudan, are described by UN-experts as ethnic cleansing. Since Sudan's independence in 1956, the country has, with the exception of a 10-year period in 1972-1983, been in a state of civil war. Conflicts between the Arab Muslims in the north and the black Christians in the south have led to the death of 1,5-2 million persons and 4 million have been forced to flee their homes. According to the United Nations co-ordinator for Sudan, Mukesh Kapila, "the events in Darfur is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world and a catastrophe for human rights." In a press conference in Kenya, Kapila stated that there is evidence of women being systematically raped, villages and fields being burnt down and civilians being massacred. "The only difference between the genocide in Rwanda and Darfur, is the number of the dead, tortured and raped", says Kapila. UNHCR spokesperson, Jennifer Clark, says there are some 110,000 refugees on the border of Chad. UNHCR is trying to move these people into refugee camps in Chad so that the refugees would be more secure and more accessible for aid. UNHCR has already moved 18,000 Sudanese to camps in Chad and continues moving thousands every day. "We have to get as many as possible to the camps before the rains begin in the end of May, because after that the roads will become impassable and we will no longer be able to help the ones at the border."

(Huvfudstadsbladet, 1 April 2004, p. 14)

Norwegian press

Jewish children experience daily harassment

PM Kjell Magne Bondevik and Minister of Justice, Odd Einar Dørum have met with Jewish children who have experienced different forms of harassment in Norway. Bondevik believes this is an increasing problem and characterises the latest developments as "disturbing". "We see systematised harassment of Jewish children in Norway simply because they are Jewish. It is important that people know this. It is our duty to combat racism and growing anti-Semitism", Bondevik said. He sees schools as important arenas in order to battle this but he also wish to contact Muslim leaders in Oslo in order to prevent that the Middle East conflict leads to further harassment between people living in Norway. The Jewish

Community in Oslo has registered 40 incidents of harassment against Jews in 2003. This is an increase from 2002 when 30 incidents were registered and 2001 when there were 20 incidents.

(Aftenposten, 7 April 2004, p. 4)

Racism charges against Sami politician dismissed

Isak Mathis O. Hætta, a member of Norway's Sami Parliament, will not be prosecuted for racism after a listener brought charges after hearing the politician call immigrants "darkies" on a radio program. Vadsø woman Anne Holder was offended by Hætta's language and charged him with violation racism laws. The incident occurred during a debate program on NRK Sami Radio and the police commission of Øst-Finnmark, Ketil Haukaas, has assessed freedom of speech as the most important factor in this instance. Hætta's remarks sparked widespread controversy due to the fact that he is also a member of an ethnic minority. He also said he had no regrets about his choice of words, saying he had every right to call immigrants "darkies".

(Aftenposten, 6 April 2004)

New arrangement for legal representation in asylum matters

Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg believes that the current arrangement concerning free legal assistance is not well functioning. Instead of the previous three hours of free legal assistance in the application phase and three more hours if a rejection is being appealed, the new suggestion offers five hours of legal assistance during the appeal. Solberg believes that the need for legal assistance in the first phase is not very big, except for certain groups, which still will receive such help.

(Aftenposten, 3 April 2004, p. 4)

Massive protest against new EU asylum policy

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is one of 76 international humanitarian organisations, which have asked the European Commission to withdraw the new EU Asylum Procedures Directive. NRC and the other organisations believe that the Commission proposal is in breach of fundamental rights and international law. In the protest letter from the organisations, one of the main concerns is the possibility of using the safe country of origin concept to restrict access to the regular asylum procedure. Another concern is the use of a so-called safe country concept, which they claim does not conform with Member States obligations under international law. Moreover, a third concern is that the proposal does not contain adequate appeal safeguards for asylum seekers. The Norwegian authorities have not been contacted in the matter, but Bjarte Vandvik of NRC says this will be done. Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg sees no reason to be worried. She says that Norway will decide who get asylum and refugee status by itself without any obligations to the EU. However, Norway might be influenced indirectly if neighbouring countries chose a stricter asylum policy and start rejecting more people who then chose to

come to Norway instead. The organisations have not yet received an answer on their letter from the EU Commission.

(Aftenposten, 3 April 2004, p. 4)

Easier to expel criminals in the future

The government wants to make it easier to expel criminal foreign visitors. It will therefore put forward a proposal, which will allow expulsion for far less serious crimes than under the present law. Today, criminal foreigners with work or residence permit may be expelled only if their crime has a maximum penalty of at least one year. In the future, the Government wants to see that also less serious crimes will result in the expulsion of the criminal. Leader of the Policemen's Federation, Arne Johannesen believes this is a positive proposition. "I think it good to signal that crime will not be tolerated. The attitude up to now has been much too soft", he says. The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), on the other hand, is very critical of the government's proposal, saying it would mean discrimination of foreigners.

(NRK, 2 April 2004)

Swedish press

Refugee revealed by hospitals

Two hospitals in Stockholm have broken their obligation to secrecy by revealing to the police and the Swedish Migration Board that they had a refugee woman threatened by deportation in their care. The police arrested the woman, who is now going to be deported together with her two children. The police comment the incident by saying that they would never had taken the decision to arrest the woman if they had had all information about the case. Today, no authority takes responsibility for the treatment of the woman and her children, who all have mental problems.

(Dagens Nyheter, 6 April 2004, p. 5)

Refugees worried over methods of the Swedish Security Police

Refugees in Sweden are worried about the way Swedish Security Police ('Säpo') have handled the case of the Swedish citizen arrested in Denmark charged of terrorism. Swedish police interrogated the man, who is originally from Morocco, two weeks ago but he was released the very same day. Later, he was arrested in Denmark, probably based on information from Säpo to the Danish police. Denmark might extradite him to Morocco, where he is considered suspect of terrorist related crimes. Refugees who have been granted Swedish citizenship have always believed that the citizenship would protect them, since Sweden does not transfer citizens to countries outside the EU. Now their confidence has decreased: "This is very worrying. There are many refugees from Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria who are opponents to the governments there, and they are afraid that they will be treated the same way if they go on vacation outside

Sweden”, Mahmoud Al-debe at the Swedish Muslim Association says. Neither Swedish or Danish security service wish to comment on the issue.
(Dagens Nyheter, 5 April 2004, p. 5)

Fewer seek asylum in Sweden

Statistics from the Swedish Migration Board shows that the number of asylum seekers to Sweden decreases. During the first quarter of 2004, 6,244 sought asylum, compared to 7,943 last year. The largest groups of asylum seekers came from Serbia and Montenegro, Somalia, Iraq and Russia. Many asylum seekers are also stateless. “This year, we are expecting around 28,000 refugees, compared to 31,000 last year. The number of asylum seekers is usually varying, depending on the circumstances in the world and in Sweden”, Marie Andersson at the Swedish Migration Board says.
(Svenska Dagbladet, 5 April 2004, p. 6)

Long waiting for relatives

The Swedish Migration Board issues a warning that there will not be a reduction in the waiting when it comes to immigration of relatives, due to demands for retrenchment. Last year, only half of the applications were investigated within six months, which is in line with the ambitions of the government. “The pressure of being allowed to stay in Sweden while waiting is increasing, and more people are also staying illegally”, Fredrik Martinsson, expert at the Swedish Migration Board, says. The number of applications increases every year. Last year, some 50,000 people sought family reunification, compared to 46,000 the year before. The most common countries in this group are Iraq, Thailand, Somalia, Afghanistan, Serbia and Montenegro, and China.
(Dagens Nyheter, 4 April 2004, p. 5)

Homosexual Iranian allowed to stay

The Aliens Appeal Board has decided that a homosexual refugee from Iran, whose story has been publicised in Swedish media, will be granted residence permit. The man claims that he will be sentenced to death if he returns to Iran, but the Swedish Migration Board rejected his application. The Aliens Appeal Board, however, believes that the recent publicity has increased the risk of him being arrested by the Iranian authorities if he returns.
(Dagens Nyheter, 4 April 2004, p. 5)

Asylum seekers mutilate their hands

Swedish Radio has reported on asylum seekers who destroy their fingers in order to avoid registration of their fingerprints in the ‘Eurodac’ database, and thus avoid deportation to the first country of asylum. Since the database was introduced one year ago, the Swedish Migration Board has registered about 26,000 asylum seekers’ fingerprints. The Board estimates that approximately 400 of these have harmed their own fingers.
(Dagens Nyheter, 3 April 2004, Culture Section p. 4)

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Danish press

Cleaning firm offers “Danish” cleaning

Copenhagen municipality provides customers a cleaning firm, which offers “white” and “Danish” cleaning. Furthermore, the same company does not allow its employees to wear headscarves. Now, the Centre against Racial Discrimination (DRC) asks whether the municipalities can include a non-discrimination clause in contracts with private firms. “Cleaning firms have found out that the customers prefer Danish rather than foreign help. It is a clear violation of the Anti-discrimination Law and it is also anti-competitive”, Niels-Erik Hansen from DRC says. Jesper Fisker from the Copenhagen area health board is surprised: “This is completely unacceptable. All firms we approve have to follow the law. We do not need to include a specific clause about this, but it should be self evident to follow the law”, he says.

(Politiken, 14 April 2004, p. 7)

Thousands living as slaves in Denmark

The Council of Europe, Amnesty International and the Danish Red Cross warn in a new report that the trade in human slaves is a growing problem. In Denmark, some 1,000 people live under such conditions that they would fall under the definition of slavery: Primarily Asian and Eastern Europeans that are coerced into prostitution and Danish international aid efforts to combat the problem are not sufficient, claim NGOs. Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder says that he is prepared to do more for the problem if the organisations are right in their evaluation. “The funding is to be found in existing budgets, and if the purpose is convincing, then I will consider it,” he says.

(Politiken, 14 April 2004, NE translation)

Chechens rejected for asylum

Human rights lobbyists Support Group for Chechnya says Danish authorities have tightened policies towards Chechens seeking asylum in the country. Carl Erik Foverskov of the Group says that immigration authorities are now rejecting all applicants. “Whether this is a permanent trend it is hard to say. But the last few months a considerable portion have been rejected”, he says.

(Politiken, 13 April 2003, p. 3, NE translation)

Danish embassies criticised by businesses

Tightened Danish immigration legislation is making it harder for Danish companies to do business abroad. This is according to the Chamber of Commerce (HTS) that criticises immigration authorities and Danish embassies for hindering invitations of foreign business contacts to Denmark. Members of HTS express anger at the immigration authorities in a survey. “We are forced to answer all kinds of ridiculous questions, before we can get a guest into the country, in spite of the fact that we have a perfect track record, and in spite of the

fact that we make economic guarantee for our guests,” says Kasper Jensen, head of sales for Scan Mills in Russia. Harun Saylam of Saylam Makina Sanayi – a company in Turkey that claims to transact DKK 100 million in Denmark – says Danish authorities are out of line in a letter to HTS: “The people at the Consulate treat us with disrespect. They are very aggressive towards us,” he writes. (Børsen, 13 April 2004, p. 16, NE translation)

Finnish Press

Educated immigrants form interest organisation

An interest organisation for academically educated immigrants and immigrants with specific education (MA-MU) has been established in Finland. According to chairwoman Olga Tchijik-Kinnunen, a primary goal is to map out the skills and education of the immigrants in Finland, as there is no such information available at the moment.

(Hufvudstadsbladet, 13 April 2004, p.15)

Critique on the large-scale expulsion of Slovakian asylum seekers

The large number of expelled Slovakian Romani asylum seekers has given rise to a lively debate in the midst of issuing a new Aliens Act in Finland. This year 328 Slovakian Romanis have applied for asylum in Finland and already 304 applications have been refused. The Constitutional Committee has particularly referred to the situation of the Slovakian asylum seekers in a statement to the Parliament, emphasizing that the decision to grant asylum should not solely be based on the general state of the country of origin. “Also in democratic countries, the state may be unable to offer protection against certain individuals or groups that are guilty of acts of violence based on ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender. For this reason it is not enough to investigate the actions of the state when determining whether a country is safe for the asylum seeker or not”, the Committee stressed. The last time the Slovakian Romanis gave rise to such a big debate was in 1999, when 1,516 Romanis applied for asylum in Finland. The Parliament decided then to add a provision in the Aliens Act, giving the Directorate of Immigration the right of accelerated procedure in the case the asylum seeker comes from a safe country. An asylum seeker who has been refused asylum by the Directorate, can according to the provision, be expelled from Finland within eight days of receiving notice of the decision.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 10 April 2004, p. A6)

Finnish employers not against hiring foreign labour

A recent questionnaire sent out to various Finnish workplaces shows that employers are ready to employ foreign labour if qualified domestic labour is not available. A third of the workplaces questioned has in recent years had foreign labour and one in ten has recently hired new foreign labour.

(Hufvudstadsbladet, 8 April 2004, p.19)

Norwegian press

Teens sorry they attacked refugees

Three teenagers in northern Norway have apologised for starting a fight between Norwegians and asylum seekers in the town of Vadsø last weekend. The local mayor had ordered a meeting between both sides on Wednesday. "We're sorry," one of the Norwegian teenage boys who started the trouble said at the meeting. "What happened over the Easter weekend never should have happened, and it won't happen again." Another admitted to local newspaper 'Finnmarken' that the incident gave Vadsø a bad image in the national press as being "violent and racist." He said he hopes things calm down now. The trouble began when a gang of Norwegian teenagers encountered two asylum seekers from Afghanistan on a street in Vadsø Saturday night, and attacked them without apparent provocation. The two asylum seekers were badly beaten and later had to be airlifted to the nearest hospital for treatment. Six Norwegians were arrested and charged with inflicting bodily harm. On Tuesday, police were called out once again to ease tensions when another group of Vadsø teenagers drove up to the local asylum centre. Among the group were those released from arrest the day before. The mayor of Vadsø then called for a meeting between the Norwegians and the refugees. Several civil employees already had talked with the Norwegians, who later met and apologised to their Afghan counterparts face-to-face.

(Aftenposten, 15 April 2004)

KrF demands more human asylum procedures

The Central Board of the Christian Democratic Party (KrF) has issued a statement demanding that political judgements have to be taken into consideration if necessary when asylum cases are being proceeded. Today, applications are being assessed by the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and appeals by the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE). The Ministry of Local Integration and Regional Development (KRD) is only entitled to interfere in cases where there is a direct threat to national security or in foreign policy issues. KRD use to be the appeals instance but former Minister of Justice, Aud-Inger Aure of the KrF, then gave this responsibility to UNE. PM Bondevik's Party now believes that KRD should get back some of its previous power. However, the Ministry should only be able to give general guidelines but not get involved in individual cases. KrF intends to soften today's strict policy and open up for a more 'human' treatment in asylum cases. KrF Vice-Chairman Knut Arild Hareide believes that KrF's opinions are very similar to those KRD Minister Erna Solberg already have proposed in a report to the Parliament.

(Aftenposten, 14 April 2004, p. 3)

Foreign brides to get official warnings

Norwegian immigration authorities will soon try to start warning foreign brides if the Norwegian men they are marrying have a history of violence. All women who come to Norway because they have married Norwegian men will also get better information about their rights once they are in the country. Thousands of women

are living in Norway because they married Norwegian men. Now, record numbers of them are turning up at local crisis centres after suffering abuse, or because their husbands are dumping them, and they do not know what to do or where to go. Many women live much too long with domestic abuse, says Tove Smaadahl, leader of the Crisis Centre Secretariat, "because they're afraid they'll be kicked out of the country." Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg wants all women to be given written information when they first contact Norwegian authorities, either in Norway or at Norway's embassies overseas. Norway's immigration agency also may be required to check whether the prospective husbands of foreign women have a record of violence or other criminal offences. The women "should be told about the crisis centres, about family patterns and that they have rights and an obligation to attend classes in Norwegian if they want permanent residence permission in Norway," Solberg said. Solberg called it "terribly wrong" that many foreign women live isolated and in fear in Norway, but the state can not help them alone. She urged neighbours and others who may have contact with foreign brides to be alert to problems, and to offer help. Of the roughly 2,500 women who sought help at crisis centers last year, around 45 per cent had foreign backgrounds, mostly from Africa, Asia, South American and Eastern Europe. Many are married to Norwegian men who abuse them or refuse to let them attend Norwegian classes or work.

(Aftenposten, 13 April 2004, p. 3)

Swedish press

Increased employment rate for immigrants

The employment rate among non-European immigrants has increased during the last six years, a new report from the Swedish Trade Union Confederation shows. Today, the employment rates for immigrants who are coming from a non-European country and have stayed in Sweden less than 10 years are 77 per cent for men and 61 per cent for women. The rates in 1997 were 60 and 47 per cent, respectively. Many women in this group are to be found in the health care sector, especially in urban areas. "The health care sector in Stockholm is totally dependent on immigrants and their children. The situation would be very serious if we did not have immigration", investigator Sven Nelander says. The report also confirms that many highly educated immigrants cannot use their competence in Sweden. There is, however, also a group of uneducated immigrants who need additional support.

(Dagens Nyheter, 15 April 2004, p. 3, Economy section)

Swedish authorities do not trust DNA test

A refugee woman from Iraq who has been granted residence permit in Sweden is not allowed to bring her children, despite the fact that there is a DNA test which proves her motherhood to 99.95 per cent. The DNA analysis is done by the National Board of Forensic Medicine in Sweden, but the blood sample is taken in

Syria, which makes the test less reliable, according to the Swedish Migration Board and the Aliens Appeal Board. Usually, Swedish authorities trust the results of the National Board of Forensic Medicine, but this case shows that the Aliens Appeal Board has set up different standards. The Swedish Migration Board will soon reinvestigate the case.

(Dagens Nyheter, 15 April 2004, p. 5)

Swedes positive to transition rules

A new opinion poll shows that a majority of the Swedish people, 54 per cent, wishes to introduce transition rules that restrict workers from the new EU countries from working in Sweden. One third of the Swedes think that transition rules should not be introduced. In the same time, a narrow majority (50 per cent) of the Swedes is positive to the EU enlargement as a whole, while 32 per cent are negative.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 10 April 2004, p. 6, & Dagens Nyheter, 11 April, p. 5)

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Danish press

Norway overflowed with refugees from Denmark

Due to the Danish opt-outs, the Norwegian authorities cannot return refugees who already had their asylum application turned down in Denmark. Minister of Integration, Bertel Haarder would like to put a stop to the traffic and pressurises EU. The problem is caused by some legal details. Whereas Norway is not an EU member it participates in the Schengen co-operation and has ratified the Dublin II-agreement. This means that Norway can send back asylum seekers to the EU country they first entered to have their case heard there. Due to the Danish legal opt-out Norway cannot do so in the case of Denmark. The problem can be solved if Denmark secures a parallel agreement with EU but both Norwegian Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg and Danish Minister of Refugees, Bertel Haarder fear that the other EU countries will use the case to raise the issue of doing away with the Danish legal opt-out.

(Politiken, 19 April 2004, p. 5)

They died on their way to Fort Europe

Persecuted and poor people are desperate to get to Europe. Many die in the attempt to climb EU's walls. The Dutch organisation United for Intercultural Action has for the last ten years gathered a list of casualties until now coming to 4,591. The purpose is to show that the high walls surrounding EU cost human lives and that it is a useless thought that you can keep the world's persecuted and poor people at a convenient distance. "The higher you try to built those walls, the more desperate people will become and the more people will die in the attempt to enter Fort Europe. Most often the dead only appear as numbers in a refugee flow and not as people," an employee in the Dutch organisation says. UNHCR believes the list illustrates the consequences of the refugee policy in Europe. "Today it is as good as impossible to reach Europe in a legal manner to seek asylum. That has created this monster of human smugglers. It means that unscrupulous human smugglers do the most horrible things like hiding people in refrigerator vans or sailing them through tiny straits in small, overcrowded boats. The Dutch death list is a result of this," says Rupert Colville, Spokesperson for UNHCR. Like the Dutch organisation, he believes that EU will never be able to close the door completely. "Since the EU closed its borders, the number of human smugglers has risen dramatically. It is like the struggle against Al Capone in the 1920s USA. You try to keep something down that cannot be kept down," he says. "I guess many of the casualties have not been refugees but poor people, who wished to reach a rich country. This doesn't change that we believe it should be possible to make it to Europe and apply for asylum. Countries can then decide who and how many they want to grant asylum," Colville says. Refugee Minister Bertel Haarder admits that many refugees and illegal immigrants today have to pay a human smuggler and calls this a "moral and difficult dilemma". "The problem is that more than 90 per cent of those who turn

to Europe are not persecuted and not real refugees. You cannot get European countries to open their doors to anyone who wants a better life. That would create other big problems," he says. Bertel Haarder instead wants to scale up the support to refugees in their regions of origin. "Here we shall review their asylum applications and then take those who really need help," he says. "But when people like today travel to the other side of the globe to apply for asylum, they'll be met by a general struggle against human smuggling and immigration," he says.

(Politiken PS, 18 April 2004)

Human rights under the microscope

Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder did not receive the seal of approval for Danish immigration legislation he had been hoping for, when the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner, the Spanish Alvaro Gil-Robles, wound up a four-day fact-finding mission in Denmark, Friday. Although Gil-Robles declared himself 'impressed' by the Danish democratic system, he also said that he had discovered a number of issues during his visit that would require closer examination, including the continuing use of isolation in prisons, the forced castration of sex criminals, and a number of the government's immigration and integration initiatives.

(Politiken, 17 April 2004, NE translation)

"We won't move till asylum is granted to all"

Five activists from the NGO Global Roots ('Globale Roedder') occupied Refugee Board offices in Copenhagen calling for asylum for all in an action against what they term state racism. The five are now arrested accused of violating domestic peace or illegal trespassing.

(Politiken, 17 April 2004, p. 7)

15,000 migrant workers await access to Denmark

Up to 15,000 workers, primarily from Poland and Lithuania, will cross the Danish border when the countries enter the EU 1 May. Employment offices throughout the country report a boom in the number of Eastern Europeans applying for work permits for seasonal work.

(Jyllandsposten, 16 April 2004, NE translation)

Finnish press

Many immigrant children taken into temporary custody

A municipal council in Finland has expressed its concern over the increasing number of immigrant children taken into temporary custody. Today one in five children that are placed at a reception centre in Finland have immigrant background. The most common reasons for taking custody over immigrant children are mental problems of the mother, abuse at home and problems related to upbringing. The Committee for Social and Health Services has responded to

the municipal council's concern by stating that the support for immigrant families is constantly improving.

(HBL 17 April 2004, p. 5)

Asylum seekers mutilate their fingerprints

An increasing number of asylum applicants mutilate their fingerprints in order to hide their identity from Finnish migration officials. The Police receive, according to inspector Jaakko Heinilä, two to three cases per month. Refugees are fingerprinted in the country where they apply for asylum and the prints are then stored in the 'Eurodac' database, which is common for all EU countries. If migration officials discover applicants that have already applied for asylum in another EU state, they are likely to be sent back.

(HBL 16 April 2004, p. 5)

The revisions of the Aliens Act accepted by Finnish Parliament

The Finnish Parliament has accepted the contents of the much-debated new Aliens Act. The Act will be approved next week before coming into force 1 May this year. The biggest debate have taken place between those who plead for the direct expulsion of asylum seekers coming from so called safe countries and those who claim that even the current expulsion procedure of refused asylum seekers is too hasty. According to the Minister of the Interior, Kari Rajamäki, a balance between the two opposing views has been found in the new Aliens Act. The right of accelerated procedure that was introduced in 2000, will remain. An asylum seeker who has been refused asylum by the Directorate, can according to the right of accelerated procedure, be expelled from Finland within eight days of receiving notice of the decision. Kari Rajamäki also states that the new Act will slightly improve foreigners' legal security, as it extends the possibility of lodging an appeal to almost all decisions concerning a residence permit. The new Act places particular focus on what is best for children. It gives solitary underage siblings the right to come to Finland if they already have an underage sister or brother with refugee status in the country. The Act further aims at shortening the waiting periods for the processing of asylum, residence permit and citizenship applications by half. Some changes have also been made in order to facilitate the issuing of work permits in Finland. The changes are mostly aimed at foreign family members, temporary workers in horticulture and skilled labour in the fields of science, art and culture.

(Helsingin Sanomat 15, 17 April 2004, p. A8 & Huvudstadsbladet, 15/16/17 April 2004, pp. 6/8/6)

Norwegian press

Vanunu wants Norwegian help to leave Israel

Israeli Mordechai Vanunu, released Wednesday after 18 years in prison for revealing his country's nuclear secrets, wants Norway to help him leave Israel after his release from prison, according to Norwegian peace

activist and lawyer Fredrik S. Heffermehl. However, Israel has imposed strict controls on Vanunu, including a ban on leaving the country and speaking to foreigners. "The first thing he said to me was that he strongly hoped that Norway could help him get out of Israel, and that maybe could be granted residency in Norway," Fredrik S. Heffermehl said. That would mean Norway would have to give him a passport or other travel document, plus a visa on humanitarian grounds. It was not clear whether Vanunu had made the same request to other countries. The Norwegian foreign ministry declined immediate comment.

(Aftenposten, 22 April 2004)

Bin Laden turned Krekar down

Mullah Krekar presented his book "In My Own Words" at a press conference on Thursday. The autobiography includes a series of shocking revelations, including the admission that Krekar tried to get funding from Osama bin Laden. Other riveting tales from the spiritual leader include how the teenaged Krekar took a pilot's head as a trophy in his early years as a liberationist guerrilla and memories of how Kurds endured vicious bombing from Iraqi Baathists and others. Krekar relates that he did not receive any financial assistance from bin Laden. He claims that bin Laden preferred to back rebels in Afghanistan. The controversial mullah, who is currently fighting an deportation order in Norway, writes effusively about his new homeland, telling immigrant readers living here that it is a Muslim duty to maintain the laws of their new home. Krekar thanks Norway for its protection and patience and says that Muslims gaining residency in Norway and other western nations have a holy duty to observe the laws and rules that apply there.

(Aftenposten, 22 April 2004)

Non-western immigrants face job discrimination

Even if two of the biggest obstacles to job equality are removed, non-western immigrants can still expect to see Norwegians hired ahead of them. Higher education from Norway and perfect language skills were no guarantee of equal opportunity according to a new study, student newspaper 'Universitas' reports. Non-western immigrants can expect double the unemployment rate after graduation compared to their ethnic Norwegian peers according to a new report from the Norwegian Institute for Education and Research Studies (NIFU). Education and language skills did not improve their chances. "It should not come as a shock that non-westerners are more seldom hired," said Liv Anne Støren, sociologist and the author of the new report. Nevertheless, the details of the study were surprising. "Norwegian skills appear to have little impact. Whether they were educated in Norway or abroad also appears to make no noticeable difference. The only thing that seems relevant is that they were not westerners," Støren said. The study has not yet examined which areas of study are least secure, but previous research indicated that the natural sciences and technology are among the sectors with highest immigrant unemployment. Finn Langeland, information director of the Confederation

of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO) believes there is every reason to fear that prejudice is a dominant factor when hiring occurs. "Some are also sceptical about whether the documents applicants have truly prove their qualifications, there have been cases where people falsified their papers," Langeland said. "Norway needs competent people, whether they are from India or Hokksund."
(Aftenposten, 21 April 2004)

Immigration youth voices are heard

The Norwegian Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg wish youngsters with immigrant background to be heard on account of a report on multicultural Norway that the government is presenting next autumn. For this purpose, the Norwegian Youth Council (LNU) and *Statsrådet* will start a youth process in which youngsters will be able to initiate their own ideas and be heard by public authorities. NOK 1 million has been granted for this purpose.
(Aftenposten 21 April 2004, p. 3)

Six out of ten immigrants come to Norway due to family ties

More than 60 per cent of the 16,850 foreigners who were granted residence permit in Norway last year, came due to family reunification. The number of persons that receive a resident permit due to family ties has within the past five years increased by some 50 per cent compared to the earlier five-year period. Director General of the Directorate of Immigration (UDI), Trygve G. Nordby, says they are dealing with the biggest immigrant group in Norway. Out of this group, 52 per cent were spouses to a Norwegian citizen, of which half were of Norwegian descent. Only 5 per cent were spouses to refugees living in Norway. The Assistant Director of UDI, Manuela Ramin-Osmundsen, says the programs that the state and the municipalities operate are very much directed to asylum seekers and refugees. The persons moving to Norway to join their spouses fall outside these traditional programs, and 'disappear' into the Norwegian community with their needs often met too late, if at all. Something must be done about this". "This type of family immigration comes increasingly from Asia and Eastern Europe. Norwegians travel more, study more abroad and get more spouses from other countries", concludes Nordby.

(Aftenposten 20 April 2004, p. 3)

230 children can apply for family reunion in Norway

230 children are exempted from the regulation of travelling to their home country when applying for family reunion with parents who have been married in Norway. However, in the future the regulations on family reunion will be stricter. More bureaucracy and longer waiting periods for Norwegians who wish to bring a spouse to Norway from a country with a visa requirement will be established. According to Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg, the reason for this decision is a worry over the amount of marriages between Norwegians and East-Europeans that occur too hastily, and often with ulterior motives. The aim is also to ensure that the rights of both parents whether

in Norway or abroad are respected and to prevent children from being kidnapped into Norway, says Solberg.
(Aftenposten, 21 April, p. 2)

Survey states Mullah Krekar creates fear

Eight of the ten in a national survey claimed that people have become more sceptical towards immigrants due to the Mullah Krekar case. The negative attitude is evident nation wide. The answers are so overwhelmingly negative that there is no longer any doubt that people in Norway believe the Krekar case has created fear of immigrants and increased negative attitudes towards immigration. The people who to the largest degree believe this are people in the age group 45 to 59, who live in the southern part of Norway and vote for the Conservative party. Of these people nine of ten believe the negative attitudes towards immigration have increased. Brynjar Meling, Mullah Krekar's lawyer, said in a comment to the survey that he was not surprised by the result. "Of course, I wish it was different, but we can probably not expect any another result of a survey like that with the campaign both politicians and media have run against my client," Meling said.

(Nettavisen, 20 April 2004)

Immigration connected to criminality focus for election campaign

The vice chairperson of the Norwegian Progress Party, Siv Jensen wishes to focus on immigration in connection with criminality in next year's election campaign in order to attract voters from the Christian Democrats and the Conservative Party. According to a new opinion poll, voters from these parties are in line with the view of the Progress Party when it comes to immigration issues.

(Aftenposten, 18 April 2004, p. 2)

Swedish press

Deportation of children postponed

The Aliens Appeal Board has decided to postpone the deportation of five Kurdish children with consideration to their state of health. The children, whose parents are hiding in Sweden, were about to be placed in family homes or reception centres in Germany.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 23 April 2004, p. 11 & Dagens Nyheter, p. 6)

The paradox of the integration debate

There is a paradox built in the Swedish integration debate. The objective is clear: all citizens should be treated as individuals, not as representatives of a collective. In order to reach this objective, we need to discuss and analyse the existing society where different cultural characteristics influence the power resources of the individuals. Almost all integration strategies have a potential to strengthen the collective identities rather than to counteract them. One criterion for affirmative

action, for example, is that citizens have to be sorted on the basis of some kind of cultural aspect. The question is, however, what kind of cultural aspect; historical connection to Sweden, religious orientation, or skin colour? The opposite strategy, to call for increasing assimilation by means of legislation directed towards immigrants, is hard to implement or runs the risk of violating the openness and tolerance of a liberal society. Is the solution, then, not to do anything? The answer is no. Racism, segregation, and discrimination on the labour market show that we can leave neither the state nor the civil society to itself. In order to integrate all citizens without reinforcing group identities, we need a pragmatic policy. Yesterday, the government presented directives to a new integration commission concerning power, integration and structural discrimination. It is important that this new commission both gives us a clear picture of our society and appropriates the necessary changes.
(Dagens Nyheter, 23 April 2004, Editorial, p. 2)

Immigrants receive harder penalties in drunken-driving cases

According to an investigation made by a Swedish Radio, persons with foreign background are sentenced to harder penalties for drunken driving than Swedes. In the urban areas, more than 50 per cent of the immigrants but only 30 per cent of the Swedes convicted for drunken driving are sentenced to imprisonment. "This is about structural circumstances, which influence the equality before the law", Professor of criminology, Jerzy Sarnecki says.
(Dagens Nyheter, 23 April 2004, p. 5 & Svenska Dagbladet, p. 6)

Less unaccompanied refugee children are allowed to stay

Last year, 561 children without accompanying relatives arrived in Sweden. Less than half of them received residence permit, in contrast to 2001, when almost all unaccompanied refugee children were allowed to stay. "This might depend on the situation in the world, but the numbers indicate that the Swedish Migration Board now has adopted a stricter attitude towards these children", Kristina Swiech from Save the Children says. The Migration Board, however, denies this: "The reason why more children are turned away today, is that the situation in their home countries have changed", Anna Wessel from the Board says.
(Svenska Dagbladet, 21 April 2004, p. 9)

No support for transition rules

The Conservative Party has decided to vote against the government's proposal on transition rules for new EU members. The decision indicates that the proposal will be rejected in Parliament next week. PM Göran Persson, however, is still convinced that his proposal will be supported: "If the government has judged the situation right, there will be transition rules in Sweden. It is enough that some municipalities in southern Sweden experience difficulties for the attitudes to change, which will then lead to a majority in the Parliament being in favour of transition rules", he says.
(Svenska Dagbladet, 21 April 2004, p. 8 & Dagens Nyheter, p. 13)

Hundreds of refugee children do not want to live

More than 150 refugee children in Sweden have escaped the real world and merely lie in their beds, totally apathetic. They are helpless, mute and motionless. Swedish health care is perplexed: "This specific condition (...) has not been scientifically reported anywhere in the world", senior physician Göran Bodegård says. Many of these children have a traumatic background, and their parents have in most of the cases given up their parenthood. There is also a connection between their condition and the family's asylum application. Several children have become apathetic when their asylum application has been rejected. "These children do not want to live", Marie Hessle, Director at the psychiatric unit for refugee children in Stockholm, says. "The families have no energy left to try to restore the health of the child. In order to help these children, we need to develop the working methods within the psychiatric care, but also improve the handling of the asylum applications", she concludes. Director of the Migration Board, Janna Valik, is "deeply moved" by the story. "This is of course not acceptable. Right now, the government is going through the asylum process and will suggest improvements. The most urgent measure is to abolish the possibility to reapply an unlimited number of times", she says. To the question whether children should be present when the family receive a deportation decision, Valik answers: "Our duty is to always let the children have a say, but at the same time see to their best. The ambition is to present also negative decisions in a proper way

(Svenska Dagbladet, 19 April 2004, pp. 6,7 & 20 April, p. 11)

Sweden deports five children

For the first time, Sweden is going to deport children without their parents or other relatives accompanying them. The five children, who are between six and 15 years old and of Kurdish origin, came to Sweden last summer together with their parents and another two siblings. When the Aliens Appeal Board decided to send the family to Germany, where their asylum application already has been rejected, the parents and two of the seven children went underground. The five remaining children are now going to be placed in a family home or reception centre in Germany. "Our contacts in Germany guarantee that the children will be taken care of in the best way possible. The family has lived in Germany for more than 10 years, but only for 10 months in Sweden. In Germany they also have relatives", Uno Nilsson from the Swedish Migration Board says. Johan Braw, legal representative of the family, hopes that the Aliens Appeal Board will stop the deportation: "It is inhuman to deport five young children while their parents are hiding. The pressure on them is enormous right now", he says.

(Dagens Nyheter, 18 April 2004, p. 6, & Svenska Dagbladet, p. 11)

Sweden transit country for Chinese traffickers

This year, about 40 young Chinese have sought asylum in Sweden. All of them have arrived at Arlanda airport without identity papers, with the same amount of money and with similar stories. After a few days at the reception centre, they disappear. The Swedish Migration Board suspects that Chinese traffickers are

using Sweden as a new transit country, and that someone is collecting the young people at the reception centres in order to transport them to another EU country. (Dagens Nyheter, 19 April 2004)

Right to free settlement important to immigrants

Asylum seekers' right to free settlement is important to their future since those who choose to move usually increase their general income, a new dissertation shows. "If the immigrants do not get proper information about Sweden when they arrive, they might settle in a region where their competence cannot be used. It becomes a mismatch between competence and job supply", the author Saman Rashid says. In contrast to Rashid's results, the government wishes to restrict the right to free settlement. "In that case, individuals who wish to move in order to be self-supporting, will be disadvantaged. This might harm our national economy", Rashid says.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 18 April 2004, p. 11)

Most Swedes live in segregated areas

Sweden is a segregated country. Usually, segregation is described by looking at urban areas where many immigrants live, but a new study shows that more than half of the Swedish-born population live in "white" areas. Outside the urban areas, 75 per cent of the Swedes live in areas without any immigrant. The differences are often due to economic reasons. More Swedes than immigrants live in areas where you buy your home rather than rent it. According to the study, better labour market integration is needed, which will give immigrants an equal share of the resources.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 17 April 2004, p. 6)

Nordic Headlines 28 April 2004

Danish press

Asylum seekers kept waiting for years

Around 200 stateless Palestinians who have been declined asylum in Denmark are waiting to be sent back to the Middle East. However, due to the unstable situation in the area, the Palestinian refugees are faced with a long waiting period, which in turn has a bad affect on their mental well being. This situation has been highly criticized by politicians and experts who argue that the asylum seekers should at least be entitled to a temporary residence permit. However, it is possible for asylum seekers to receive a temporary residence permit provided that they have agreed to return after 18 months or if the prospects for them to return are poor. The Danish Immigration Service is rejecting residence permits based on the National Police's judgement, stating that it is indeed possible for the refugees to return. According to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) the asylum seekers should be entitled to a temporary residence permit after 18 months. However, DRC believes there are political forces which argue that it will be harder to send back the asylum seekers once they have been integrated into the Danish society. So far, 18 asylum seekers have been granted temporary residence permits this year. According to the Minister of Integration, Bertel Haarder, the evaluation is based on how long they have waited to return. (Politiken, 25 April 2004, fp)

Finnish Press

UNHCR criticises Chechnya's preparedness for returning refugees

Russia is closing down its last refugee camp in the region of Ingushia. The region has had a maximum of seven refugee camps, but after the Chechen presidential elections last autumn already five have been closed down. According to Igor Junash, Vice Director of the Russian Immigration Services, there is no reason to maintain camps in which people have to live in tents. Instead, refugees who stay in Ingushia are offered temporary accommodation in cowsheds or industrial halls, where already 24,000 Chechen refugees are living. Human rights organizations, however, think closing down camps only worsens the living conditions for refugees. Last February, UN supplied food for over 65,000 refugees living in Ingushia. The refugee camps have become an awkward reminder for Russia of the unstable situation in Chechnya. Kremlin has repeatedly claimed that the war has ended in the region and that a transition to a more peaceful life has begun. This is why Kremlin has vigorously attempted to get rid of the refugee camps. Russian human rights organizations have strongly criticized the Russian authorities' methods to pressure, threaten and cut off food-aid to the refugees in order to speed up their return to Chechnya. According to official estimates, 4,800 refugees have returned from Ingushia this year. The UNHCR Aid Coordinator in Russia, Kasidis Rochakorn, has criticized Chechnya's preparedness to receive

refugees. According to Rochakorn, it does not exist any jobs or housing for returning refugees in Chechnya. This year, UN supplies 50 million Euro for humanitarian aid in the Northern Caucasus region. "It is not nearly enough", says Rochakorn. There are no foreign organizations working in Chechnya due to the weak security situation in the region, so the returning refugees have to manage on their own or with the help of local authorities.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 27 April 2004, p. A13)

Colombian man hides in the woods in fear of deportation

A man from Colombia hid in the woods for three months fearing that he would be sent back to Colombia if the Finnish authorities were to catch him. In order to survive he stole canned food from summer cottages in the Kemiö region. The exhausted man was finally found and is now awaiting a decision in Finland regarding a residence permit.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 26 April 2004, p. A7)

Norwegian press

Immigrant comedienne maddens Mullah

Norwegian-Pakistani humorist Shabana Rehman pulled a stunt during a public debate with Mullah Krekar, the controversial former leader of the militant group Ansar al-Islam that left the religious man fuming and threatening a lawsuit. Rehman, a popular stand-up comic who specializes in material based on culture collision, picked the mullah up off the ground, an act he called a gruesome humiliation. The bizarre incident took place during a debate about Krekar's new book, a largely autobiographical work that tries to put his life and beliefs into perspective and give an alternative look at a man constantly embroiled in accusations of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Rehman, who was born in Karachi but raised in Norway since infancy, is controversial in her own right, constantly creating a stir with comedy material touching on immigration, integration, Muslim conflicts and traditions, feminism and sexual repression. As the debate was winding to a close, Rehman came on stage and said she wanted to carry out a "satiric test" to find out if Mullah Krekar was as strongly fundamentalist as some of his critics believe. When he approached her, she grabbed him and lifted him up in the air. "She displays contempt for me. I cannot accept this," Krekar said, and promised to lodge a complaint via his lawyer. Rehman, told that she wanted to show that if she could lift Krekar, he could hardly be a danger to national security. Rehman said she wanted to see if Krekar was as tolerant and relaxed as he claims to be, and admitted that she found his reaction confusing. Rehman said that his willingness to appear in a public debate and bring female family members along showed liberal views. Krekar's furious reaction hinted at fundamentalism but his desire to seek legal action rather than a fatwa was the behavior of a civilized person in Norway.

(Aftenposten, 28 April 2004)

Increasing number of illegal immigrants

The number of asylum seekers arriving in Norway is on the decline compared with earlier years. However, at the same time the influx of illegal immigrants is increasing. In January and February, altogether 233 illegal immigrants to Norway were stopped, compared with 109 in the same period last year. This indicates that we have an increase in the number of illegal immigrants to Norway, says head of the police alien's section, Frank Sandsund. The control with asylum seekers has been intensified, and in Sandsund's opinion this may be contributing to the increase of the number of illegal immigrants.

(Aftenposten, 26 April 2004, p. 4)

Swedish press

Rejected asylum seekers difficult to deport

Only eight per cent of the foreigners who are denied asylum in Sweden and refuse to return voluntarily, are deported. An increasing amount chooses to hide from the authorities or stay openly in Sweden as illegal immigrants. It is the duty of the Migration Board to make sure that refused asylum seekers return to their own countries, but as there exists no sanctions, only half of the rejected asylum seekers actually go home voluntarily. In order to make the return easier, the Migration Board engages in motivational discussions with the asylum seekers, and provide help in planning and financing the return. Faster identification of the refugee and shorter processing periods would make it easier for refugees to return, says Milan Bobic, repatriation expert at the Migration Board. Another incitement is to help these people financially when they have returned home, says Bobic. The Swedish Police is in charge of the cases in which an asylum seeker has to be deported by force. Due to scarce resources, however, the Police prefer to prioritise other matters like crime prevention. Last year, the Police handled 8,910 such cases, but only 780 lead to deportation of a rejected asylum seeker.

(Dagens Nyheter, 27 April 2004, p. 5)

Refugee children can be saved

Dr. Göran Bodegård, head of the child and youth psychiatric clinic 'Eugenia' in Stockholm, have cured eight out of some 150 severely ill refugee children, who have all been in a totally apathetic condition. Five of the patients have a similar background. All originates from the former Soviet Union and has experienced violence and physical abuse in the past. In most cases they had already shown signs of mental illness when living in their native countries. After arrival to Sweden they have been experiencing hopelessness and uncertainty about the future. Moreover, their mothers had a past of extremely difficult life experiences. As a direct consequence of their parent's disability to uphold their parenthood, three of the children fell into a coma. The method that Bodegård and his team used was to confront the parents and thereby try to dissolve the family's depressive situation. In most cases, the positive change came when they

received their residence permit. Bodegård concludes that it seems like the residence permit is crucial when it comes to the families regaining hope and to help the children in gaining strength to live. To the question why some children got a residence permit whilst equal sick children did not, Bodegård replies that instead of sending ordinary medical certificates to the Swedish Migration Board, he has chosen to send updated reports. He believes that the Board must evaluate concrete situations and that ordinary medical certificates are not enough for judging these sick refugee children and their special situation.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 27 April 2004, p. 8)