

Nordic Headlines 1 July 2004

Danish press

More young criminals

Copenhagen's police force is concerned with the increased criminal activity among youngsters and the fact that immigrants are over-represented. Out of 117 cases in Copenhagen's Court of Justice, 81 have some other ethnic background than Danish. In order to combat the recent developments, the police will investigate whether certain individuals initiate most of these criminal activities.

(Politiken, 29 June 2004, p. 2)

Parent training for ethnic minorities

The Liberal Party is proposing that ethnic-minority parents, whose children continue to break the law or behave in a socially unacceptable manner, should be forced to attend a course teaching them how to raise children in a proper manner. With backing from the Social Democrats, the party has suggested that parents of children with behavioural problems will be asked to participate in talks with the social authorities if their offspring stay away from school, commit petty crimes, damage property, or verbally or physically attack other children. After an initial meeting, the parents could then be made to attend 'upbringing lessons' on a course tutored by a role model from the immigrant community, who will attempt to break down the barriers that currently exist between foreigners and Danish society.

(Jyllands Posten, 26 June 2004, p. 2, NE translations)

Finnish press

Difficult for both patient and staff

To give birth in a different country can be both frightening and difficult. The language barrier is the most common problem faced by immigrant women who are giving birth in Finland. However, Somali midwife Batulo Essak says that it is not such a big problem, as most often the woman has a relative whom is able to translate. But if there are complications there might not be time for translations and it can be very frightening for the woman giving birth not knowing what is going on. Different traditions concerning childbirth can also bring minor problems, such as the expectation that all relatives should be present when the woman is in labour.

(Hufvudstadsbladet, 29 June, pp. 4,5)

Norwegian press

State chides ex-pat Norwegians in Spain

Norwegians living in Spain are often reluctant to learn Spanish and fail to integrate into local society, claim Norwegian State officials. Their criticism comes after they were blasted for failing to look after the interests of Norwegian children brought to Spain by their parents. Press reports appeared in Norway earlier this year that many Norwegian children are virtually abandoned by partying parents in Spain, and many spend lots of time unsupervised in local bars. Norwegian authorities were criticised for failing to act, even though responsibility lies with local authorities in Spain. Norwegian officials found that Norwegians in Spain tended to live in expatriate clusters, that most could not speak or understand Spanish and that even authorities at Norwegian schools in Spain failed to report child welfare concerns to their local counterparts. Norwegian investigators found that Norwegian children enrolled in Spanish schools were far better integrated than those in Norwegian schools. It is estimated that as many as 20,000 Norwegian citizens live in Spain. Ironically, Norway's most right-leaning party, the Progress Party, has an active organisation for Norwegians in Spain, even though the party is best known in Norway for its harsh criticism of foreigners who emigrate to Norway but fail to learn Norwegian and integrate with Norwegian society. Progress Party leader Carl I Hagen and his wife Eli have been regularly vacationing in Spain, and have stated an intention to spend their winters there as well, when they retire.

(Aftenposten, 1 July 2004)

Refugee women found dead

A 27-year old mother of five was found murdered in an apartment in the Norwegian city of Sarpsborg. She and her family came to Norway from Congo eight months ago. On Monday night the family's apartment was destroyed by a fire which the police believes was the work of an incendiary. On Tuesday the woman was found dead in another apartment whilst her husband was found outside the building with serious head injuries. There are no suspects at the moment.

(Aftenposten, 30 June, p. 4)

High unemployment rate among immigrants

'Aetat' in Norway reports almost four times as many unemployed among first-generation immigrants as among those born in Norway. For people born in Norway the unemployment rate is three per cent whilst for first generation immigrants it is 11 per cent. For immigrants born in a western country the unemployment rate is 6.6 per cent, whilst for non-westerners it is 14 per cent.

(Aftenposten, 26 June 2004, p. 3)

Most immigrants from Sweden and Denmark

The total immigrant population in Norway consists of 349,000 people from more than 200 countries. This group constitutes 7.6 per cent of the Norwegian population of 4,5 million people, which is more than three times as many as in

1980. The immigrants have arrived as refugees, labour immigrants or because of family relations with other immigrants or Norwegians. The largest groups of first generation immigrants are from Sweden, Denmark, Iraq and Pakistan. 46 per cent of the immigrant population have obtained Norwegian citizenship.
(Statistics Norway, 25 June 2004)

More refugees settled last year

Nearly 100,000 persons with refugee background lived in Norway at the beginning of 2004. This is an increase by 5,800 persons compared with the previous year. The largest groups of refugees come from Iraq (14,000) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (12,600). The number of refugees from Somalia had the highest increase in 2003, with 1,100 persons, according to figures from Statistics Norway (SSB). Nearly 65 per cent of the refugees entered Norway as asylum seekers, while 25 per cent came as UN resettlement refugees. Around 27 per cent of all persons with refugee background live in Oslo.
(The Norway Post/Moss Avis, 25 June 2004)

Money back to asylum seekers?

Asylum seekers who voluntarily have left Norway but still had to pay for police escort have to get their money back. Lawyer John Christan Elden demands that the police's foreign section (PU), the Immigrants Appeals Board and the Directorate of Immigration check each individual case where an asylum seekers has been sent out of the country with an escort. The Supreme Court of Norway ruled last week that asylum seekers are not obliged to pay for such escort if they leave voluntarily. Last year, the police escorted 4,133 person out of the country. PU does not know how many of these cases were 'voluntarily return'. "In order to find out we have to go through this case by case," says PU Head of Information, Roar Hansen.
(Aftenposten, 26 June 2004, p. 3)

Swedish press

An increasing number of refugees in hiding

The number of refugees who are in hiding in Sweden has doubled the last two years and an increasing number are deported with the help of the police. In 2001, the Swedish Migration Board handed over some 3,300 cases to the police. In 2002 the number of cases had increased to 5,500 and last year the police received about 9,500 cases. The numbers will increase further this year. The Board can transfer cases to the police for two reasons. One reason is when it is perceived that force might be needed and the other reason is when a person has not turned up on the date of deportation. The Board does not know why the number of people hiding has increased. However, the number of asylum seekers who receive negatives answer has increased. In 2002, 68 per cent of the asylum seekers was rejected, in 2003 it had increased to 72 per cent and during the first months of this year it had increased further, to 79 per cent.
(Svenska Dagbladet, 1 July 2004, pp. 6,7)

Scrap the “immigration-bureaucracy”

Op-ed by Göran Hägglund, Christian Democratic Party

The “immigration-bureaucracy” has to be shelved, according to Christian Democrat Göran Hägglund. He and other members of the Christian Democratic Party are arguing the Swedish Migration Board and the Aliens Appeals Board along with other immigration institutions should be scrapped as they stigmatise immigrants. Moreover, the institutions hinder rather than help immigrants living a well-functioning life.

(Dagens Nyheter, 1 July 2004, p. 4)

National Democrat suspended

National Democrat Tor Paulsson is suspected for having assaulted his girlfriend in front of other party members during a midsummer party. For the elections in 2002 the Party was campaigning against what they called ‘immigrant Muslim’s violence against women’. Paulsson was heading the campaign and was featuring on posters together with his girlfriend and their children as the ideal family. According to the National Democrat’s party secretary, Vávra Suk, “the difference is the perception of right and wrong. If Tor Paulsson has done what he is accused of, I’m sure that he regrets his actions. People from a Muslim background do not.”

(Dagens Nyheter, 29 June 2004, p. 8)

Rami will not be prosecuted

Ahmed Rami, the founder of Radio Islam who was suspected of being the mastermind behind a web page on the Internet, which thousands of Swedes are accused of governing the country via a Jewish Mafia, will not be prosecuted. Prosecutor Tora Holst says Rami is behind the texts on the net but it is not possible to say if he has constructed the web page. In 1990 Rami was imprisoned for six months for spreading anti-Semitism propaganda on Radio Islam and in 2000 he was fined SEK 400,000 after publicising anti-Semitic texts on the radio’s web page.

(Dagens Nyheter, 29 June 2004, p. 8)

Archaeologists found refugee camp from 1943

For the first time ever, archaeologists are examining buildings as new as from the Second World War. Students from the University of Stockholm are examining a refugee camp for Baltic refugees at Lovön outside Stockholm. Since the camp is relatively new the findings can also be compared with well-kept records of the camp.

(Dagens Nyheter, 28 June, p. 13)

Chechen family deported

Despite a decision from the government to give people from Chechnya temporary residency, a family which have lived in Sweden for almost three years has been deported. The reason is said to be that the family before coming to

Sweden, lived for two years in Russia, hence, they have ties to other parts of Russia than Chechnya and can therefore be deported.
(Svenska Dagbladet, 28 June 2004, p. 6)

SEK 29 million spent in order to mobilise immigrant voters

According to a new report that evaluates Swedish parties' mobilisation of immigrant voters, some SEK 29 million has been spent in vain. The report states that the mobilisation started too late to have had an impact. Moreover, the parties used the extra money in their normal campaigning and merely used ordinary billboards and advertisements. The political parties, however, deem the report to be wrong and believe the money was spent in a proper way.

(Dagens Nyheter, 25 June 2004, p. 11)

Nordic Headlines 5 July 2004

Danish press

UN requests that Denmark re-admit refugee

United Nations administration in the province of Kosovo UNMIK has requested for the first time that Denmark re-admit a man for treatment who has been forcibly repatriated. The man, his wife, and three children suffer from physical and mental illnesses that cannot be treated in Kosovo. Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder rejects the request writing that "we cannot transport foreigners to Denmark for treatment". He says instead that he is willing to normalise the strained relations with UNMIK by increasing Danish funding for the Kosovo health system.

(Politiken, 5 July 2004, p. 5, NE translation)

Danish repatriation of Iraqis successful

Danish policy of attempting to get as many Iraqi refugees as possible to return to their home country has been successful. Out of 2,200 refugees that the UN-supported organisation IOM has helped return, one seventh are from a Danish refugee asylum centre. Pressure from the Danish government and strict 'lunch-box-instead-of-cash schemes' are named by refugees as the key reason for their fast return. Denmark pays DKK 18,000 to refugees that voluntarily return.

(DR online, 5 July 2004, NE translation)

More resident permits to the ill

The number of foreign citizens who receive a residence permit under the humanitarian residency clause has increased tenfold over the last four years according to projections on data from the Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration. Humanitarian residency is most frequently given to applicants who have a serious illness that cannot be treated in the home country. Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder says that the data effectively punctures criticism that the government has tightened regulations in this area. Supporting rightist party, the Danish People's Party is dissatisfied with the development however, with party vice-chairman Peter Straarup calling for action to curb the number of permits given: "It is worrying that the immigration policy is slipping. It looks like an explosion in the number of humanitarian residency permits," he says.

(JyllandsPosten, 3 July 2004, p. 2, NE translation)

Mentally ill fail citizenship due to language test

Brain damaged torture victims and the mentally ill cannot become Danish citizens even though they fulfil other criteria such as residency and a lack of criminal record. Strict language tests introduced by the government and the Danish People's Party filter out the mentally disabled. Now, however, a minor liberalisation of the strict practice may be in store. The Danish People's Party has walked out of the co-operation with the government in the area, saying that the

government is not tough enough. Instead the government is beginning to find a majority with the leading opposition party the Social Democrats on practical immigration issues like this one. Spokesman on naturalisation issues of the Social Democrats, Lars Kramer Mikkelsen, says that this means that more dispensation will be given. "It is about showing a human face and about the fact that you can only measure a welfare society on what it offers the weakest."
(Politiken, 2 July 2004, front, NE translations)

Danish-Turkish paper to fold

The newspaper Haber, released in both Danish and Turkish, and which primarily targeted the large immigrant group of Turks in Denmark is to be published for the last time today. The paper which was started up as an experiment by the national daily Politiken, has not been able to turn a profit.
(Politiken, 2 July 2004, p. 3, NE translations)

Norwegian press

Students reject proposal to ban hijab

Norway's populist Progress Party wants to ban the use of the Muslim hijab at colleges and universities. The Norwegian Student Union (NSU) immediately called the proposal a "witch hunt". The NSU reacted swiftly and negatively Friday to the proposal from Progress Party politician Per Sandberg. "This resembles more of a witch hunt than a serious proposal from a politician," said NSU leader Jørn Henriksen. "Educational institutions should be based on democratic freedoms, where people can wear what they like." Sandberg's proposal to ban headscarves and Muslim dress was not being taken very seriously. Some experts noted it would be illegal in Norway to ban the hijab without also banning all other forms of religious expression such as the cross or turbans. The Progress Party earlier proposed a ban on religious adornments at elementary and junior high schools. Now Sandberg, who serves as spokesman for the party's immigration policies, wants a ban at all educational institutions in Norway. Henriksen scoffed at the idea, saying it would create more fear of foreigners and intolerance instead of tackling such issues.
(Aftenposten, 2 July 2004)

Swedish press

Immigrant children on holiday in the Stockholm archipelago

About 80-90 children are visiting the Stockholm archipelago each day during a two-week period this summer. "Many of the children are not used to spending time in nature and that is why these trips are organised," says Karin Pontén from the Archipelago Association that is organising the event.
(Dagens Nyheter, 4 July 2004, p. 6)

Muslim football team fined

'Iftin KOLF', a predominantly Muslim boys football team, which assaulted the Jewish team 'IK Makkabi', during a tournament a couple of weeks ago, have to pay a SEK 2,000 fine after the incident. Moreover, the captain of the team has been suspended for two years and three other players have been suspended throughout this season. In addition, the team is obliged to participate in training on ethics and moral.

(Dagens Nyheter, 3 July 2004, p. 12)

Discriminating employment officers

According to a new report, immigrants are more often discriminated at the Swedish labour market than previously thought. Not only employers are to blame for this but also officers at employment agencies and social services. The criticism comes from the author of the report, Department Secretary of the Finance Department, Annika Århammar, who presented her findings on Thursday. "Discrimination of immigrants at the labour market is a much more serious problem than previously thought," she said.

(Dagens Nyheter, 2 July 2004, p. 5 – Ekonomi)

Alien Appeals Board will be scrapped

Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Barbro Holmberg, confirms today in an article in newspaper 'Svenska Dagbladet' that the Aliens Appeals Board is to be scrapped as already decided by the Parliament. However, the government is rearranging and developing the implementation of the decision as the costs for the project turn out to be higher than expected.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 2 July 2004, p. 5)

Nordic Headlines 9 July 2004

Danish press

Criticism of Danish immigration policies

A new report by the Council of Europe severely criticises Denmark's immigration policies. After a fact-finding mission to this country in April, the author of the new report, EU Commissioner for Human Rights Alvaro Gil-Robles concludes that the Danish government has adopted a far more restrictive immigration system over the past few years. Which might lead to the risk of Denmark not being able to fully abide by international human rights legislation. Gill-Robles specifically criticises the strict rules introduced to prevent immigrants gaining residency via family reunification, and also the demands for a DKK 50,000 deposit and proof of one year's employment before immigrants can apply for residency for their spouse. The full report of the conclusions from Gil-Robles' three day-visit to Denmark in April, can be accessed in English at: www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland.

(Politiken, 9 July 2004, p. 4. NE translation)

Government rejects report's findings

The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration has rejected the findings of the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner Alvaro Gil-Robles, and is now demanding that a six page rebuttal be added as an appendix to the critical report, indicating that it contains a number of factual mistakes. According to the ministry, the government stressed the importance of abiding by international conventions and human rights when it formulated new immigration legislation in 2002. Further, it claims that the contentious family reunification ruling, which requires citizens to be at least 24 years of age before entering into marriage with a person from another country, was only introduced to protect young people and ensure that they are not pressurised into accepting a forced marriage. "The later in life that young people, especially women, get married, the greater possibility they have of getting an education and/or a job. Therefore we cannot accept Mr Robles views," writes the Ministry in reply to the conclusions of the new report. The Ministry also claims that the DKK 50,000 deposit and 12 months employment demand for an immigrant-seeking residency for a spouse was introduced to promote, not prevent integration. "The Danish government is convinced that the integration process benefits when immigrants are active in the labour market, instead of being dependent upon social benefits," writes the Ministry in its rebuttal.

(Politiken online, 9 July 2004, p. 4, NE translation)

Human rights praise for controversial new report

Whilst the Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration rejects the findings of the new report about Denmark's immigration policies, the Institute for Human Rights has declared itself in full agreement with both the negative and positive criticism. Head of department at the institute, Birgitte Kofod Olsen, says she is "positively surprised" at the findings of the report, which is both "solid and

thorough.” “It’s an extremely good report because it accentuates both the negative and positive aspects of Danish immigration policy,” she said. “There are definitely problems of discrimination and immigration and it’s correct of Mr Gil-Robles to point them out.” Olsen says she agrees with the conclusion of the report stating that Denmark is no longer a pioneering country when it comes to abiding by human rights. “When we look at Denmark from a human rights viewpoint, then there is definitely a downward trend. We do not specifically breach human rights, but neither do we protect them as much as we should,” she said.

(Politiken online, 9 July 2004, NE translation)

Come to Denmark – the long way round

The Centre for Documentation and Counselling has produced a detailed manual explaining how Danish citizens, who are prevented from gaining residency for their foreign-born spouses because of strict family reunification laws, can circumvent Danish legislation by residing in Germany for a short period of time whilst they gain EU residency. An estimated thousand couples have relocated to Sweden since the government introduced its immigrant reform bill two years ago, and the numbers are being swelled by around 50 every month. However, the new manual reports that the easiest method of legally getting one’s spouse into Denmark is via temporary residency in Northern Germany.

(Politiken, 9 July 2004, p. 5, NE translation)

Shrinking population

The government’s immigration restrictions will lead to Danish population figures shrinking significantly over the course of this century. The DREAM group, which publishes annual population projections for the Finance and Integration ministries and the Welfare Commission, claims in a new prognosis that today’s population figures of 5.4 million will be reduced by 700,000, to 4.7 million by the end of this century. This will be the outcome if immigration restrictions continue to limit the number of new arrivals.

(Politiken, 9 July 2004, p. 14, NE translation)

Minors imported for prostitution

Women’s’ rights groups are calling for a national plan of action to halt the rising tide of illegal women trafficking, after the news that three minors have been given deportation orders for working as prostitutes in Denmark. Dorit Otzen, is head of the women’s’ crisis centre, Reden, in Vesterbro, which counsels street prostitutes who frequent the notorious district around the central train station. Otzen says that Denmark has a duty to live up to the UN’s Convention on children’s’ rights and ensure that young girls sent back to their own countries do not end up in the clutches of criminals involved in organised smuggling rings. There are reports that many young Nigerian girls are currently being sold for prostitution purposes.

(Jyllands Posten, 8 July 2004, p. 2, NE translation)

Iraqis want to go home

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) observes a raising interest in going back to Iraq among the Iraqis granted Danish residency. In 2003, only one Iraqi went back. This year already 130 have returned. "Many want to assist in reconstructing the country," says DRC advisor Vagn Klim Larsen. The organisation helps Iraqis return but do not recommend any one to go because of the instability in the country.

(Politiken, 6 July 2004, p. 5)

The Liberals: Immigrant parents to be employed in primary schools

Unemployed immigrant parents are to join vocational training in primary schools so they can build a bridge between sceptical immigrant families and the school. The Liberal Party proposes this in a new integration paper. Both the Social Democrats and the Conservative Party believe it is a good proposal. Danish Folk Party, however, is concerned.

(Politiken, 4 July 2004, p. 3)

Finnish press

Number of asylum-seekers in Finland growing

The number of foreigners seeking asylum in Finland increased by 46 per cent during the first five months of this year compared to the same period last year. According to the statistics of the Aliens Board, during January-May 1,439 persons sought asylum, which is 451 more than the same period the previous year. The majority of asylum-seekers this year have been from Slovakia and Serbia-Montenegro. Last year, most came from Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia-Montenegro.

(Helsingin Sanomat 5 July 2004, p A9)

Asylum-seekers escaped from detention using saw and blankets

Two asylum seekers of East European origin escaped from the detention centre in Helsinki in a rather traditional manner, using a saw and some blankets tied together to form a rope. The men sawed off the bars of the window in their room with a piece of an iron saw, jumped out of the window onto the inner court of the old prison which is serving as a detention centre, threw the tied-together blankets around a lamp on top of the wall to the street and climbed over it, after which they disappeared into the city. One of the men was kept in detention because of unclear identity and the other was awaiting deportation. "This is such a classical way of escaping," says the Head of the detention centre, Veikko Pyykkonen. Altogether eight persons have escaped from the Helsinki detention centre since it was opened in July 2002. The reasons for the detention of asylum seekers are unclear identity or unclear itinerary before arriving to Finland. Also, some of those about to be deported may have to wait in the detention centre for the deportation to be executed.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 2 July 2004, p A7)

UN: Number of asylum seekers on the decrease

According to UNHCR, the first quarter of this year was the eighth consecutive period during which the number of refugees in the industrialised countries decreased. The number of asylum seekers dropped 18 per cent in Europe during the first quarter, compared to the last quarter of last year. During the whole year of 2003, the number of asylum applications (288,100) was 22 per cent less than in 2002. Most applications were made in the UK (61,500). France and Germany received some 10 per cent each, while Sweden and Austria received about seven per cent each. The number in Sweden (31,360) was five per cent less than the year before. In Denmark, applications have decreased by two thirds in two years (4,560 in 2003). 3,080 asylum-seekers arrived to Finland, 15,960 to Norway in 2003. **Source: UNHCR**

(Helsingin Sanomat, 29 June 2004, p. A13)

Norwegian press

61 Iraqis have returned home

A total of 61 persons with residence permits in Norway have returned to Iraq after the fall of Saddam's regime. Six of these decided to return to Norway. An additional eight Iraqis with residence permits in Norway have ordered plane tickets and are preparing to go home, reported the Norwegian news bureau after viewing numbers from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). UDI has got several requests after the fall of Saddam's regime from Iraqi refugees in Norway who want to return home. Norwegian authorities have therefore organised two schemes for voluntary return to Iraq, one for Iraqis who have been granted residence permit in Norway and one for those who have not.

(Nettavisen, 8 July 2004)

Control of immigrants to prison academy

An increasing number of criminals with a foreign background are detained in Norwegian prisons. The authorities fear that co-operation between these criminals and employed immigrants within the Correctional Service of Norway Staff Academy might occur. The Academy is encouraging people with an immigrant background to apply for jobs. At the same time, a more thorough control of people with such backgrounds, and especially applicants coming from Eastern Europe, might be conducted in the future.

(Aftenposten, 7 July 2004, p. 4)

Expulsion of Mullah Krekar postponed

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has decided to postpone the expulsion of Mullah Krekar until 1 January 2005. Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg has ordered the postponement due to the unstable situation in Iraq. Krekar's Norwegian lawyer, Brynjar Meling, looks on the decision as a victory for his client. "This decision means that Mullah

Krekar now may remain legally in Norway until the end of the year, and this gives us time to prepare our legal protest against the expulsion order”, Meling says. (Aftenposten, 6 July 2004)

Swedish press

HIV-positive Tanzanian deported after infecting two women

An HIV-positive man from Tanzania is to be deported from Sweden within the next couple of days. In 1999 the Svea Court of Appeal sentenced the man to six years imprisonment and deportation after he had had unprotected sex with three women, of which two got infected by HIV. The man has now spent his time in prison and is to be deported. He has appealed to both the Parliament and the European Court of Justice, arguing that if deported, he can not access HIV-drugs and he will consequently die within a couple of years. The man also has two daughters in Sweden. Neither the Parliament nor the Court will try his case.

(Dagens Nyheter, 9 July 2004, p. 5)

Ethnic discrimination at pubs and clubs increases

Since the new law against discrimination was introduced last year, the number of reported cases has doubled. The number of cases reported is relatively low, only 28, but the 'Diskrimineringsombudsman' (Ombudsman for ethnic discrimination – DO) suggests that this number only reflect few of those that actually have experienced ethnic discrimination. The lack of evidence makes it difficult and hinders the DO to take the cases to court. The authorities are now considering using actors in order to test restaurants and pubs. It is also suggested that discriminating restaurants, pubs or clubs should lose its licence to serve alcohol. Another suggestion to get to grips with the problem is that every restaurant, pub or club need to clearly advise its customers of the rules regarding entrance on a board outside the place, which may hinder the place to change the rules to suit themselves.

(Dagens Nyheter, 6 July 2004, pp. 6-7 & 7 July, p. 10)

Nordic Headlines 14 July 2004

Danish press

Council of Europe: Yes, Denmark does violate human rights

The Danish immigration policy does in fact violate human rights conventions. This is according to the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights Alvaro Gil-Robles. "Denmark unconditionally violates human rights – in particular in regards to family reunification rules," he says. The Danish Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder responded to the release of the report last week by saying that Gil-Robles had misunderstood several things in the Danish immigration law, probably because he was Spanish, and that there are large cultural differences between Spain and Denmark. But Haarder misconstrues the content of the report Gil-Robles says, adding that he cannot help his Spanish background. "Even if I had the honour of being born in Denmark I would have believed the same thing". The Danish Minister says that if it is not explicitly stated in the report that Denmark breaches conventions on rights, then Danish immigration policies are within the convention.

(Politiken, 14 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

Red Cross: Millions flee in Sudan

The Danish Red Cross and six other Danish humanitarian aid organisations plan to stage an emergency summer campaign to try and collect DKK 10 million to help the latest wave of wounded, starving and thirsty refugees fleeing villages destroyed by fire in the troubled Darfur province of Sudan. Danish Red Cross chief Jørgen Poulsen calls the situation in Sudan the 'worst humanitarian crisis in the world at the present time.'

(Jyllandsposten, 14 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

Immigrants should sit down and learn Danish – abroad

Only days after the Council of Europe criticised Denmark for its strict immigration policies, the largest governing party the Liberal Party wants to tighten policies still further. Foreign nationals applying for residency under family reunification rules should learn Danish abroad, and pass a language test at a Danish embassy. "It will be a kind of drivers license for Denmark," says Flemming Oppfeldt who says that the idea is Dutch and that the party will await Dutch government experience with the policy before implementing it. "You have to be able to basically understand the spoken language, and the test level should be made so that if you make an effort you can pass." The Social Liberal Party is shocked by the proposal which is also supported by the rightist Danish People's Party. "They (the Liberals ed.) don't care about the Danish reputation. They are just trying to satisfy the Danish People's Party, and this party is insatiable," says Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen.

(Politiken, 13 July 2004, p, 2, NE translation)

Denmark turns blind eye to immigration criticism

Although Denmark was severely criticised for its strict immigration policies in a scathing new report from the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles last week, a cross-party parliamentary majority continues to turn a blind eye to the recommendations of the report. Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder dismissed Robles' findings as a "...politicised piece of work, written by one politician to satisfy other politicians." "When he uses so much energy proclaiming what good integration policy really is, then I am forced to say that we just can't use his advice at all," said Haarder. The deputy leader of the Danish People's Party, Peter Skaarup, went further by requesting Robles to refrain from commenting on Danish domestic policies. "The Council of Europe should, plain and simply, keep its nose out of our affairs," said Skaarup. According to Council of Europe sources, the controversial new report could now be used as ammunition in an official complaint to the European Court of Human Rights about Denmark's immigration policies.

(Berlingske Tidende, 10 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

'Infallible Denmark'

A leading article in Berlingske Tidende, Saturday, describes Denmark's blanket rejection of the criticism aimed at the country's immigration policies by the Council of Europe as yet another example of Denmark's tendency to go on the defence when under verbal attack from abroad. According to the article, Denmark has on four separate occasions in recent years been criticised by international organisations concerned with human rights, and on each occasion the criticism has been rejected out of hand. The Council of Europe has previously voiced concern about Denmark's treatment of ethnic minorities, specifically Greenlanders, the country's exclusivity agreements in relation to the Council of Europe's social pact, and its attitude towards Muslims. In 2001, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) accused Denmark of promoting an 'anti-Muslim climate' that fosters intolerance and prejudice through discrimination in housing and labour market policies, and for housing a media, alongside extreme-right wing politicians, that promotes racism in this country. Then, as now, the criticism was dismissed by politicians as 'too fierce and outdated,' and the majority of newspapers protested over the 'shock images' of Denmark portrayed by ECRI. According to Berlingske Tidende, the present government, believing Denmark to be infallible, has no more intention of listening to the criticism from the Council of Europe than the previous Social Democrat-led government did.

(Boersen, 10 July 2004, p. 5, NE translation)

No to electronic tagging

Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder has rejected a proposal that Denmark should follow the line of other countries and allow refugees and asylum seekers to be fitted with electronic tags, so the authorities can control their whereabouts. Under an experimental scheme, 70 asylum

seekers in Scotland are to be fitted with the same surveillance tags used to monitor criminals who have been released from prison but placed under house arrest. "We have no need for this kind of control because we can identify people through our CPR register (National registration scheme) and also through our co-operation with 'Eurodac'," said Haarder. "In addition, I don't personally agree with the idea of 'electronic handcuffs'", he added.
(Politiken, 10 July 2004, p. 2, NE translation)

Self-employed immigrants

Immigrants in Copenhagen are far more likely to start their own business than ethnic Danes. A new survey by the New Insight analysis institute shows that whilst 16 out of every hundred immigrants in the capital are self-employed, for their Danish counterparts the figure is just one-in-five. Over the past five years the number of immigrant-owned businesses has risen by 20 per cent in Copenhagen.

(JyllandsPosten, 12 July 2004, Business – p. 3, NE translation)

Three persons have received permits for tolerated stay since last year

Afghan and Libyan policemen have had their asylum applications rejected because they have been involved in torture in their home countries. They are still in Denmark since they risk prosecution. In its annual report 2003, the Refugee Board writes of three cases where the applicants were entitled to residency, but the Board reckoned that they had committed acts in their homelands, which nevertheless excluded them from remaining in Denmark. All three are obvious cases for the Danish Prosecution Service in the Special International Crimes Office that was created in 2001 when it came out that the former Iraqi Military Commander Nazar Al-Khazraji received permit for tolerated stay in Denmark.

(Politiken, 8 July 2004, p. 5)

Norwegian press

Progress Party leader attacks Islam

Leader of the Progress Party, Carl I. Hagen has come under fire after he attacked Islam in the strongest terms in a speech on Tuesday. Oslo University theologian Oddbjoern Leirvik says the speech may be compared to the anti-Jewish agitation in the 1930s. Speaking at the summer festival of the Charismatic church 'Living Word' (Levende Ord) in Bergen, Hagen said among other things that children are used as suicide bombers in the effort to convert the world to Islam, while parents believe they receive glory and honour as their children become martyrs. "I can see no similarity with the concept of moral and justice found in Christianity," Hagen said. Hagen also said that if Israel loses in the Middle East, Europe will succumb to Islam next, if Islamic fundamentalists have it their way. "That's why Israel must be defended, Hagen stated, while at the same time emphasizing that there are also good and decent Muslims. "Hagen is once again trying to create a split between Muslims and non-Muslims, and between

Muslims and Norwegians, said spokesperson Zahid Mukhtar of the Islamic Council Norway. Mukhtar claims the statements only prove how little the party leader knows about Islam. Acting leader of the Centre against Ethnic Discrimination, Ella Ghosh, says that they are tired of Hagen's frequent anti-Muslim statements, and that his behaviour this time cannot be defended. Conservative Party leader Erna Solberg says the speech shows why the Progress Party is not part of any government. "It is a bit dangerous if we picture all Muslims as terrorists," Solberg said. Hagen may now be reported to the police for anti-Muslim agitation.

(Aftenposten, 14 July 2004)

State seeks asylum centre evictions

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is filing legal action against 46 would-be refugees who failed to win asylum in the country. They refuse to leave the Norwegian asylum centres where they have been living, even though they have not been denied residence permission in Norway. State prosecutors thus are readying lawsuits seeking forced evictions from the asylum centres. The suits will target people who now are considered to be illegal aliens in Norway, but who can not be transported out of the country by police because they lack identification papers. UDI contends it has a right to turn these people out onto the streets, in the same way others are evicted from their homes if they do not pay the rent. This marks the first time, however, that state officials are taking such measures. "These people have received offers to stay in the asylum centres if they are willing to cooperate on ways of sending them home voluntarily," Roald Kristiansen of UDI said. "They've rejected the offers, and the state now believes it's unreasonable to allow them to stay in the centres at taxpayer expense when they are in Norway illegally, Kristiansen said.

(Aftenposten, 14 July 2004)

Closing reception centres

Another five reception centres for asylum-seekers will be closed down by the end of this year. This brings to 30 the number of such centres to be closed down in 2004. The closing down of reception centres will mean annual savings of NOK 290 million, according to the Directorate of Immigration (UDI). The number of asylum-seekers dropped by 11 per cent from 2002 to 2003, and further reduction is expected this year. According to estimates, the number of asylum-seekers arriving in Norway will drop to 10,000 this year. This will be a 36 per cent reduction, compared with last year.

(The Norway Post, 13 July 2004)

Young Jews move from Norway

About 50 per cent of all young Jews in Norway choose to move abroad as they feel anti-Semitism has increased significantly in Norway during the last couple of years. Rolf Kirschner, Director of the Jewish Community of Oslo, said he is worried as more and more young Jews choose to move away from Norway. Kirschner claims media contributes to stigmatize Jews, and he stresses that

there are three main reasons why young Jews move abroad. "Some want to study abroad, others want a larger Jewish environment, and some feel the increased pressure against Jews," Kirschner said. He said that many Jews are afraid of wearing religious symbols and said that the anti-Semitism is increasing in Norway. Kirschner claims the media is responsible for much of it. "It is not very pleasant to follow a news media which is so one-sided, and many times, has a hurtful angle," Kirschner said. "The way I see it, Israel is treated differently in many other countries. Norwegian media should to a larger degree focus on other conflicts in addition to the Middle East conflict."

(Nettavisen, 13 July 2004)

Anti Muslim opinions voiced on teletext

Anonymous contributors voiced negative opinions regarding Mullah Krekar, Christian Democrat Dagfinn Høybråten, and Islam in general on the Norwegian television channel NRK's teletext network. It is one of the teletext's ad pages which present these anonymous messages as people may send in by SMS. Expert in media ethics, Odd Raaum, said that the posted opinions are a clear breach of media ethics. However, Raaum claims that the messages are not breaching Norwegian law. Editor in Chief Kjetil Svorkmo Bergmann at NRK, who is responsible for the television channels teletext said that the pages would be removed.

(Nettavisen, 12 July 2004)

19-year-old Israeli to be deported

A 19-year-old Israeli man came to Norway together with his family two years ago. Israel wants to arrest the young man as he has escaped military service in his home country. As the family is Christian they do not want to participate in any kind of military activity. However, the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) has decided not to give the family asylum and they will be deported.

UNE Director General Terje Sjeggstad says that the 19 year-old will not be forced into military service. "He has psychological problems, and we know that this is a reason for exemption in Israel", says Sjeggstad.

(Aftenposten, July 8 2004, p. 3 & 10 July, p. 2)

Swedish press

Swedish asylum process criticised by EU

The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, demands in a new report that Sweden change their national law so that refugees not run the risk of being deported to a country where they might experience torture. Gil-Robles argues that Sweden needs to respect paragraph 3 and 13 in the European Convention. Moreover, the Commissioner is critical to the mistreatment of minors, who are disappearing in Sweden. Furthermore, he is disapproving of several reception centres that he visited while in Sweden and he also argues that Sweden need to shorten the proceeding time for asylum-

seekers. Lastly, Gil-Robles approves the decision taken by the government that the Aliens Appeal Board should be scrapped for a court system.
(Svenska Dagbladet, 12 July 2004, p. 6)

Apathetic refugee children found only in Sweden

The apathetic refugee children that has been discussed in Swedish media the last couple of months is a phenomena that has only been found among Swedish refugee children says Sten Lewander, Professor in psychiatry. "It is the Swedish asylum process that is causing this condition among the children," states Lewander. He has contacted psychiatrists in other countries to see whether apathetic refugee children are common there as well, but it is only in Sweden, and in places experiencing war, that children with this condition have been found.
(Dagens Nyheter, 10 July 2004, p. 6)

Nordic Headlines 16 July 2004

Danish press

Immigrant crime warning

The Council for the Prevention of Criminality has warned the country's police districts that the number of criminals from ethnic minorities will continue to rise over the next ten years. This comes after the release of new statistics showing that one in five of all prisoners currently serving sentences is either an immigrant or has immigrant roots and the Council warns that unless preventive measures are taken now, the number of young immigrant criminals will triple within a few years. The Danish People's Party's spokesman on justice, Per Dalgaard, is demanding that the government launches a massive crime prevention information campaign aimed directly at immigrants. "These people don't read Danish newspapers or watch Danish TV, so we're going to have to drum it into them in Arabic," he said. "Immigrants aren't born to be criminals, so it must be a direct consequence of their social environment." Dalgaard is also demanding that courts be more consequential in deporting criminal immigrants, and also that the parents of young immigrant criminals be forced to attend courses on how to raise children. According to the new figures from the National Prison Society, a total of 3,741 prisoners were behind bars on 4 May this year. Out of these, 955 had an immigrant background, even though immigrants still account for less than five per cent of the population.

(Jyllandsposten, 16 July 2004, p. 5 & Politiken online, 15 July, NE translations)

Red Cross criticism of government

The General Secretary of the Danish Red Cross, Jørgen Poulsen, has once again lashed out at this country's poor treatment of asylum seekers, which he characterises as 'disgraceful.' "Current legislation is destructive for asylum seekers and refugees' dignity. It's shocking that so many asylum seekers and their children are on the government's 'lunchbox scheme,' and don't receive any pocket money at all." Asylum-seekers and their families who refuse to voluntarily return to their native countries are placed on the so-called 'lunchbox scheme,' which provides just the bare necessities of food to survive on. Poulsen is now appealing for a more respectful treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees. "The tone used in the ever-present public debate has changed radically and it's now become quite acceptable to criminalize people just because they are foreigners – that's not the way I know Danes, or wish to know them," he said. "It would be a pleasant situation if there were fewer refugees in Denmark due to there being fewer refugees throughout the world. The government has tried to tell us that, but it's untrue. We shouldn't be isolating ourselves and taking a step back in tolerance."

(Information, 16 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

High season for arranged marriages

Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder has called for more 'safe havens', in the form of secure, protective crisis centres, for young immigrant women who seek help to avoid being forced into arranged marriages by their parents. The National Organisation for Women's Crisis Centres (LOKK) reports that despite the government's controversial 24-years-of-age stipulation for marriage between couples from ethnic minorities, there has been a significant rise in the number of women seeking help over the past few weeks, traditionally the high-season for arranged marriages. "We have experienced a number of tragic cases of young women who fear that the family's annual trip home to their native country will be used as an excuse by their parents to fulfil an old promise of marriage," says LOKK Secretary General, Anne Mau in a letter of appeal to the government. "This proves that the problem of arranged marriages is far from being solved by the government's immigration restrictions." Haarder has now promised a substantial increase in funding to the crisis centres so they can create a safe environment for women defying their families, and has also threatened to send LOKK's letter to the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, who last week characterised Denmark's use of the 24-year age ruling as a breach of human rights. "This letter proves how arranged marriages are still an integral part of the immigrant culture in this country, and why we have to continue to help women who refuse to be oppressed," Haarder said.

(Jyllandsposten, 15 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

Human Rights institute echoes immigration criticism

The Institute for Human Rights has backed the Council of Europe's accusation that Denmark's laws concerning family reunification are a breach of international human rights conventions. "The law was passed to prevent arranged marriages, which the state has a duty to stop, but unfortunately it also affects many who are seeking residency via family reunification but aren't involved in arranged marriages," says Head of department at the Institute, Birgitte Kofod Olsen. The criticism was shared by Professor in Human Rights at Århus University, Jens Vedsted Hansen, who said the strict interpretation of the 24-year rule was definitely in breach of the European Human Rights Convention. There are also political calls for a change in the contentious legislation. The Social Liberals have now declared that they will strive for a change in the rules regarding family reunification if they form a government alongside the Social Democrats after the next election. "In light of all this criticism, it's clear that we will have to find a better solution to what is becoming a major problem for all concerned," said party leader Marianne Jelved.

(Politiken, 15 July 2004, p. 2, NE translation)

Municipalities before court

Turkish children are entitled to receive classes in their mother tongue, claims the Documentation and Advice Centre on Racial discrimination. The Centre now takes the municipalities having annulled the classes to court.
(Politiken, 11 July 2004)

Norwegian press

Volunteer fever sweeps over Norway

Norwegians seem to be volunteering their time and services more than ever before. Charitable organizations in Oslo are reporting a surge in humanitarian activists, especially young people, who want to help others. Concrete activities with clear duty times are attracting scores of volunteers to local chapters of the Red Cross, Save the Children, Amnesty International and Norwegian Peoples Aid. In some cases, the supply of eager volunteers is larger than the demand for their services. Coming up with concrete activities where the time involved is clearly defined has done wonders for releasing people's engagement. Norway's chapter of Save the Children has around 750 volunteers who visit children at asylum centres or in local schools.
(Aftenposten, 16 July 2004)

Hagen may attend course on Islam

Norwegian politician Carl I. Hagen will consider attending a course on Islam when he comes home from summer vacation. Hagen raised a fuss earlier this week when he bashed Islam and its followers' alleged efforts to take over the world. Hagen says his remarks were directed at fundamentalists, not all Muslims. He has no regrets for publicly relating his fears of Islamic fundamentalists, or his belief that Christians should oppose Islamic inroads into Europe. But in fending off a barrage of criticism for his remarks, he says he will consider an invitation from an Islamic advisory council in Norway to learn more about the religion. Meanwhile, two Muslims from Pakistan, now living in Oslo, told have filed police charges against Hagen for allegedly violating Norway's law against blasphemy.
(Aftenposten, 16 July 2004)

Fewer asylum seekers to Norway

The number of asylum seekers arriving in Norway has been reduced by nearly 50 per cent so far this year. This is shown by fresh figures from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI). The main reason for the reduction is the tightening up of the Norwegian immigration policy, which has been introduced by the Government, says UDI Director Frode Mortensen. The financial support for asylum seekers has been reduced, the processing time for asylum seekers are down to 48 hours in some cases, and there is improved cooperation with other European countries. The reduction is true for most nationalities, and without weakening the individual's right to asylum. However, according to the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), the Norwegian immigration policy has now become

so strict that is in violation of UN's recommendations. Altogether 3,900 persons applied for asylum in Norway in the first six months of this year.
(NRK, 16 July 2004)

Hagen and Crown Prince Haakon on collision course

Norwegian right wing politician Carl I. Hagen disagrees with the United Nation's and Crown Prince Haakon's view of cultural diversity in Norway. Hagen has during the last couple of days been in the media blitz due to his statements regarding Islam. He now states that he completely disagrees with UNDP's view of cultural diversity within single states. During the presentation of the Human Development Report Thursday, UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Crown Prince Haakon of Norway said cultural diversity is important for world peace. "Cultural freedom is important in all societies," Crown Prince Haakon said. "To suppress people's cultural rights lead to conflicts." He also expressed scepticism to whether or not Norway would have been ranked the best county to live in if cultural diversity had been included in the calculations. Carl I. Hagen said that he is surprised by the UN's opinions regarding cultural freedom. "Are we going to accept that Somalis practice circumcision and other countries' practice of forced marriages? This is just another idea from UN bureaucrats," Hagen said. "In my opinion the best long-term solution for Norway would be that all inhabitants gradually adapt to the main basis of our culture. After that there will of course be room for artistic expression, but some values have to apply for all", Hagen said.
(Nettavisen, 16 July 2004)

Swedish press

Nine-year-old refugee raped

A 67-year-old man has been arrested for raping a 9-year-old girl from Kosovo, near the reception centre in Ånge where she lives. After raping her, the man threatened the girl, saying that if she told anyone he would kill her parents. The man has not admitted the crime but witnesses to the incident and traces of the man's DNA on the little girl's clothes should be enough for a conviction, according to Chief Prosecutor Marina Amonsson.

(Dagens Nyheter, 15 July 2004, p. 6)

Nordic Headlines 23 July 2004

Danish press

Ambassador warns against sending Iraqis home

Torben Gettermann, Denmark's Ambassador in Iraq, advises against the wisdom of repatriating Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers in Denmark for the time being, citing security concerns. "It would be premature to say that the situation is now more secure (in Iraq)," Gettermann said. "More than 400 Iraqi civilians were killed in June and one of the local Baghdad newspapers is today quoting a minister as urging western governments not to send Iraqi refugees home yet as the situation is not safe," he said. There are at present 580 Iraqis in Denmark whose asylum requests have been rejected by the authorities; so far some 500 Iraqi asylum seekers have been repatriated, after receiving economic assistance. Pia Kjaersgaard, leader of the Danish People's Party – the right-wing government's ally on immigration policy, is urging Minister for Refugees, Immigration & Integration Bertel Haarder to send all Iraqis in Denmark back home now authority in the country has been handed over to an Iraqi administration. (Berlingske Tidene, 23 July 2004, p. 4, NE translation)

DF wants all Iraqis sent home

Incentives should be introduced to encourage all Iraqi refugees in Denmark to return home, Danish People's Party (DF) leader Pia Kjaersgaard says. There are approximately 20,000 Iraqis living in Denmark with residence permits and Kjaersgaard is urging Minister of Refugees, Immigrants & Integration, Bertel Haarder to personally intervene and ask them to return home now the Iraq war is over and the country is under Iraqi control. The proposal represents a further tightening of DF demands on the government on the immigration front. "I realise we cannot force them (the Iraqis) to go home but many of them are residing here in accordance with the old legislation," Kjaersgaard said. "The bulk of them are living off state subsidies and must surely be interested now in going back and building up their homeland." Under the present legislation, Iraqis are being offered DKK 18,000 per head by the Danish government as an incentive to return home. Haarder has not ruled out the possibility of following Kjaersgaard's advice and making a personal appeal to Iraqis to go home. Iraqis are one of the biggest asylum seeker groups in Denmark; 442 Iraqi asylum seekers came to Denmark last year and so far this year the figure is 106. The Danish Refugee Organisation warns that the situation is still too dangerous in Iraq to send asylum seekers back.

(Berlingske Tidene, 22 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

Parties split on immigration issue

Both the opposition Social Democrats and the centrist Radical Liberals – partners in centre-left coalition governments throughout much of the 1990s – are internally split on the thorny issue of immigration – and the controversial family

reunification rules in particular. Radical Liberal leader Marianne Jelved's recent refusal to join any coalition with the Social Democrats unless they eased immigration laws has left her party deeply split, as are the Social Democrats and the issue is expected to dominate the party's congress in September. The Social Democrats supported the right-wing government's draconian tightening of family reunification rules. A swing to the left could lead to the formation of a new Social Democrat-Radical Liberal government at the general election due by end-2005 at the latest.

(Jyllandsposten, 22 July 2004, p. 2, NE translation)

Derogatory remarks could dent Haarder's EU commissioner prospects

Danish Refugees, Immigration & Integration Minister, Bertel Haarder's chances of becoming Denmark's next EU Commissioner could have been seriously dented by derogatory remarks he made last week about European Council Human Rights Commissioner Alvaro Gil-Robles. Last week Haarder responded to a European Council report criticising Denmark's tight immigration policies for being in violation of international human rights conventions by saying that Gil-Robles misunderstood Danish immigration law, because he was Spanish and there were great cultural differences between Denmark and Spain. Should Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen select Haarder as Danish commissioner in the new EU Commission, as many observers expect, there could be problems getting his candidature approved in the European Parliament, political sources in Strasbourg told Politiken. "It wasn't a very wise thing for Mr Haarder to say," said Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, former Danish Prime Minister, now MEP and leader of the Social Democratic group at Strasbourg. "It was unnecessary arrogant." Left and right wing party spokesmen in the European Parliament told that Haarder's remarks would have to be brought up in any hearing on his candidacy. One representative of the far left grouping said his group would vote against Haarder's candidacy because of his remarks. The European Council report's criticism of Denmark was aimed mainly at its tight family reunification stipulations. (Politiken, 21 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

Danish family reunification law to be tested in court

The Danish government's tight immigration policy with its controversial restrictions on family reunification, criticised last week by the Council of Europe for being in breach of human rights conventions, is to be tested in the High Court of Eastern Denmark. Danish lawyer Anders Christian Jensen has filed a case to the court on behalf of his client, a 26-year-old Vietnamese with residence permit and full employment in Denmark, whose wife has been forbidden to join him by the immigration authorities. The Vietnamese man's parents, his two brothers and one of his two children have all been granted residence permits in Denmark. The Danish Minister of Refugees, Immigrants & Integration, Bertel Haarder has welcomed the holding of what looks like being a test case. "It is a good thing for the courts to check whether the law is being upheld, it should clear the air of some of the misconceptions currently in circulation," said Haarder, who hotly denies that Danish immigration law is in violation of international conventions.

(Politiken, 19 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

Opposition row over immigration laws

The Radical Liberals, coalition partner of the Social Democrats in a series of centre-left governments throughout the 1990s, are demanding that Denmark's tight immigration legislation be significantly relaxed as the price for forming a new government with the Social Democrats after the next general election. The Radical Liberals, a centrist grouping, led by former Economy Minister Marianne Jelved, want to see the notorious family reunification clause in the immigration law, agreed by the right-wing government and the Social Democrats, removed. Leading Social Democrat mayors of towns with large immigrant populations have voiced strong opposition to the Radical Liberals' demands and the political leadership of the Social Democrats remains silent on the issue. "The rules must be changed, we refuse to take part in any government which breaches human rights conventions," Jelved said. Elections are due in Denmark by end-2005 at the latest with the opposition, led by the Social Democrats and the Radical Liberals, hopeful of victory.

(Jyllandsposten, 19 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

Norwegian press

'Shame' blamed in daughter's murder

A man who strangled his teenage daughter earlier this week reportedly went into a rage because his daughter was ashamed of him. She allegedly chided him for not having high enough social status in Norway, after fleeing from Iran as a refugee. Motives behind the family tragedy started emerging after the man submitted to police questioning. The daughter's shame over her father's modest lifestyle in Norway was at the root of a conflict between them. The 41-year-old defendant remained in police custody Thursday after being charged with premeditated murder. His daughter's body was found Sunday night in the flat the two shared in Oslo's Furuset district. The defendant came to Norway from Iran in 1990 and eventually carved out a new life for himself. He bought the flat, which he at one point rented out while he lived outside of town, and has worked all along. For the past several years he's been working at a Honda car dealership in suburban Asker, washing and polishing cars. He finally managed to bring his 18-year-old daughter to Norway last year under the country's family reunification program. She had spent most of her life living with grandparents in Teheran, who reportedly were affluent and enjoyed high social status. They died, and she came to live with her father, but apparently was surprised to find he worked with cars. "According to his statements, it seems she wasn't aware that her father worked with automobile maintenance," Finn Abrahamsen of the Oslo Police District said. Unhappy with what she viewed as her father's low status in Norway, the two started quarrelling. She travelled back to Iran but returned to Norway. Their conflict resulted in a loud confrontation Sunday afternoon, and he admitted

strangling her. The defendant was due to undergo physical and psychological examination early next week.

(Aftenposten, 19, 20 & 22 July 2004)

Right-wing politicians want to ban Islam

Central members of Kristiansand Progress Party (FrP) claims Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' and the Koran are one of the same, and they want Islam banned in Norway. "We are not the only ones demanding this ban," said Halvor Hulaas, Chairperson in Krstiansand Frp to the paper. "This is an opinion that is well-established in Scandinavian countries. We are now importing people with a religion that is practised in the same way it was practised when it was established in year 600. The freedom we have in Norway may be taken away from us if we do not start to have some demands to these immigrants." Karina Udnæs, deputy leader of FrP's city council group in Kristiansand is pushing it even further. "It is about high time Norway and Europe make the ideology Islam and the practice of this, illegal and punishable in the same way as Nazism," Udnæs said. "The prophet Muhammad urged them to kill everyone infidel." "Udnæs' comparison of Nazism and Islam is supported by many in Frp," Hulaas said. "The religion as it is practised is a threat against our social system and way of life." He said that Kristiansand now lives under the threat of getting a large mosque in town. "Of course, we are aware of what these mosques are used for," Hulaas said.

(Nettavisen, 19 July 2004)

Roma people refused entry to campsite

Three Roma families coming from Sweden were denied entry to a Norwegian campsite. The owner of the campsite is now accused of having broken the law, which states that a person can be convicted for refusing services or goods to another person due to their skin colour or ethnic belonging. The owner of the campsite says that he previously has had bad experiences with Roma people.

(Aftenposten, 16 July 2004, p. 2)

Swedish press

New critique for deporting Egyptians

The Swedish government is receiving more critique from the human rights organisation Human Rights Watch for the deportation of two suspected terrorists from Egypt in December 2001. The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuses to comment the on the case.

(Dagens Nyheter, 23 July 2004, p. 8)

Two asylum-seekers arrested after escape

Two asylum-seekers from Russia tried to escape from the reception centre in, Märsta just outside of Stockholm. The two were, however, caught by the police

only an hour after the escape. The reception centre in Märsta has experienced several attempted escapes the last couple of weeks.

(Dagens Nyheter, 20 July 2004, p. 8)

Barbro Holmberg discusses future EU migration and asylum policy

The EU Justice and Home Affairs Council is meeting in Brussels on Monday and Sweden is being represented by Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Barbro Holmberg. The agenda includes a new multi-annual programme for the area of justice and home affairs. During the Dutch Presidency in the autumn of 2004 there will be an assessment and follow-up of the conclusions of the summit in Tampere in 1999. These conclusions have guided work on justice and home affairs issues over the past five years. The aim is to have a second action programme ready for the summit in November 2004. Discussion on the content of the second programme will begin at the Council meeting. "One of the most important tasks we are facing is to ensure that decisions taken by the EU are implemented at national level," says Barbro Holmberg. "The meeting will open discussions on the shape of co-operation over the coming five years. That work will be completed at the summit in November. The new agenda will, for example, include measures to strengthen protection of refugees where they are, something that is fully in line with Sweden's holistic view of refugee policy," continues Barbro Holmberg.

(Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Press Release, 19 July 2004)

Difficult to get work after changing career

The Swedish Government spent SEK 12 millions on re-educating 170 civil engineers to become teachers. It was assumed that they all would get jobs as teachers after one year at the Teacher's College. However, merely half of the former civil engineers have been able to get work as teachers. Poor economy in the municipalities is seen as one explanation. Another plausible explanation is that one third of the former engineers have a foreign background. Newspaper Dagens Nyheter interviewed ten of new teachers, who all had an immigrant background, and they were all felt they were not able to get teaching jobs due to their background, although they have lived in Sweden for a long time.

(Dagens Nyheter, 18 July 2004, p. 5)

Nordic Headlines 27 July 2004

Danish press

New demand from the Danish People's Party to sent home foreigners

The Danish People's Party (DF) has once again placed the ever-present immigration debate at the top of the political agenda by claiming that asylum seekers and refugees cost society so much money that they are threatening the long-term health of the welfare state, and many of them should be sent home. "Every time we discuss how we can continue to finance the public sector, it's our own citizens, and primarily the elderly, who are targeted for cutbacks," says DF party leader Pia Kjærsgaard. "We constantly hear that the elderly are a burden on society, but not immigrants. I personally believe that immigrants are a major financial burden on this country." Kjærsgaard has now challenged the government to initiate a campaign aimed at persuading immigrants to return to their native countries. "We are looking for a new chapter in the immigration debate, because previously there has been too little attention paid to how much immigrants are costing us, from maternity wards and psychiatric hospitals to the prison system," said Kjærsgaard. Last week Kjærsgaard challenged Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder to write to all Iraqis in this country offering them the opportunity to return home – an offer which she now says should be given to the majority of immigrants.

(Politiken, 27 July 2004, front page, NE translation)

Haarder rejects call for change in immigration law

Immigrants who work in jobs that provide greater contact with Danes and Danish society, and therefore increased chances of integration, such as teachers or care workers, have a greater chance of gaining residency through family reunification than taxi-drivers or short-order cooks in pizza bars. This is the view of Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Bertel Haarder who yesterday (26 July) rejected charges levelled in left-wing daily Information that affiliation to Denmark requirements, as laid out in the immigration laws, are biased against uneducated workers. "If an immigrant works in a pizza bar, without any contact to the rest of society, then the inconvenience of him or her having to leave Denmark is less, because the same person could just as well be working in a pizza bar in their native country," claimed Harder. Social Democrat spokeswoman on integration, Anne Marie Meldgaard, said she was in 'deep disagreement' with Haarder's explanation and interpretation of the affiliation requirements. "It's simply unfair to pigeonhole people in this manner. If people fulfil the requirements for family reunification, then it shouldn't matter if they're a taxi driver or a doctor," she said. "Being self-supporting and employed should be enough. What job one have is irrelevant."

(Information, 27 July 2004, front page, NE translation)

Immigration criticism could lead to change in law

Both the government and the Social Democrats are prepared to amend controversial immigration legislation, in the face of fierce criticism from the Council of Europe. The Social Democrats' political spokesman, Frank Jensen, has proposed a new clause that will require immigration officials and caseworkers to abide by international obligations, especially concerning the ruling that requires immigrants seeking residency through family reunification to be at least 24 years old. Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder has declared himself 'open' to the new proposal.

(Berlingske Tidene, 26 July 2004, Front, NE translation)

Lawsuits will test Aliens Act

The Advisory and Documentation Centre for Racial Discrimination (DRC) is close to file several lawsuits that will test whether the Danish rules for family-reunion violates the European Convention for Human Rights. According to Niels-Erik Hansen from the DRC, approximately six to seven lawsuits will be filed and cover different marriage constellations, such as those with another ethnic background than Danish, those with Danish background and families with mixed ethnical background. Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder welcomes the examination and he believes the outcome will once and for all meet all allegations from the DRC.

(Politiken, 26 July 2004, front page)

Asylum-seekers disappear

The number of asylum seekers who apparently just 'disappear' into thin air every year, after their applications for residency are rejected, continues to rise. According to police statistics, nearly 4,000 rejected asylum seekers are now officially listed as missing persons in Denmark. Mona Ljungberg, Head of a support group for refugees in danger, claims that many of the asylum-seekers travel to Sweden or Norway, or go 'underground' in Denmark in the hope that their applications for residency will be reassumed at a later date.

(Politiken, 26 July 2004, p. 3, NE translation)

Private aid in support of refugee children

A support-group for the refugees in the city of Fare have collected money in order to help 53 asylum-seeking children who live at the reception centre in Fare and are only waiting to be sent back to their country of origin. The children will receive some hundred Danish crowns from the support-group in order to make their lives at the centre more bearable. The children are, together with their parent's, part of a food-program that every second week provides them with all the groceries they are in need of.

(Politiken, 26 July 2004, p. 2)

The Danish Refugee Council warns Iraqis to return back home

The Danish Refugee Council judge the demand from the Danish People's Party, to encourage all Iraqis refugees to return back to Iraq, to be unrealistic in a time of insecurity for the civilian population in Iraq. So far this year, 201 Iraqis have

voluntary returned home. However, the last month the numbers have declined due to increased violent disturbances in Iraq.
(Politiken, 23 July 2004, p. 2)

Norwegian press

Counterattack by Hagen

Leader of the Progress Party, Carl I. Hagen, says the five ambassadors who criticise the statements on Islam made by him in a speech, are interfering in a debate which is none of their concern. "They are making their criticism on an unsound basis, because they have not read the whole speech he made to a congregation last week. I am shocked", Hagen says. He says that the statements for which he has been criticised have been taken out of context. "But I see that terrorism is carried out in the name of Islam over large parts of the world, and where are the five ambassadors then? Why don't they openly step out and criticise the terrorists when they make their strikes?", Hagens asks.
(NRK/Aftenposten, 25 July 2004)

Ambassadors' criticism understandable

Leader of Parliament's Foreign Policy Committee, Thorbjørn Jagland says the criticism by Muslim ambassadors of Progress Party leader Carl I. Hagen's speech is understandable. State Secretary, Vidar Helgesen, agrees, and says the reactions show that Hagen's statements are perceived as very offensive. It provokes strong reactions when a leading politician like Hagen talks about Islam and the prophet Muhammed in such simplified terms, with the aim to create confrontation, Helgesen says. Jagland points out that foreign ambassadors should be careful about taking part in debates on Norwegian domestic affairs, but that the letter from the Muslim ambassadors must be seen in the light of Hagen's move. It shows just how wrong Hagen's statement was, when the ambassadors take the steps to comment on a political debate in the country in which they serve, Jagland says.
(NRK/Aftenposten, 25 July 2004)

Ambassadors criticise Progress Party leader

The ambassadors to Norway from Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt and Morocco and the Charge d'affaires from Tunisia has criticized the leader of the right wing Progress Party, Carl I. Hagen, for his attack on the Muslim faith in a speech last week. Hagen has insulted 1.3 billion Muslims, and offended the principles of tolerance and freedom on which the Norwegian society is built, the diplomats write in a letter to Aftenposten. We expect that our rights to practice Islam will be respected by those who do not share our faith, and that we do not have to meet the ugly threat of religious intolerance from any quarter, the letter states. It is very unusual for foreign diplomats to comment on Norwegian domestic affairs.
(NRK, 25 July 2004)

Claims media contribute to fear of foreigners

The Islamic Council Norway claims the media contributes to xenophobia, the irrational fear for foreigners. The Council reacts as Muslims often are described in a negative light in the media. Imran Mushtaq, deputy leader in the Council, an umbrella organization for Islamic organizations in Norway, said that the negative media coverage contributes to increased fear of foreigners. "The coverage creates an enemy," said Mushtaq. "People, who don't have contact with Muslims and smaller minorities daily, will not get any contradictions of the negative coverage." He stated that he is frustrated by the media's never-ending hunt for scandals. "We often experience that journalists have already made up their mind of what they want to hear before they contact us," Mushtaq said. "Then they call around until they find the one person who, for example, is positive to violence. The fact that the majority think it's terrible, is completely ignored." (Nettavisen, 23 July 2004)

Officials set to close 40 refugee centres

Norway's immigration agency plans to close as many as 40 refugee centres by the end of the year. The reason is sharp decline in the number of people seeking asylum in the country. The number of asylum-seekers has fallen from 7,000 during the first half of last year to 3,900 this year. The decline is largely attributed to stricter asylum policies and moves to more quickly expedite cases. The number of residents at existing asylum centres, meanwhile, has fallen from 17,700 at the end of last year to around 14,000 by mid-July. That means 10 asylum centres in addition to the 30 earlier earmarked for closure will be shut down by December. Occupancy rates at Norway's 102 remaining asylum centres, however, will thus be high. (Aftenposten, 23 July 2004)

Norway to send personnel to Sudan

The Norwegian Ministry of Defence is planning to send four or five staff officers to southern Sudan together with officers from 14 other nations. The Norwegian unit will be working on finalizing the draft agreement between the government and the guerrillas, and on logistics. UN Security Council decided June 11 to send a vanguard to prepare for a possible UN operation in southern Sudan. (Nettavisen, 23 July 2004)

Asylum-seeking couple leaves Norway

A Pakistani couple given asylum in Norway after their marriage upset opposing tribes, has left the Scandinavian nation. The BBC reported last week that Shaista Almani and Balkh Sher Mahar had left Norway. The couple had married in 2003 in the interior of Sindh province and ever since their lives have been under fire because they were from opposing tribes. The marriage increased tension between the tribes, and the bride's tribe vowed to kill both her and her husband. However, in March the Sindh High Court said the couple had done nothing illegal and could go where they liked.

(Washington Times/ Norway in the News, 22/23 July 2004)

Asylum-seeking children collected at school

The Norwegian Parents Association (Foreldreutvalget for grunnskolen – FUG) demands that the police do not collect asylum-seeking children for deportation while they are at school. This has happened at several occasions and many pupils have been frightened by the police actions. “It is important that the school is a safe place for the children” says Deputy Head of FUG, Odd Emil Ingebrigtsen.

(Aftenposten, 23 July 2004, p. 3)

Swedish press

The Swedish Rescue Service Agency sends help to Chad

A plane carrying ten Scania trucks, tents and other necessities leaves from Landvetter Airport in Gothenburg on Thursday 29 July bound for Chad. Approximately ten people from the Swedish Rescue Service Agency are also travelling to Chad to help setting up the tents and prepare them for use. The airlift is a UNHCR initiative which costs SEK 4.5 millions and is financed by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida).

(Dagens Nyheter, 27 July 2004, p. 5 & Svenska Dagbladet, 27 July, p. 12)

Two men escapes from detention centre

Two men have escaped from the detention centre in Ljungaskog outside of the city of Örkelljunga. The men, 31 and 19 years old, were waiting to be deported back to Russia. They locked themselves inside a room at the centre, broke a window and escaped in a waiting car.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 27 July 2004, p. 9)

Fewer refugees are allowed to stay

The number of refugees that are allowed to stay in Sweden is drastically decreasing. Statistics from the Swedish Migration Board shows that 23 percent of the asylum-seekers were given residency in 2000, while only 10 percent of the asylum-seekers were given residency during the first half of 2004. This means that Sweden is now below average compared to other EU countries. Ten years ago Sweden was well above the average. “The decisions taken by the Migration Board and the Aliens Appeal Board are becoming more stereotyped and streamlined, which leads to more rejections”, says Anders Sundquist, from the Advice Bureau for Asylum-seekers and Refugees. Marie Andersson at the Migration Board says the numbers of rejections are increasing as the processing time is getting shorter, resulting in that fewer people get asylum due to humanitarian issues.

(Dagens Nyheter, 24 July 2004, p. 6)

Rapist sentenced to three years in prison

A man who raped a nine-year old asylum-seeking girl has been sentenced to three years in prison and will be deported afterwards. The sentence is too short argues the girl's lawyer but accepts the sentence, as the girl also will receive SEK 200,000 in compensation from the convicted man.

(Dagens Nyheter, 24 July 2004)

Nordic Headlines 30 July 2004

Danish press

Criticism for DF demands

Inhuman and unfair – that is the verdict from Danish Refugee Aid on Danish People's Party (DF) leader Pia Kjærsgaard's proposal for a national campaign to encourage immigrants to return to their native countries. The Confederation of Danish Industries (DI) has also condemned the proposal, claiming that the Danish economy could suffer from a closed labour market. General Secretary of Danish Refugee Council, Andreas Kam, characterized the proposal as "a horrible attempt to drive out refugees one more time by creating a negative atmosphere. "It would be catastrophic to transform those people who are already here into outcasts who aren't welcome," he said. "Instead of harassing them we should be reassuring them that their existence here is secure. If they want to return home it's fine, but it is important that they know they can stay, and that they are welcome." Deputy head of DI, Bolette Christensen, said it would be a very poor idea to seal off the Danish labour market. "It wouldn't benefit our welfare system, and it certainly would not benefit the general globalisation process. Many companies' ability to compete is based on diversity in the workplace. Danish companies trade with many different countries, and it's important to have different nationalities employed."

(Politiken, 28 July 2004, p. 3, NE translation)

Norwegian press

Terrorist suspect applied for asylum in Norway

A man with Arab background, suspected of having connections to the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, arrived in Norway as an asylum seeker in November 2001. The 47-year-old man had first been detained in the Netherlands together with three other men, only two days after the terrorist attacks in September 11 2001. Shortly thereafter the man managed to escape, and in November the same year he came to a police station in Oslo and applied for asylum under a false name. No one knew that the man had produced false passports for a terrorist group in the Netherlands. However, at the end of the year one of his identities was found through the Schengen fingerprint system and has since been remanded in detention in Norway. However, his real identity is not known, and the Norwegian police is therefore not able to return him to the Netherlands or to Algeria, which may possibly be his homeland. The man's application for asylum in Norway has been refused, but in reality he will remain in jail until his identity will be found. "This is an example of a person who has engaged in criminal activity in Europe, comes here and seeks a kind of port of refuge under the asylum right," said Arnstein Øverkil, Head of Norwegian Police Security Service (PST). "He has been refused asylum and we are working with trying to obtain a travel document so that we can send him out of the country," said Roar Hansen, at the police department's immigration department.

(Nettavisen/NRK, 29 July 2004)

Refused asylum seekers disappear

Many persons who have been denied asylum in Norway, and who have been turned away from asylum centres, continue to stay in Norway illegally, with no known residence. In January the Ministry for Local Government and Regional Development decided that single asylum seekers whose application has been refused, will have to leave the reception centres. A total of 365 persons living at such centres have so far this year been told that they can no longer live there. According to fresh figures from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI), 8 per cent of these have been escorted out of the country by the police, while 20 per cent are cooperating about a voluntary return to their home country. This leaves 160 persons who have moved out to an unknown residence. "The only thing we know is that they either have returned to the country of origin, or traveled to another country to apply for asylum there. Then there are some who stay in Norway illegally", says UDI information director Geir Loendal. (NRK, 29 July 2004)

Halal pizza a winner

Norwegian Muslims can now join in the national pizza craze, and they have begun with a passion. A new halal frozen pizza has entered the market and has become an instant bestseller. The 'Rema 1000' chain in Storhaug in Stavanger has seen the halal pizza outsell all of the frozen competition except for the 'Grandiosa', a Norwegian fast-food institution. "Norwegian stores stocking wares adapted to Muslims is a big step in the right direction," Ali Hossein, Head of the Muslim Common Council in Stavanger said. The Stavanger initiative and success mean that the halal pizzas now will be available in the Rema chain nation-wide. (Aftenposten, 28 July 2004)

Swedish press

Few immigrants employed despite extra investment from AMS

The Swedish National Labour Market Administration (AMS) has started a new and expensive project aimed at helping immigrants getting work. Specialist from the employment agency will assist and support the immigrants in order to find work. The goal is to get jobs for 13,500 immigrants before the end of 2005. The project was initiated almost a year ago but so far only 330 people have been employed through the project. (Dagens Nyheter, 29 July 2004, Economy – p. 2)

No increased immigration from the new EU-countries

The fear of "social tourism" and increased immigration from the new EU-countries was unjustified. A new study shows that opening up the borders 1 May only marginally increased the number of immigrants arriving into Sweden from new member states. The report from the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies indicates that immigration from the new EU-member states will increase by ten per cent this year. (Dagens Nyheter, 29 July, p. 10)