



# **t** <sup>new</sup> **imes**

A magazine produced by asylum seekers and immigrants in Denmark > September 2012 > issue # 83

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# EDITORIAL

## Want to write for New Times?

Do you want to write articles for New Times? Or are you good at taking pictures? New Times is a magazine written by asylum seekers. At the moment we are a group of eight asylum seekers writing the stories that we find important for you to know. Contact your job center and ask about your chances of internal praktik at New Times. All you need is to speak and write English (you don't need to be fluent). If you also have the interest and curiosity to learn more about society and the life as an asylum seeker in Denmark, we welcome you!

"Can you imagine the level of stress that asylum seekers experience during their time in the asylum system?"

I was asked this question recently by one of my colleagues, a red cross staff member who has been working in the asylum system for several years. I had to admit that it was hard for me to imagine what it would be like.

"No Danes are able to", she said. She might be right. As Danes, we might experience a heavy loss when we lose someone dear to us or when we are forced to move from our beloved house because we have lost our job. If, at the same time, we have children to protect from the

worst symptoms of our stress, we must control ourselves with extraordinary strength and not give up.

However, if you talk with people living in the asylum centers, you quickly discover that it is hard to compare your problems to those of a person who has had to flee their own country. According to a report by Amnesty International from 2008, 34% of the refugees coming to Denmark are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder when they arrive at the asylum center. Put on top of that, the stress of the uncertainty of not knowing whether you will be given asylum or not. You have to brace yourself for

the possible risk of a long wait as the average waiting time for a case to be processed is 566 days. 566 days of uncertainty.

I am quite sure that I would have a great difficulty managing my life in this kind of situation yet I still see so many asylum seekers keeping their heads up. Among them are some of the most inspiring people and they are writing for this magazine. Some of them fear to be recognized by persons in their home country so they write under pseudonym. But still, they insist on using their ability to express themselves. Sometimes they lose hope if some of their items are stolen at the asylum centre, if a violent

episode chocks them, or if they are being refused asylum, and they have to put their faith in an appeal. But always they keep their heads up.

I am not sure if I would be able to if I was in their shoes. But I am grateful that they are and I am sure many readers of this magazine benefit from their endurance.

*Robin Ahrenkiel El-Tanany*  
Editor

## FOLLOW US ON THE WEB

You can follow us on our webpage [www.newtimes.dk](http://www.newtimes.dk) where we upload articles on a regular basis. Here, you can also make comments and debate the issues that come up.

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**times**

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**ASIG:**  
ASIG (Asylum Seekers Information Group) answers questions about asylum and life as a refugee. Individuals, teachers, students, journal-

ists and anyone interested in asylum matters is welcome to send an inquiry. To book the group for lectures, presentations and discussions contact [newtimesdk@gmail.com](mailto:newtimesdk@gmail.com)

**Support:**  
We are a Danish Red Cross Asylum Department project and are supported by the Danish Institute for Study Abroad. We cooperate with the Danish Refugee Council and Amnesty International.

**Note:**  
Some of the journalists use their real names, but some use pseudonyms because they do not want their whereabouts known by people in their home countries.

**Disclaimer:**  
The opinions expressed are those of the authors and the persons interviewed and not – unless stated clearly – the opinion of the Danish Red Cross.

# ASYLUM SEEKER LEADS ONLINE SHOP

One of the most interesting and productive ways to spend time in the asylum system is to start in an internship – or praktik. Meet Juan Carlos, who is now the main person behind the designing of a big online project.

■ By Sonny

Four hours a week Juan Carlos, an asylum seeker living at Auderød centre, goes to praktik in a Red Cross shop at Frederiksværk. And his responsibilities have been growing ever since he started.

Now he is the main web designer for the new web page for four Red Cross online shops. "I'm very happy to use my skills here in the Red Cross shop. I am used to work with web-designing and computers, and just being in Auderød is a disaster for me, because there is nothing to do for me as the Internet connection is very, very slow."

## BIG SAY

Juan is being involved in the development of the shop. Every Thursday he sits at the table where the weekly meeting of the shop staff takes place. "It's a nice feeling to be an active member of this shop, and I to feel that they are considering my ideas".

## Would you like to go to praktik?

If you are interested in doing external praktik in a Danish company or organization you must meet three criteria:

- You need to be in phase two or have been in phase one for at least three months
- Stable attendance in school/ internal praktik for at least 4-6 weeks
- A certain level in Danish or English language skills. The teachers will decide, if your level is sufficient

If you are interested in getting a praktik. Talk to your job center. They can help you.

## FACTS

Visit the webpage Juan Carlos has helped to create at [www.rodekors.dk/halsnaes](http://www.rodekors.dk/halsnaes)

## EMPLOYER IS HAPPY

Red Cross has more than 200 second hand shops in the whole of Denmark. These shops are mainly selling second hand clothes, furniture etc. It is only a few of them, that have online shops, and John Toettcher the local president of Red Cross at Halsnæs Kommune and the director of Frederiksværk's Red Cross shop, is happy to have Juan Carlos to help out.

"It was actually Juan Carlos' idea to build a web page for the online shop and I'm very delighted about it," says John Toettcher.

## JOBCENTER HELPED

It was the staff at Auderød Asylum Center's jobcenter that told Juan Carlos that the Frederiksværk Red Cross shop needed interns. And he started shortly afterwards.



The internet expert Juan Carlos is using his skills in an external internship, or praktik. He enjoys the opportunity to go out of the camp and meet new people and learn new things.



# THE STONE COLLECTOR

Tull Bohora risks his life to bring big discoveries to Denmark

■ By Robin

On Wednesday the 8th of August, a group of Swedish fishermen heard a cry for help near the shore. They searched the rocky coastline of Stevns Klint inch by inch with their binoculars and suddenly one of them discovered a hand, sticking out between some huge rocks, waving at them.

## TRAPPED

The hand belongs to the asylum seeker, Tull Bohora, a hunter of rare minerals, who had been trapped in a cave by a huge rock in his quest for geological treasures. The fishermen managed to free him, and two weeks later his adventurous struggle was awarded with the membership of the local geological group, Litorina.

“Inside that cave I found a 10 kg fossil of an ancient animal. If it turns out that this ancient

animal was a dinosaur, Denmark will be in the news all over the world,” Tull Bohora explains with a big smile on his face.

## DANISH RECORD

Apart from this finding, Tull Bohora has also uncovered an 8.3 kg rock of pyrite. This is the biggest of this sort ever to be found in Denmark, and he hopes it will go on display in the geological museum in Copenhagen.

His interest for discovering rare minerals started when Tull Bohora was a child in Nepal. But today, he is not just doing it to enjoy himself. He is doing it to keep his mind busy.

## BAD THOUGHTS

“I have been in the asylum system for more than eight years now. My mind is having serious problems. When I eat, when I sleep, when I am awake,

all the time the bad thoughts are there, and I need to get rid of them. Collecting stones helps me to kick out these thoughts,” he says.

“Now I am very happy. The people of the geological group are telling me that they need me. They are putting up my discoveries on their website,” he says.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Tull Bohora now looks forward to every Wednesday and Friday, when he meets with the mem-

bers of the geological group. When he goes out on his quest for the ancient minerals, he climbs rocks and dives in the ocean. The other members of the group are amazed by Tull Bohoras skills. They are now advocating for Tull Bohora to have a chance to studying geology here in Denmark. They have also provided him with new equipment – including a metal-detector – so other big findings are almost destined to come.

“I wish every asylum seeker had a passion like mine, to keep their minds away from their bad thoughts,” says Tull Bohora.

“I wish every asylum seeker had a passion like mine, to keep their minds away from their bad thoughts.”

## FACTS

Read more about the local geological group at [www.litorina-gfko.dk](http://www.litorina-gfko.dk)





# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN SANDHOLM

When you think that you have lost everything, when you feel you're about to fall down, look for one smile - the smile of a child. You will find this at the kindergarten in Sandholm. When you open the door of building number 7, you enter another world.

■ By Yolanda

In building number seven in Sandholm there are children from various continents and countries, and you can hear many different languages. But somehow, the children understand each other. They are together in the fairy-tales and in the games of policemen and firemen.

Now it is time for one of the rituals. The children are sitting in the circle with their teachers. They are eating their breakfast passing around one big plate with brown bread, cheese, and fruit. This way they learn to be polite, friendly, and to respect one another.

## SINGING IN DANISH

They are singing a song in Danish, as part of learning

the language of the country whose help their parents are seeking. In this moment, there are no borders, wars, or suffering; just smiles. You don't cover your ears because of this type of noise. Instead you just let it warm your heart and feed your soul.

"Some of the children are still under stress", explains the kindergarten teacher, Susanne Krüger, 53, who has twenty years experience in this job. "But day by day, with someone looking after them with attention, they feel much better," she says.

## PARENTS UNDER STRESS

"Parents are under great stress and it is reflected in their children. Sometimes the parents ask us for advice and we suggest them to try different things

in their homes. We cooperate with the parents and support each other."

Susanne Krüger and her colleagues spend time talking with each child to gain their trust, and they are working in a specific way to create the best atmosphere possible in the kindergarten.

## NO WINNERS AND LOSERS

"Our most important rules are to behave professionally and to treat everyone equally. Every day we do ritual things such as hand washing, eating breakfast and singing songs. Also, we organize some activities, like playing games in which there are no winners and losers. It is all about taking part in the game."

It sounds simple. Children feel safe because they are sur-

rounded by people who are both friendly and authoritative. They learn to respect the rules in life and that they can always be a member of the team, even if they are not the best.

I close the door of building seven again and think that maybe we can try to use the model of this kindergarten as a life model. A life without winners and losers.

Everyday at 10:20 the children in the kindergarten sing a song and eat together.

## FACTS

The kindergarten in Sandholm uses the STROF model.

**STROF** stands for:

- S - Structure
- T - Talking, time, trust
- R - Ritual
- O - Organization
- F - Cooperation with parents (Forældresamarbejde in Danish)

# SLOW DOWN YOUR

# THOUGHTS

## FACTS

The average waiting time for asylum seekers is 566 days.


## STRESSFUL SITUATION

The poster is developed with inspiration from therapy for people suffering from borderline personality disorder. "The symptoms of people suffering from borderline personality disorder are very similar to those experienced by asylum seekers who are waiting for months and years for their case to be processed. It is an extremely stressful situation", explains Pia Hammerich, project leader and one of the main persons behind the poster.

These days this poster is being presented to all asylum seekers who are taking classes in the Red Cross School in Copenhagen. The intention is to help the asylum seekers to pass their waiting time a little easier, giving tips as to how to slow down your thoughts. New Times wishes to share these tips with all asylum seekers around the country.

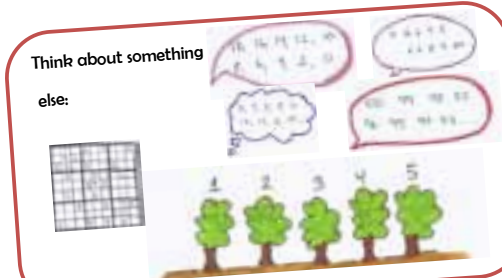
### Perseverance strategies

**Distract yourself:**

Activities: 

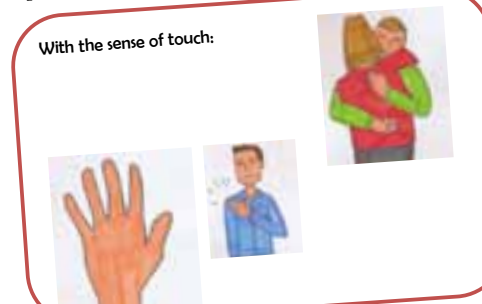
Do something for someone: 


Experience contrary feelings: 

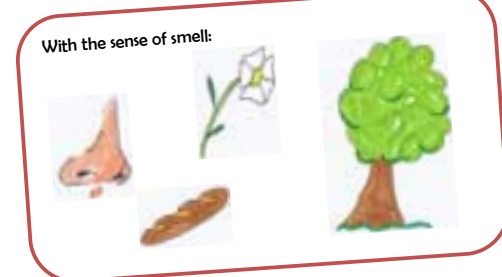
Think about something else: 

Strong sense impressions: 

Relieve with sense impressions:

With the sense of touch: 

With the sense of taste: 

With the sense of smell: 

With the sense of hearing: 



The word 'transferred' may seem insignificant as it is used in common conversational English. However, for asylum seekers, it carries special connotations and is associated with all sorts of myths and rumours.

# TRANSFERRED

■ By Cassa

"I am being transferred" A told us passionately.

"Where?" we asked curiously.

"To Avnstrup!" A proclaimed proudly, watching us intently in order to gather any information we might have collected in our private memories from day and night conversations.

"Wow," said one of us, "that is a good place and close to Copenhagen."

"The place doesn't matter," another said, trying to be balanced, "as long as I get positive [asylum case approved], I don't care about which camp I go to." He then continued, "I don't care if it is a cave or a mountain."

"Don't say that!" someone protested.

"Why?" he shouted, "I have been to mountains and caves. Maybe you came from plane to plane, my friend?"

Everybody laughed and the conversation continued.

## HANSTHOLM

The next day B came and said "I am being transferred."

"Where?" we asked.

"Hanstholm" B uttered the news.

Everyone seemed reluctant to give their usual input. Some brushed their hair and others nodded their heads.

B was confused and afraid by their silence and reluctant behavior. He had to ask leading questions for them to speak out easily.

"How is that camp?" was his first question. "Have any of you ever heard anything about that camp?" This time he swallowed, anticipating answers from them.

"It is ok," said one of us, trying to calm him down.

But that wasn't enough for B. He kept gazing at him, wanting further clarification.

## DUBLIN REGULATION

The person couldn't resist the look of B and said, "I mean... have you ever heard about the Dublin countries (he meant the Dublin Regulation)?"

I interposed myself after a long silence. "It is an agreement between the European countries which states that the first country of entry for the immigrants is the country that processes his/her case."

That didn't help him. He was still roving his eyes.

"My friend," another said loudly, "have you ever given your fingerprints to another European country other than Denmark?"

Without answering the question, B said, "Why didn't you all say that?"

## TABOO

Not everybody will acknowledge it, but it is considered a taboo among asylum seekers to inquire about fingerprints. He avoided the question and came up with another.

"So what are you saying," B rolled his eyes, "that those who have fingerprints in another European country are sent to that camp?"

"I guess so!" answered the same person who had asked about B's fingerprints but could not be sure about the camp.

"I don't need you to guess my friend," B flushed with anger, "why would you say that if you were not sure?" B said as he left us a bit annoyed.

That is the way of our camps. Sometimes you laugh, sometimes you get frustrated and at times you get angry. Anyway, it

keeps us moving and alive.

## MY TURN

The 31st of August was my turn. I was just returning from my short trip to our central office (New Times Magazine) in Copenhagen to talk about my internship as a reporter for our magazine. I had just concluded my meeting with the editor of the magazine, Mr. Robin, and was on a train back to my camp when my friend from the camp called me.

"Hey man, you are being transferred!" he delivered the news to me.

## NERVOUS

"Really." I said with a calm voice, as I had anticipated it like everyone else who has done the first police interview. However, the 'where' question made me a bit nervous. I don't know of any sort of criteria used by the The Danish Immigration Service when deciding where they move someone.

Moreover, for me, my next camp location would complicate things, as I had already made my contract to work with New Times Magazine and was told to come the next day to Copenhagen to start my job. It was obvious that I would have benefited more if I was close to the central office. Thus adding to my anticipation to hear where I was being transferred to.

"Where did they transfer me?" I asked him with all those issues dangling in my head.

"To Ebeltoft!" he finally proclaimed.

## MIXED FEELINGS

I had earlier seen the Ebeltoft camp on a map on the main board in the Auderød office, so

there was no confusion over its location. But the news had galvanized a mixed feeling inside me. On one side, I wasn't as happy as I would have been if it was Avnstrup, Kongelunden or Sigerslev because that would have placed me close to the central office and enabled me to do my job effectively. Moreover, there is always a good feeling about being close to the capital city. On the other side, my main reason for coming to Denmark is to ask for protection. Nothing is more important than that, so as long as my case is being processed, the location of my camp is secondary.

## GOODBYE

Thus, early in the morning of Monday, September 3, I had to depart Auderød camp and say goodbye to the short-period friends of mine. I could see on their faces the longing for their own transfer, because there is a general feeling among us (it could be an unfounded feeling) that with your departure from Auderød camp, your case has started to be processed. Anyway, we exchanged some wishes of good luck and I started my trip to the soon-to-be-discovered new camp of mine, Ebeltoft Camp.

## FACTS

Hanstholm is NOT an asylum center for people under the Dublin regulation. It is a normal asylum center receiving families and singles that are waiting for their asylum case to be processed.

Myths and rumors are hard to stop. If you are in doubt ask a Red Cross staff member.

It is The Danish Immigration Service that decides the transfers. The asylum seekers or the Red Cross has no say in this matter.

# ASK A LAWYER

We sent your questions to the lawyers at the Danish Refugee Council. Here are their replies.

**1** *Hey. I'm an asylum seeker in Denmark and I got married in the Islamic way with a Danish woman one year ago. Now I'm expecting a child from her, and I want to ask you; how can I marry with her legally in Denmark, and what nationality will my child have? I don't want to go back to my country, and I want to live with her for my whole life. Is it there any way to get residence permit in Denmark?*

**1** First of all, congratulations with the pregnancy of your wife. In the following, I will try to answer your questions:

*Regarding marriage:* According to Danish Law regarding marriage, only persons with a valid, legal stay can get married in Denmark. This means that as a general rule asylum seekers are not allowed to marry in Denmark. However, in certain cases you can apply for dispensation: If you have (or are expecting) a child together, if you have been asylum seeker in Denmark for more than 3 years, if you and your girlfriend was together in your country of origin, or if one of you suffers from a serious illness or handicap. For all of the above mentioned reasons to apply, you will need to have known each other for 1-1½ year.

So you and your wife can apply for dispensation. You do this at the municipality ("Kommune"), where one of you have your registered address (if you live in an asylum camp, it is the municipality where the camp is located). You need to write them a letter asking for "dispensation for kravet om lovligt ophold ved indgåelse af ægteskab, jf. Ægteskabsloven § 11 a, stk. 2". In the letter you should describe the following:

a) for how long time you and your wife have known each other, b) the date and place of your Islamic wedding c) the expected date of the child birth. Furthermore you should attach copies of the following documents a) your ID-card b) the passport of your wife c) your wedding documents from the Islamic wedding d) medical papers regarding the pregnancy of your wife. You can hand in the application by post or in person to the municipality. The municipality will the process your application. If you are granted dispensation, you can get married at the town hall. If the municipality rejects your application, you can file a complaint to the National Social Appeals Board ("Ankestyrelsens familieretsafdeling"). However, should you receive a rejection from the municipality we would very much like to assist you in filing the complaint. Please contact our Legal Counselling should you receive a rejection: [advice@drc.dk](mailto:advice@drc.dk)

*Regarding citizenship of the child:* If your wife has Danish citizenship, your child will be Danish citizen from birth.

*Regarding future possibilities:* As you probably know, it can be very difficult to get family reunification in Denmark, and normally you will have to give in the application from abroad (e.g. A Danish Embassy in your country of origin). However, if your wife has Danish citizenship, you can apply under the special European Union-rules, if she finds work in another European country. You can read more about this at [nyidanmark.dk](http://nyidanmark.dk)

**2** *Hi. I am seeking asylum in Denmark with my child. I had my fingerprints taken in Italy. I fear they will send me back to Italy now. I do not want to go to Italy. They have many problems there. Like Greece. I do not want to live on the street. Can they send me back to Italy?*

**2** First of all I would like to stress, that the Danish Refugee Council are aware of the harsh living conditions for asylum seekers in Italy, and that it must be a difficult situation for you and your child.

According to the Dublin-regulation (of the European Union), the Danish Authorities can transfer you and your child to Italy, if you have been registered in Italy (or have a visa or legal stay in Italy). You can file a complaint regarding the decision of transfer to Italy to the Danish Ministry of Justice. However, it is very rare, that the Ministry changes the decision of transfer. Nevertheless, the Danish Refugee Council has asked the European Court of Human Rights to stop the deportation of a family with a small child to Italy. While the Danish Authorities are waiting for the decision of the court, the deportation to Italy of families with small children as well as unaccompanied minors under 18, are stopped at the moment. This is, however, only temporary and we do not know if or when deportations will start again. We have had no success in stopping deportation of single adults to Italy. However, all asylum seekers who are facing deportation to Italy are very welcome to contact the Danish Refugee Council, as we would like to assist you in filing a complaint to the Ministry of Justice. Please contact [advice@drc.dk](mailto:advice@drc.dk)

**3** Hi. I am an asylum seeker from Africa. Some of my friends have had negative replies to their cases, and one of the reasons was that the officials documents in their case did look reliable. But they did not fake them. Now I am afraid that the Danish authorities will see my official documents as fake as well. How can I feel sure that they will trust my documents?

**3** In some cases the Immigration Service or the Refugees Appeals Board ("the court") asks the Technical Department of the Police or the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to check documents handed in by asylum seekers. The police will look for signs of copy or false stamps etc, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will typically ask the Embassy in the country of origin to check the documents (in such cases the documents will be sent forth in an anonymous version, so that the identity of the asylum seeker is not disclosed). However, sometimes the documents are rejected as false without any such investigation. If so, you can ask the Immigration Service if it's possible to do a real and thorough investigation of your documents. If you only have copies with you, it can be a good idea to see if you can get the originals to Denmark.

I wish you the best of luck with your case.

## DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION? WRITE TO:

New Times,  
Red Cross House  
Rosenørnsallé 31, 4th floor  
1970 Frederiksberg

or email us at  
[newtimesdk@gmail.com](mailto:newtimesdk@gmail.com)

Please feel free to ask your questions anonymously.

## YOU CAN ALSO CONTACT:

Dansk Flygtningehjælp  
Legal Counseling Unit  
Asylum Department  
Borgergade 10  
Postbox 53  
1002 København K

[www.drc.dk](http://www.drc.dk)  
Email: [advice@drc.dk](mailto:advice@drc.dk)

Free Legal Counseling  
for asylum seekers every  
Wednesday  
from 13:00 - 15:00

You need to present your questions in Danish or English





# VOX POP

by Rohit

## NEW TIMES ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. The current government is planning to allow asylum seekers to live outside the asylum centers. Do you think this is a good idea?
2. If you were an asylum seeker in another country, would you prefer to live in an asylum center or outside in society?
3. How would you personally feel if an asylum seeker lived next door to you?



Karina, 35, Karlslunde.  
 1. It's a pretty good idea. I mean, they live in isolated places despite being normal humans. 2. Okay... because it would be an entirely new atmosphere and culture, I would prefer to first live in a transition center for some time to adapt, and then, of course, I would want to live in the society. 3. They are just welcome.



Mik, 19, Copenhagen.  
 1. I think it's okay, because they are normal people like us. 2. I would definitely like to live in the society. 3. Well, I would just feel normal.



Torben, 30, Ålborg.  
 1. Sure it's a good idea, because they come from their respective societies. 2. Yes, I would like to live and interact within main society. 3. No problem for me.

## NEW TIMES ASKED FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO ASYLUM SEEKERS:

1. The current government is planning to allow asylum seekers to live outside the asylum centers. Do you think this is a good idea?
2. Where would you like to live and why?
3. Would you miss the facilities you are being provided with in the centers?



Wahidullah, 23, Afghanistan.  
 1. Sure, this is good idea. 2. Anywhere in Denmark is okay for me. 3. We have facilities because we are not allowed to work. If they allow us to work then we will not.



Marco, 54, Italy  
 1. This is absolutely a good idea. 2. I would like to live in Jylland because of good nature. 3. Well it depends on whether we are allowed to work or not."



Abu Amin, 41, Syria  
 1. Definitely, it's a good idea. 2. Preferably in Copenhagen, because I know many people there from my country. 3. Certainly not, if we are allowed to work

The front of Center Sandholm.



The washing room.



I like this graffiti.



The bus stop in front of center Sandholm. Here people wait for the bus 381 to Allerød where they catch the train to Copenhagen.



Some people playing basketball inside the center.

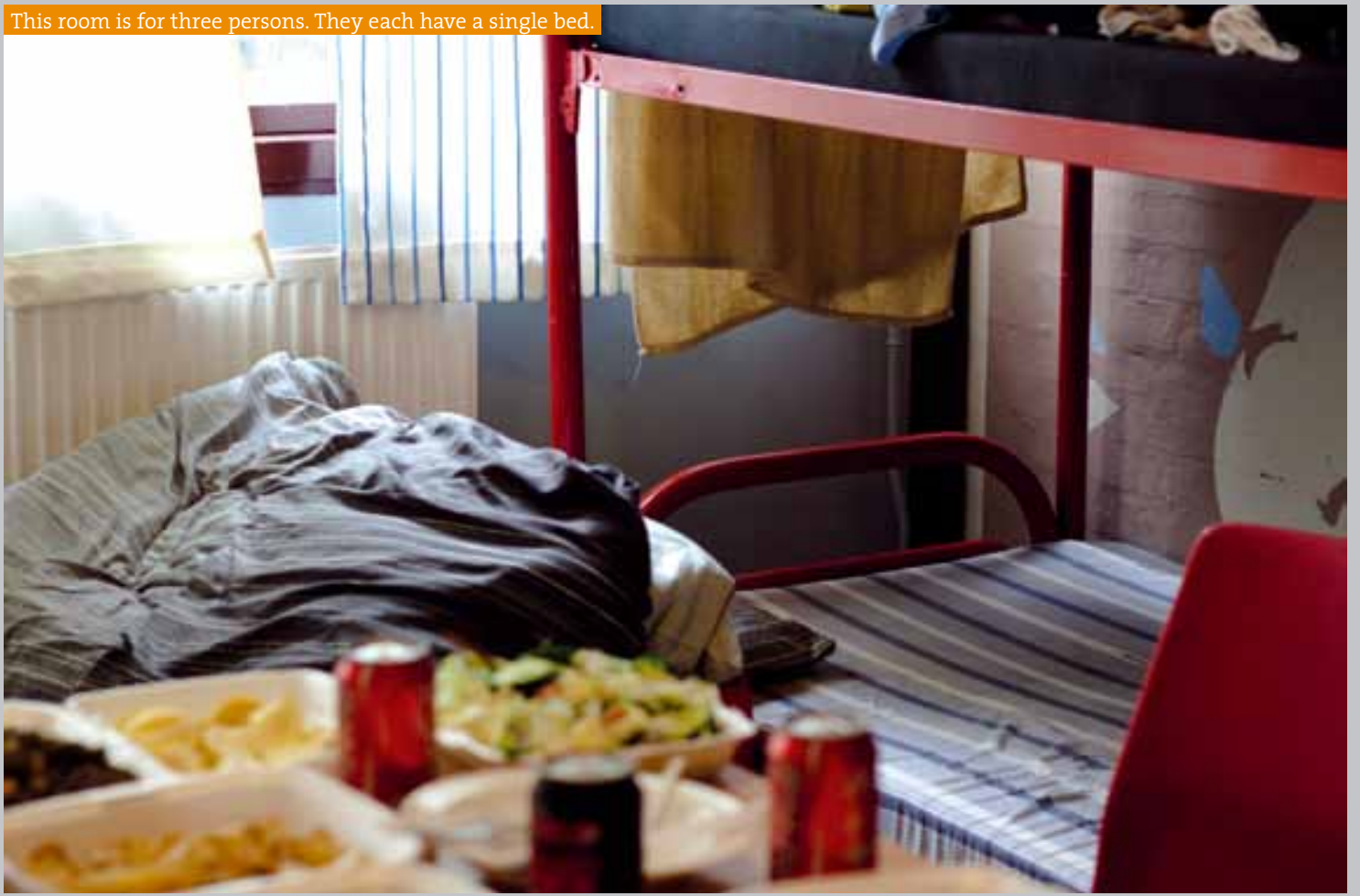


# PLACES

By Tania

All asylum seekers start their journey in the Danish asylum system in Center Sandholm. So did our photographer, Tania, who has been on a visit back to her old camp, to capture some of the atmosphere she remembers from her time there.

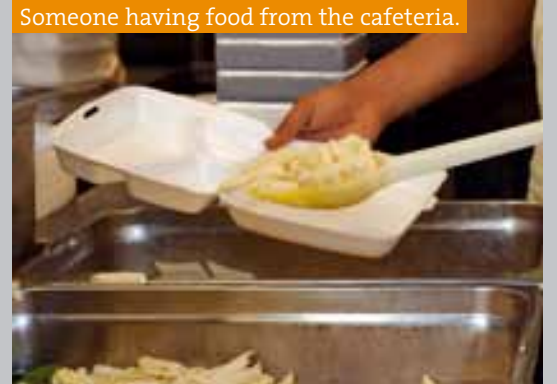
This room is for three persons. They each have a single bed.



Building no. 4. The biggest and most important building in the center. All most all activities happen here.



Someone having food from the cafeteria.



TV is on, in one of the rooms.



The office where people can get all kinds of help and information.



# FORMER REFUGEE HELPS FOREIGNERS FIND JOBS

Marcus Sabri fled from Iraq when he was 18 years old in 1994. Today - 18 years and many challenges later - he has switched his position as unemployed new-comer to Denmark, for a job as professional consultant in a successful Danish private company.

■ By Robin

“Getting a job in Denmark can be extremely difficult, if you do not know the basics about the Danish society”, says Marcus Sabri.

And he should know, as he has tried himself to start from scratch after being granted asylum in 1995. He now holds a position as professional consultant in Integro, a company that helps unemployed people find a job. He is working on a project with special focus on helping new Danish citizens – such as immigrants and people who have been granted asylum. Over the past years he has helped more than a hundred people to find a job - or increase their chances of getting one, by finding the right education for them.

## EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT

“We are helping many people to find jobs. And one of the most crucial things to understand, when you are a foreigner and interested in finding a job in Denmark, is the importance of education”, says Marcus Sabri.

His own road from the asylum center to his present job includes more than three studies.

## LANGUAGE BARRIER

“Back home in Iraq my father owned a construction company. I learned to operate a crane when I was 13, and I had my own crane, earning my own money when I was 15. So I thought I could continue that line of work, and started the formal study at the center of Transport and Logistics in Odense. But the language barrier was too high for me, and the mentality there did not suit me, so I only finished the first half of the study”, says Marcus Sabri.

With the help of his friends he got a job as florist in a flower shop in Copenhagen, but after a while he grew tired of that, and took the last half of the study in Copenhagen. To finish the study, however, he needed an internship.

“I sent more than 300 applications, and did not receive a single positive answer”, he explains.

## 1.2 MIO AND DEAD

Then he turned direction again. This time trying his luck with the post, taking a two year-long education at Post Danmark. But after five years, an injury in his back forced him away.

“I was offered the choice between early retirement or a new education. If I chose early retirement I would also receive compensation worth 1.2 mio. kroner. A huge amount of money. I chose a new education, and my family was shocked. But I knew that if I retired at the age of 28, I might have open eyes, but I would be dead inside”, says Marcus Sabri.

## SOCIAL WORKER

Then he started to study to be social worker. A four year-long study. After finishing he immediately got a job at a job center in Aarhus, and then he was discovered by the company Integro, who hired him, when they saw the chance.

## INVOLVE ASYLUM SEEKERS

“I hope that the road to a good job can be shorter for the asylum seekers who are being granted asylum today. A big help for them - and to the Danish society - would be to involve the asylum

seekers in the society straight away. Give them the possibility of working and living outside the camps. Like they do in Australia, USA and Canada”, he says.

## SHORTEN WAITING TIME

“If the authorities could also shorten the time of

processing the asylum cases it would help the refugees tremendously. The waiting time is not easy to cope with. I was lucky that I was living together with a group of family and friends from Iraq. We went fishing, biking and hiking all the time. But not everyone is so fortunate to have someone to share his waiting time with”.



# GOD, DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN AGAIN

Death came to many people in this war not so long ago.

■ By Yolanda

During the very beginning of the war, we were all very confused. We were trapped in the town, without any hope of escaping from that Hell's circle. We were bombarded in our day-to-day life. We hadn't started to think about death yet. We still didn't have time for that. But one of my friends had. Maybe because he was so young.

## AFRAID OF WAR

He was afraid of the war, of death, and he didn't want to kill. He didn't want to be a soldier, but he had no choice. For several days he was screaming, "I don't want to die!" We just smiled. "You are a coward," we teased him. When we celebrated his birthday, one friend told him, "This is your last birthday, tell us your wish." He had many. We were laughing.

## SNIPER HITS

The next day, in the morning, we went to pass through a very dangerous place, where snipers killed many people. I passed before him and was fine, but he wasn't the soldier of fortune and was shot down. He was

badly wounded, laying silently in the street, with wide, blue eyes open. We couldn't help him, and after a few minutes, he died.

He had a baby face and a very nice smile. He was tall and played basketball.

And he was only eighteen years old.

## DEAD OR ALIVE

In the war, everybody is a hero. There is just one difference. Are you dead or are you alive?

We will have a better chance in the future if we have greater understanding of the past.

God, don't let it happen again.

## FACTS

Are you having heavy thoughts about war, conflict or pain? Do you know that you have the right to talk to a psychologist? Contact a member of the clinic in your center to find out more.

Marcus Sabri coaching a former asylum seeker, to increase his chances of getting a job. Very often he manages to find a job for his clients.



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# WAFANDE: ON HIS LIFE AND HOPE FOR REFUGEES

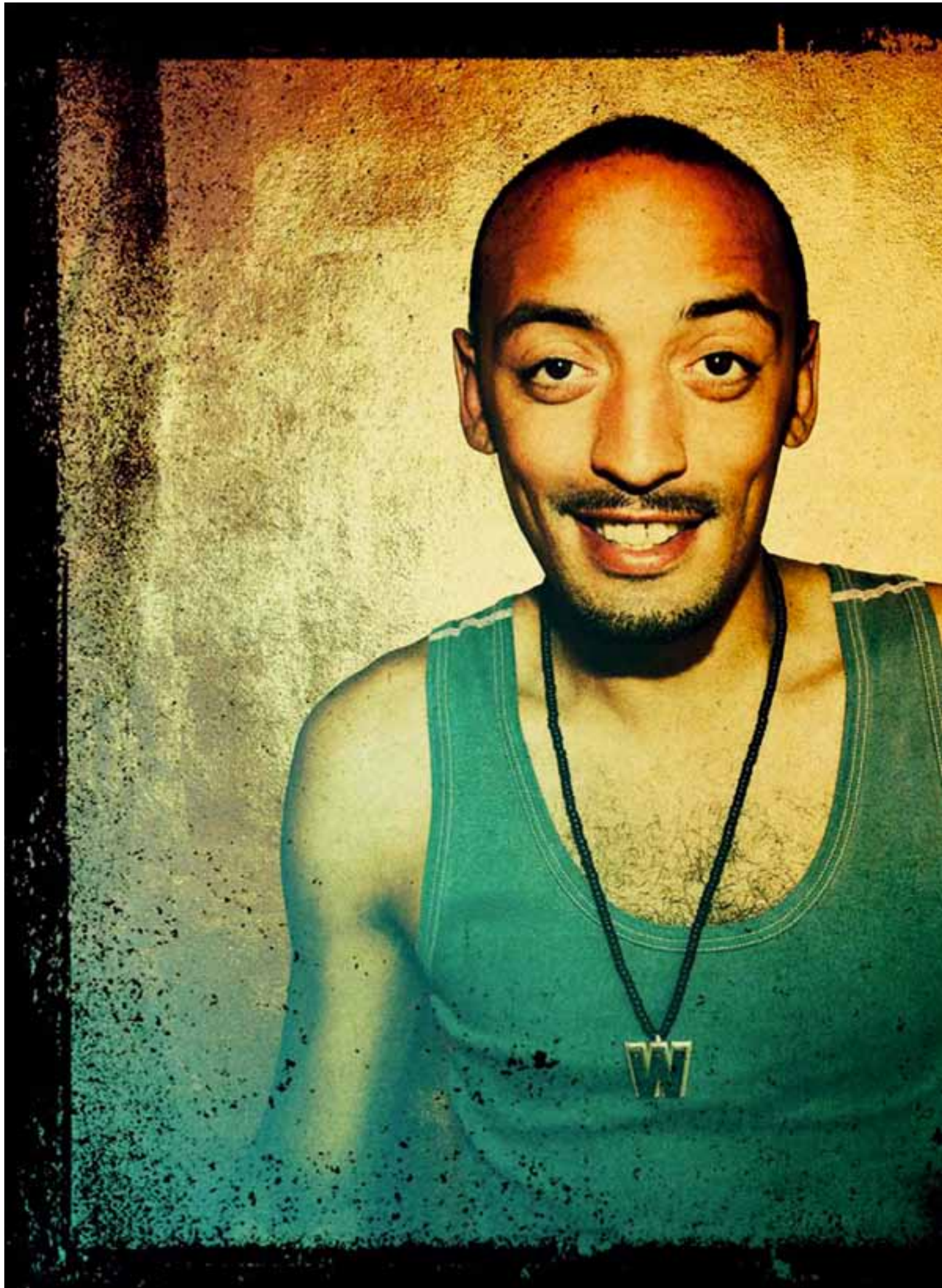
Wafande Jolivel Zahor is a leading reggae, hip-hop and soul musician in Denmark. His music is produced by the legendary Danish musician and producer Pharfar. He is also signed to the world's leading record label, Universal Studios. Zach K. spoke to him in Copenhagen about his life and his hopes for better treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in Denmark.

■ By Zach K.

"Just give me a smile, when you meet me on the way... you have only one life to live, so enjoy it, and give me a smile" (Gi Mig Et Smil - Hit single 2011)

How do you categorize a man whose mother is half French, half Dane, and whose father has roots in Malawi, Congo, Oman and Tanzania? But that is Wafande for you. A polished reggae and soul musician whose fanatical following extends beyond Denmark's horizons.

Born and partly bred in the vibrant Freetown of Christiania, Wafande is hitting the music scene with a bang, and his message - Peace! At birth he was named Wafande Jolivel Zahor. The last two names have since faded. With huge album sales and top-of-the-chart hits, one would be forgiven for expecting a sophisticated, flashy personality. But for Wafande, life is more than glamour and ego. He is a humble being who stays in touch with his Christiania roots.





### FRENCH, DANE OR WHAT...

We plan to meet at the Copenhagen Central Station on a Thursday afternoon. He meets me and our photographer with a cheerful smile that I soon realise is his signature expression. Five minutes later we are sitting in a cafe with our cameras rolling. I question if he ever experiences an identity crisis considering his diverse backgrounds; "I grew up half my life in Christiania and the other half in France. I am Danish when in Denmark, French when in France." He sips his beer. Two sips later, "This is my Danish part," he quips. Apart from music, he was also a talented basketball player. He played for the French national youth program and won an athletic scholarship to study in the US. This presented him with a choice between the scholarship and being with family. He chose the latter and gave up the scholarship.

Wafande's music touches on social themes. He particularly focuses on integration, racial issues and coexistence in Denmark. I am curious to know how his life experiences have influenced the themes in his music. "When I moved back from France to Denmark, I lived with my dad but it did not go so well. I got kicked out of the house shortly after moving in." He ended up living on the streets with his friends. That was to be his defining moment. Rap music started running in his veins. He joined a school where he had access to a studio where he honed his lyrical skills.

### LONG WAY HOME...

Looking at him now, with success on his shoulders and a smile on his face, it is hard to imagine the tough young life he endured on the streets. He credits his good grounding in the determination of his mother. "My mother did a good job in letting me follow my dreams and still kept me grounded." But how was it growing up in Christiania with all the influences there, including drugs? "People cared about each other in Christiania, it was a close-knit community. Drugs were there but we never got involved. They were easily accessible therefore less interesting. Myself and most of my friends never used them, not even smoked a cigarette until I was eighteen."

The first song that catapulted him to fame was Lang Vej Hjem (Long Way Home). It was politically charged. In it he called on fellow Danes to shun politicians

like Pia Kjærsgaard (an MP from the Danish People's Party), who, in his opinion, seek to incite Danes against foreigners with venomous statements. He dedicated the last verse of the song to refugees.

*It is not a choice to be a refugee they lose their family and their lives turn black and then they come here to a closed gate it shouldn't be like that*

His subsequent hits included "Gi Mig Et Smil" (Give me a smile), and most recently Uartig (Naughty), currently riding high on the airwaves.

I ask his opinion about Danes' perspectives on foreigners. "Sometimes in the Danish society, they have a 'correct' way of saying they are not racists," he says. "They will call you second-generation foreigner. But no matter how you put it, that is a racist remark, because even if you are sixth generation, they still refer to you as second generation. It makes no sense."

His mission is to open the eyes of his society. He strives to make society understand how hard it is being a foreigner or mixed race in Denmark. "I am complaining because every time I try to get a job they still look at my face and ask if my name is Mohamed!" He expresses his love for Denmark with all the social welfare, but is quick to point out that a change of attitude towards foreigners is necessary.

### DEEP SYMPATHY FOR REFUGEES

Wafande narrates how he once played a concert in an asylum centre in Nordjylland. There was a 13-year-old boy who had escaped from Gaza. He had scars all over his face from a bomb that almost blew him up. Before he escaped, he managed to get into their burning house and rescued his two baby sisters from the flames and ran out with them. Somehow they made it out of Gaza all the way to Sweden. They finally landed in Denmark.

His sisters were then six and eight years old. "Obviously they have nothing to go back to. They come here, we put them in an asylum centre, and say here you go, we saved you. But those children need more help. They need psychological help, they need a normal community. We have to learn to treat refugees better."

About his political stance, his answer is short and quick. "I hate politics, period!. I have strong feelings for freedom and

equality. Basic humanity. To be just and not care about colour or ethnicity." "But how realistic is that dream?" I interject. "It is not realistic," he adds, "It is a dream world, but there are more and more people taking notice that some things going on in Danish politics are not right."

But Wafande's life is not just music. He makes time to give back to his community. He engages children in various projects. He also works with humanitarian organisations like the Red Cross youth wing to spread the message of universal friendship and humanitarian relations. He also plays concerts for charity.

### KEEP SMILING

As for his input in the ongoing asylum debate in Denmark - "They [asylum seekers], should be allowed to go to school and to work. Probably their families are dead, the best we can do is to give them a new start to life." Wafande will never venture into politics. But I still ask him what is the one thing he would change if he woke up one day to find himself the Danish Prime Minister. "I would have very heavy culture politics. I would try and teach the Danes that the world is bigger than what they can see in front of their noses, I would try to make the sun shine in winter time." His parting shot for asylum seekers and refugees coming to Denmark is: "I cross my fingers for you, so gi mig et smil!"

#### Wafande

Full Names:  
**Wafande Jolivel Zahor**  
Birth place:  
**Christiania, Copenhagen**  
Genre:  
**Reggae, Hip Hop, Soul**  
Speaks:  
**Danish, English, French, Swahili**  
First Album:  
**Du Ved De (2011)**  
Interests:  
**Music, Basketball**  
Hopes to work with:  
**Nabiha (DK), Tiken Jah Farkoly (Ivory Coast)**  
Website:  
**www.myspace.com/wafande**

# POSTER COMPETITION

Draw or paint a poster for this year's Energy campaign

The Danish Red Cross wants to take care of the environment, and save money on electricity, heating and water. So we are arranging a "save energy" campaign in November 2012.

## WHAT THE POSTER NEEDS TO BE:

For the campaign we need some festive and colourful posters, which will help us all to think about our usage of energy and water.

Paint or draw your poster on A2 paper.

The words THINK ENERGY (or in Danish TÆNK ENERGI) should be visible somewhere on the poster. You decide how it should be written. There should also be room for a little Red Cross logo in the bottom left-hand corner. This will be put on by the judges.

Each school can deliver 5 posters, to Lisbeth Nielsen, Rosenørnsallé 31, 4th floor, 1970 Frederiksberg, no later than Friday 5th October at 12 o'clock.

## THERE ARE PRIZES FOR THE BEST 3 POSTERS!

We save energy by using less:-

**ELECTRICITY:** For example, by remembering to switch off computers (and screens!) when not in use, and lights when we leave a room, and by closing the fridge after us.

**HEATING:** For example, by turning down the radiator and putting on a jumper and socks, and turning it off when we air the room out.

**WATER:** For example, by limiting the time we take a shower to 5 minutes, by washing-up in a washing-up bowl (and not in the sink), and turning off the tap when we brush our teeth, shave etc.

Best regards, Lisbet Nielsen  
tlf.9258163  
lin@redcross.dk



Montage / design: supergreen.dk

# THINK ENERGY