

## TRAPPED IN NO MAN'S LAND

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WAITING FOR  
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# EDITORIAL

In this magazine we have decided to focus on the "long stayers" in the asylum system. The refugees who have had their pleas for protection denied by the Danish authorities, but who do not dare to return to their home countries - or can not be returned.

All the journalists on the New Times team know someone who has been trapped in this kind of mind-wrecking no man's land for several years. Not just two, three or four years. Indeed, one of our own journalists has been living in the asylum system for more than ten years. We bring you his and other long stayers' stories in this magazine, as well as an

interview with an experienced psychologist who describes the immense pressure these people are living under.

The number of people living in the asylum centres for more than two years has been decreasing for many years, but last year the number started to rise alarmingly again. Now more than 800 people are living in the centres for their second, third - or in some cases - tenth year.

It is a tragic situation. The Danish authorities have had their final say. The Immigrations Service as well as the Refugee Council are convinced that these people do not meet the criteria for asylum. Only impor-

tant new information - which rarely surfaces - can reopen these cases. The refugees do not agree with the authorities' decision. They fear for their lives if they return, so they dare not go back. The fear is of such a scale, that they would rather live in a an asylum centre in a foreign country, where they are not allowed to work, marry or learn the local language than to return to their home countries.

The result is endless waiting time. In an isolated no man's land.

*Robin Ahrenkiel El-Tanany*  
Editor



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**Disclaimer:**  
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# MOBILES TO THE TEST

Many asylum seekers believe that Lycamobile is the best company to buy a SIM card from. But is that really true?

■ By: Charles

Immediately upon arrival in a Danish asylum centre, many people will tell you, "Everyone has Lyca, so unless you want to waste your money, you better buy a Lyca SIM card". Because of this, most asylum seekers have a telephone number that starts with 91 or 71, Lyca's first two digits.

But is Lyca really the best brand with the cheapest prices? This article seeks to reveal what is fact and what is simply fiction.

## THE CHEAPEST?

The first rumour in the asylum centres is that Lyca is the cheapest. Like Lyca, most mobile operators offer a free SIM card, but if it is not free, it usually has enough credit on it to help users get started. Most companies also offer free SMS, free voice mail, free MMS and free incoming calls.

However, the condition for most of these services is if both the caller and the receiver use the same SIM card company. This means, for example, that if your SIM card is from Lyca and you would like to text or call someone for free, the person you're trying to call or text must also have a Lyca SIM card. In fact, Lyca-to-Lyca contact is not completely free, except for some months; only texting is. Calling costs you 0,01 kr.

Thus, the main reason most people buy a Lyca SIM card

is that it is free to call their friends who use the same provider. However, it is important to note that this is not something unique to Lyca, as many other SIM card companies offer similar plans.

## A CLEVER MARKETING STRATEGY

Most asylum seekers buy SIM cards from Lyca not because Lyca has the cheapest rates, but because Lyca is so heavily used already among asylum seekers. Jimal, an asylum seeker from Egypt, helps to shed some light on the mystery of Lyca's monopoly in the asylum centres:

"About two years ago, when I arrived in Auderød Camp, a car with a Lyca Mobile logo on it drove around the camp with people handing out free SIM cards to asylum seekers. Many asylum seekers took more than one to give to friends and family at a later date," he recalls.

Lyca used to have a clever marketing strategy, but it has been a long time since they have implemented their plan to get their SIM cards out there. So the question remains: is Lyca still the best?

## BE WARY OF OFFERS

About three months ago a new SIM card was released named Delight. According to advertizers, you can call and talk for roughly ten hours with family and friends in Iran, for example, for just 1 kr. But this special offer only lasts for the first month,

and then the rates change to ones similar to Lyca's. Such gimmicks and "tilbuds", or sales tactics, are commonly used by SIM card providers to get more customers. Asylum seekers should be weary of these offers because they often do not last.

Still, this example shows that other companies are able to compete with Lyca on the prices, which dismisses the first major rumour about Lyca- that Lyca is the cheapest.

## TRACEABILITY

The second rumor surrounding Lyca SIM cards is that the company makes them untraceable. This means that you can purchase a SIM card without having to register your name with the company. For asylum seekers coming from countries with dictatorial governments, having this anonymity when calling friends and family back home is key.

However, almost all operators work this way. Companies like Delight, Hey and GT mobile make it possible for you to use an unregistered SIM card with no worries about being monitored. It seems that the second rumour is also untrue.

## CALLS ABROAD

When it comes to calls abroad, Lyca is facing tough competition from new arrivals on the scene. Delight Mobile is a very good choice for people who call home a lot - as long as Delight's campaign lasts. But other com-

panies like GT mobile and HEY also offer cheap prices for calling abroad.

## SO WHAT'S THE CONCLUSION?

Lyca is not the cheapest and offers services made available by other providers. Before you put a Lyca SIM card in your phone, make sure you check out other options and you might end up saving money.

### Check!

Destination	Delight (per min)	GT(per min)	Lebara (per min)	Lyca (per min)
Afghanistan mobiles	0.99kr	1.58kr	1.49kr	1.49kr
Iran mobiles	0.49kr	0.89kr	0.79kr	0.79kr
Somalia mobiles	1.97kr	2.99kr	2.49kr	2.49kr
Syria mobiles	0.49kr	1.99kr	1.29kr	1.29kr
Denmark mobiles	0.0kr	0.89kr	0.19kr	0.01kr

The information in this chart has been taken from the websites and brochures of each operator and is correct as of 21 November 2012



# ALWAYS BE JOYFUL

It is a very rare for a child to be able to walk away from a traumatic experience into a classroom and just “be normal”. That is why the Red Cross School at Lynge is implementing the JOY project

■ By Sonny

“Every child in my school has trauma, more or less,” says the headteacher, Paul Karoff. “If we study the background of the children who are here, we will find that they are from some place where war is going on or where humanity is neglected, and they have seen or experienced disgraceful events. Sometimes maybe the children’s parents had terrible experiences and have passed their trauma on to their children. Whatever the consequence is, trauma and for this reason, the school has implemented Project JOY.”

## PROVIDING JOY WHERE IT’S NEEDED MOST

The two teachers who have been the most involved, Louise Weinholt and Inci Skor, have been a part of the project for four years. They say the pupils have benefited from the JOY sessions.

“Around 20 students have been untraumatized or have calmed down so much that they

are now studying in a normal Danish school with the other Danes,” they explain.

## THE PROJECT

JOY is a project that started in Boston, in the United States, in 1989 for children who had been exposed to traumatic experiences like natural disasters, separation from parents or the mental shock of being accused of a crime. What happened was that these children often stopped playing. But the people behind the project argued that when these children stop playing, they also stop living and growing. It is during these times that children need adults to help them feel safe and secure enough to play again. Project JOY works to ensure that nothing stands in the way of healthy play for all children.

## THE GOALS OF JOY

When one child experiences trauma from anything, their inner-conflict increases with time. By playing, and under the proper guidance of adults, chil-

dren can calm down fully. Lynge is an ideal place for Project JOY because many asylum children are in a traumatized state. There they can get regular guidance from the teachers, who actually teach them through play.

## HELP THE CHILD BY PLAYING

The driving idea behind Project JOY is “without play, no child can grow up healthy. When children are faced with an overwhelming threat, they stop playing.” So everyday at Lynge school one or two classes get a session with Project JOY where they can play. For example, in one JOY session, the children sit together with their teachers in a circle and start with a ball that has to be passed on and held by everyone in the group at least once. The ball has everyone’s name on it, so they all can remember each other’s names. Then they play some games where one person says something like, “whoever ate pizza today, stand up and change places with someone else.” Then whoever has eaten pizza has to stand up

and find another place in the circle quickly. Everybody has a significant and important role to play in this game. By playing, the children think about themselves and are physical at the same time. This helps their healthy development.

You can read more about JOY at <http://www.lifeisgood.com>

Photo: Sonny



“I love to come to school so then I can learn Danish by playing games, and my thinking capacity has grown as well,” says 15 year old Almira from Serbia who beamed a big smile while she was talking about JOY.

Photo: Yolanda



# NO LINES IN THE FUTURE

The long lines on Pocket Money Day may soon be history. The Red Cross is trying to change the system so each asylum seeker will be given a debit card instead.

■ By Sameer Ahmad

“Pocket money” is a well known English phrase among all asylum seekers in Denmark, and it is because every 14 days asylum seekers receive a specific amount of money from the Danish government via the Red Cross. The asylum seekers get together in a specific place at their asylum centre, which is secured by the local police. And the people must wait for their turn in very long lines.

Pocket money day poses some critical problems for the Red Cross and the asylum seekers: thieves are tempted to work that day; it is costly to transport all the money from the banks to the centres and Red Cross

staff have to spend a lot of time handing out the money.

## NO LINES NO MORE

Branislav Mihic, from the Red Cross financial unit might be the man partly responsible for a radical change in the asylum seekers’ world of pocket money. He has recently submitted a proposal to the relevant authorities to simplify the pocket money system

## NO CASH

The new pocket money system will get rid of cash and instead use a special kind of individual debit card. A similar system is used in Sweden and Holland, which works very well. The new system will enable asylum

seekers to buy and withdraw money from specific places. The new system will save lots of time, energy and resources for the Danish government, the Red Cross and refugees. The proposal is now under the scrutiny by the relevant authorities.

Many people hope this proposal soon will become reality.

## FACTS

The amount of pocket money asylum seekers get differs according to the phase that they are in. Asylum seekers in phase 1 (new arrivals) and phase 3 (after the final rejection of an application for asylum) receive around 700 Kr, and the asylum seekers who are in phase 2 (applications are in process) receive around 1100 Kr.

The pocket money is a provision to cover food expenses, transport and other necessities.



## POCKET MONEY DAY

Twice every month asylum seekers stand in long lines to receive pocket money for necessary provisions.

By Sameer Ahmad and Yolanda (Photos)

On pocket money day the centres are packed with people. All asylum seekers who live inside and outside the centres come to collect their pocket money.



An asylum seekers receiving pocket money from Red Cross personnel.... (Avnstrup Centre)



Building number four. The place of receiving pocket money.



Receiving the money



Checking the ID-card



Long line. Long waiting time.



An asylum seeker signing the paper work for pocket money... (Avnstrup centre)

#### FACTS

There are the following types of cash allowances for asylum seekers:

- Basic allowance
- Supplementary allowance
- Caregiver allowance for first and second child
- Reduced caregiver allowance for third and fourth child

#### Basic allowance

The basic allowance covers expenses for food, personal hygiene items, etc. This is paid to all asylum seekers over the age of 18 who do not receive free food at their accommodation centre. The basic allowance is DKK 50.03 per day per adult. Applicants living with a spouse, registered partner or cohabiting partner will receive DKK 39.61 per day per adult. The money is paid in advance every other Thursday.

#### Supplementary allowance

Asylum seekers over the age of 18 who are not placed on the 'food allowance' programme can receive a supplementary allowance if they comply with the contract regarding completing necessary tasks and participating in job activation or courses.

The supplementary allowance is DKK 8.35 per day for people in phase 1 and DKK 29.19 per day for those in phase 2. The money is paid every other Thursday, at the end of each fourteen-day period.

#### Caregiver allowances

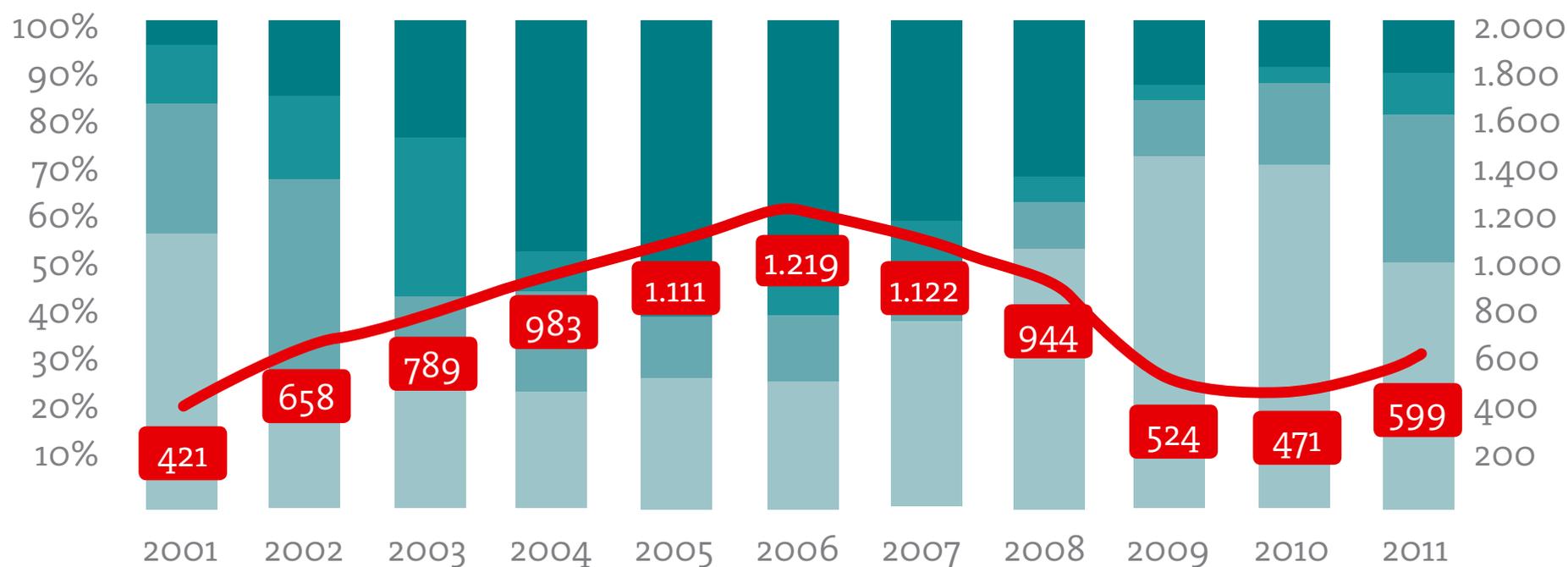
Asylum seekers with dependent children under the age of 18 receive a caregiver allowance to support their children. Only one allowance per child is given. The caregiver allowance is paid for a maximum of two children. If a family has more children, they will receive a reduced caregiver allowance for the third and fourth child. It is not possible to receive allowances for more than four children. Caregiver allowances are paid in advance every other Thursday.

The caregiver allowance for the first and second child, during phase 1 is DKK 58.38 per child per day and for those in phase 2, DKK 79.22 per child per day. There is a reduced caregiver allowance for the third and fourth child of DKK 41,70 per child per day.

For more details and examples of allowances see <https://www.nyidanmark.dk>

# TRAPPED IN NO MAN'S LAND

More than 800 people have been trapped in the Danish asylum system for several years. They have been denied asylum and must return to their home countries according to the law. But they dare not go back.



By: Robin Ahrenkiel El-Tanany

"I would rather die in Denmark, than go back to Iran." These words were painted on a huge banner displayed during a hunger strike in Sandholm Centre some months ago. The Iranian asylum seekers were protesting against the Danish authorities' decision to deny them asylum.

## DEPORTATION AS THE NORM

Normally the Danish authorities would send these people back to their home countries despite their unwillingness to return. Many people remember how the Iraqi asylum seekers who had sought refuge in Brorson's Church in Copenhagen three years ago were arrested by the police (five Danish protesters trying to prevent the police from moving in were also arrested). After being arrested, many were then sent back to Iraq.

Each month, rejected asylum seekers who do not go willingly are deported by the police.

## POLICE CANNOT DEPORT

In some cases, however, the police are not able - or allowed - to deport people.

For example, Iran and Iraq refuse to receive citizens who do not wish to go back, and based on two rulings from the the Danish Refugee Board and

the European Court of Human Rights, the police are not allowed to deport people back to Syria and Somalia.

Deportation can also be made extremely difficult in cases where the asylum seeker has no documents - or has fake ones that the country of origin does not accept.

Therefore, many asylum seekers with a failed case who fear returning to their country of origin end up waiting for years in the asylum centres, hoping for a miracle that might never come.

## 800 LONG STAYERS

According to numbers from the Ministry of Justice, 20% of asylum seekers in Denmark have been living in asylum centres for more than two years. That equals more than 800 people. Half of them have been living in the centres for more than three years and some have been living in centres for five, six or even ten years.

After four years of steady decline, the number of "long stayers" is again starting to rise (see chart).

## NGOS REACT

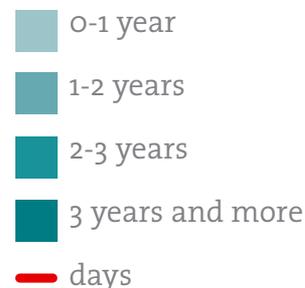
To help turn this number around, the Red Cross has recently set up an internal task force that will try to get an overview of the number of long stayers and take an extra look

at their cases to see if there are any other options for them.

The Danish Refugee Council is also reacting, and has just started a new pilot project with a group of special advisors for these long stayers.

## WHERE DO THEY GO?

New Times has kept in email contact with several long stayers who were eventually deported. One has got asylum in another European country; some are in hiding, but do not say whether in their own or in other countries; some are living safely in their home countries but struggling to make ends meet and rebuild their lives because of the (post war) conditions there.



Average gross length of residence by interval.

Source: The Ministry of Justice "Report on asylum seekers possibilities of accessing the job market and live outside the centres." June 2012

# WAITING FOR A MIRACLE

For more than ten years Makmoud Suleiman from Iraq has been fighting, unsuccessfully, to get protection and asylum in Denmark.

■ By: Robin Ahrenkiel El-Tanany

He will turn 69 next birthday, his eyesight is getting poor and pains constantly run down through his body from his injured back to his right leg.

But you have to have known him for a while to know this.

The first thing you notice about Makmoud Suleiman is something else. For instance his ability to captivate those around him with his warm laugh and his histories and insights.

Other refugees often use him as a mentor if they are in need of advice about their stressful situation.

## BE STRONG

"I tell people to be strong," he says. "They have to be ready for everything coming - and maybe most importantly - they should go out and occupy their minds with something."

*How do you manage to stay strong year after year - for more than ten years?*

"I believe in my case. There is no doubt in my mind. And I keep myself busy. I read newspapers. I take courses. I help other people. I make new friends" he explains.

## TALKING WITH PEOPLE

Back in Iraq in the eighties he was also good at talking with people. After starting his carpentry business his number of customers grew quickly.

"I never lost a customer," he says with a smile, remembering his business when it was at its peak.

Before Saddam Hussein sent critics to their deaths and made business impossible, and before suicide bombs and religious harassment took over the streets of Baghdad, Makmoud Suleiman employed thirteen people and had a thriving business.

But around year 2000 things were becoming very complicated.

## 56 YEARS-OLD SOLDIER

"I was called to serve in the so-called Jerusalem Army. To fight an unknown war. I was 56 years-old at that time, and thought I had been in the military long enough after six years

in the army during the Iran-Iraq war and before that more than three years in normal service," Makmoud explains.

"It was around this time that I decided it was not safe for me to stay. It was a terrible time. We did not even dare to talk about Saddam Hussein within our own families. We were afraid the children might say something in school" he says.

Makmoud refused to have children himself.

"At that time I said: I will never raise children for Saddam to kill," he recalls. When he came to Denmark asking for protection, he was almost 57-years-old, but he still had a dream of having a small family. After more than ten years in the Danish asylum system - more than three of them underground - that dream is fading.

*Why don't you go back to Iraq, now that Saddam is gone?*

"Today the situation is even worse. There is no security. Bombs go off all the time and the conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Baghdad is intensifying. I read in the Danish newspapers about some Iraqi people who have gone back. They live fearful, miserable lives," Makmoud says.

## NO ASYLUM

Nevertheless the Danish authorities want Makmoud to go home. They have stripped

him of many of the privileges an asylum seeker can have in Denmark: no pocket money to buy his own food, only three meals per day in the canteen in the centre where he stays. And twice a week he has to report to the police in centre Sandholm to confirm he is still here.

It is hard to understand how Makmoud Suleiman manages to stay sane and continue to smile. Many people who have been living in the asylum system for several years eventually break down.

## GETTING OLD

"The biggest challenge is getting old," Makmoud says. "I have limited health care and no money. I have lost eight teeth. My back and my leg hurt and I am losing my sight. But I will never break down" he says with a serious expression.

"If you have experienced a catastrophe in your life, remember how you got over it" says Makmoud Suleiman.

# STORIES FROM NO MAN'S LAND

Susan and Ali are both dealing with the uncertainty that accompanies the many years they have spent in the asylum system in Denmark. Faced with a long wait, and stuck between two worlds, their experiences have been lonely and difficult. Still, both of them hold on to their hope, and prove that it is hope that always dies last.

■ By: Yolanda



## Susan Rashti, 55, Iran

Susan, a beautiful woman who always wears makeup, is one of many asylum seekers who has been in the system for many years. She came to Denmark seven years ago and her request for asylum has been rejected three times, the first time in 2009. She left Iran because of her connection with the fight for women's rights, something that is not respected in her home country, and does not want to agree to be sent back.

### Check with police

For this reason, she now must go to the police station in Sandholm at a certain time, two times a week to confirm that she is still in Denmark. Susan used to be a resident of a camp in Jelling on Jutland, but she has now been living in Sandholm for two years.

### Lost hope

While she has been waiting Susan has lost not only hope, but also her health. Since she has been in Denmark, she has taken ten pills every day for her blood pressure and her pains and she also takes anti-psychotic drugs. What sometimes makes her situation more difficult, and other times easier, is the fact that her son has lived in Denmark with his wife and two children for twenty five years. To be close to family is good for Susan, but her situation depresses her son, especially when he comes to visit her.

### Family in Iran

Meanwhile, Susan's other two children, a son, 25, and daughter, 30, still live in Iran. Unable to work in Denmark, Susan looks back on the time when she lived in Iran and was the owner of a fitness club.

### Susan's dream

If Susan's story had a happy ending, she says that it would include opening a small restaurant in Helsingør, where she would serve Iranian and Danish food.

## Ali Jaber Rashed, 44, Kuwait

Ali is a charming gentleman from Kuwait and came to Denmark thirteen years ago. While living in the Sandholm centre for all of those years, his request for asylum has been rejected several times. After being rejected, Ali agreed to be voluntarily sent back to his home country, however he could not return because his home country will not accept him.

### Health ruined

Ali's physical and psychological health has been ruined by asylum life. He doesn't want to take any medicine, but cannot avoid having his head examined because of his very serious problems with blood circulation.

### Lost confidence

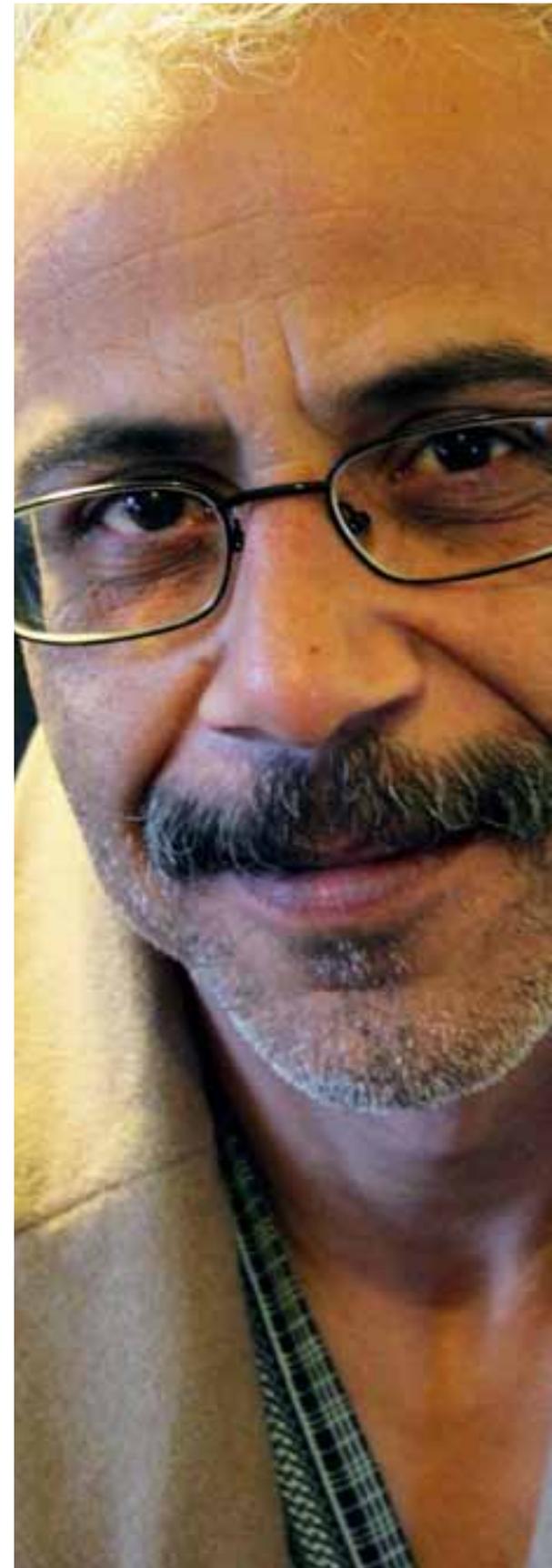
Although he does not have any family in Denmark, he has many Danish friends outside the centre and they visit each other. Even though he has lost confidence in the Danish judicial system, Ali still maintains his belief in the Danish people. They are "honest and open, without double morals" he says.

### One day

For a long time now, he has stopped himself from asking questions like "until when?" and "how?" He says he simply lives one day at a time. When he spends time in the camp, he is mostly in his room, where he lives alone. There, his only friends are cigarettes, coffee, and beer.

### Ali's dream

If Ali's story had a happy ending, it would include him married, with a family. He would like to work in Denmark as a butcher, which was his profession in Kuwait.



# TIME BOMB

Dr. Dea Seidenfaden has been counseling asylum seekers for years. There is no doubt in the psychologist's mind that the longer they stay, the worse their symptoms will become.

■ By: Sameer Ahmad

Dr. Dea Seidenfaden, a Red Cross psychologist, knows asylum seekers that have been in the centres for 12 to 13 years and are suffering severely from psychological problems. "The longer asylum seekers remain in the centres, the worse their symptoms become. Children are the most vulnerable people in the centres and should not suffer," she says.

In the asylum centres adults, as well as children, witness the police arriving in the middle of the night, people breaking windows or other things, shouting in the corridors, fighting, people getting drunk and misbehaving. Life in asylum centres is very challenging.

## SINGLE MEN

Single men are vulnerable too. Many are lonely and don't have contact with their families. A large proportion of these men were subjected to torture or imprisonment, not to mention the ordeals they encountered on their journeys to Denmark.

According to an Amnesty International report more than 45% of asylum seekers in Denmark have been subjected to torture and prison, and 63% of asylum seekers suffer from PTSD (post-traumatic-stress-disorder).

Asylum seekers living in the

centres have few opportunities to make decisions about, for instance, where they live. They can't work and support themselves. Taking away control over their lives only adds to their psychological problems. A common symptom among asylum seekers is that they only sleep a few hours each night and they often don't eat properly due to a reduced appetite and stress.

## SHARING FEELINGS,

As a psychologist, Dr. Seiden-

faden highly recommends that asylum seekers are offered more opportunities to work and get out into society.

"all asylum seekers, especially single men, should go to school or have a praktik to get back into some sort of a daily rhythm like they used to have in their home countries." She also says they should be, "eating, sleeping, and exercising regularly. It is also important that they find someone to share their feelings and express their frustrations to."



## Survey highlights

The Red Cross conducted a psychological survey among the asylum seekers with family members in 2008. The survey was conducted by Dr. Dea Seidenfaden. It shows that asylum seekers suffer from lots of problems such as identity problems because they have lost their good name and reputation. According to Dr. Seidenfaden the survey suggests that asylum seekers should be given the choice to live outside of the centres. More choice improves their quality of life.

*Amnesty Report: Asylansøgere i Danmark: En undersøgelse af nyankomne asylansøgers helbredstilstand og traumatiseringsgrad.*

# HELPING LONG STAYERS

A new pilot project for “long stayers” is about to be initiated.

■ By: Agha

Waiting for years in asylum centres with no job, no family, no future is hard both mentally and physically.

To help these people the Danish Refugee Council has started a new pilot project. The

project is aimed at 10-15 long stayers, and they will be offered legal counseling.

“We will help each one getting an overview of their case, to see if there are any legal options left to follow”, says Vagn Klim Larsen, special advisor in the project.

“Maybe some new important information has turned up or maybe the asylum seeker is very ill, so there is basis for a re-opening of his or her case”, Vagn Klim Larsen explains, but he stresses that a re-opening of

the case is extremely rare.

## FACING THE OPTIONS

“If going back starts to look less bad than staying waiting, we offer people to talk with one of our repatriation advisors”, he explains.

But living away from one’s country for so many years lessens the sense of belonging. Especially for a refugee who - according to his mind - has forever left his native country. For many of these people it is almost unthinkable to go back.

According to an article in the Copenhagen Post May 2012 only 150 out of 950 rejected asylum seekers agreed to be sent out of Denmark last year.

“We know it is a hard decision. And we will only start advising about return if the asylum seeker wishes to. But at some point people may start thinking whether keep waiting is better than going back. And then we can offer our assistance”, Vagn Klim Larsen says.

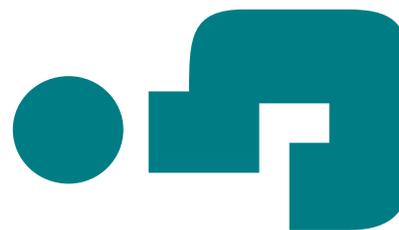
The pilot project will be starting shortly, and if it is a success

the offer of counseling may be given to all long stayers.

It’s a hard decision to return to a country where you feel sure to face torture or death. But if the alternative is aimless waiting for an indefinite number of years in different asylum centres, some asylum seekers might want to risk it.

## ASK A LAWYER

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



**1** Hi. I have told the police everything, giving them all my documents and answering their questions. But now they tell me that I do not co-operate, because the authorities in my home country cannot find me and my family in their system. I am confused. What does it exactly mean that I co-operate? And what is the consequence for me and my family when the police says that I am not co-operating?

**1** Your question certainly highlights a tricky spot in the Danish Asylum procedure: Unfortunately there is no precise description or definition of what it means for an asylum seeker to cooperate. Thus your frustration is very understandable. According to Danish Law, an asylum seeker must cooperate and provide all relevant information and possible documentation regarding her or his asylum application. However it is up to the police and/or Immigration Service to decide, whether they find or believe that an asylum seeker is actually giving all information needed. This can make it quite difficult for the asylum seeker to find out, which demands he or she must fulfill, in order to cooperate. And most important: It can be very difficult for the asylum seeker to prove that they are in fact cooperating. In your case, it sounds as if the police might believe, that even though you have given them information and documentation, you are withholding some information regarding your family or nationality – or that you have given false information regarding your nationality. In such cases the police can insist (for example based on the fact that the authorities in your home country refuse to

accept your information) that you are not cooperating, as they believe that you are not telling the truth. These cases are very difficult to change, as it is your word against the opinion of the police. I will suggest – if it is in any way possible for you – that you on your own hand try to get new documentation (birth certificates, school papers, ID-card regarding you or your family members. The documents should if possible be originals, so that it will be possible for the police to check them) from your country of origin in order to prove your nationality. Otherwise I’m afraid the police can stick to their assessment – that you are not cooperating, because you have given false information. I know that getting such documentation can be almost impossible, but I think it is the only way. I wish you the best of luck.

**2** Dear Lawyer. Some of my friends have been refused asylum. I fear the Danish authorities might reject me asylum. I have been rejected by the Immigration Service, and am now waiting for the Refugee Appeal Board’s decision. I am very afraid. I would like to know if it is possible to appeal the decision of the Refugee Appeals Board?

**2** If you get a negative decision from the Refugee Appeals Board (Flygtningesnævnet), the decision regarding your asylum application is final and cannot be appealed. This means that the Danish Immigration Authorities regard your case as closed, and your case will be transferred to the police, who will be responsible for arranging your deportation or voluntary return. However, there is a (very small) opportunity to appeal the case

to the European Court of Human Rights. To do this, however, you will need a lawyer (who you must finance on your own), and the case must be of a such character, that the Human Rights Court will accept to process it. The court only accepts a limited number of cases and it can take several years before a case is processed. Thus in general we advise asylum seekers to regard the decision from the Refugee Appeals Board as final, as this is the far most realistic scenario for most rejected asylum seekers. I wish you the best of luck with your case in the Appeals Board.

**3** Hi. I am an asylum seeker from Myanmar. I have received three negative replies on my case. I have been supporting the police’s requests. But I can’t go back. Myanmar does not accept me. I have been in the Danish asylum system for more than three years now. Some of my friends say, that if your country does not accept you, and you are helping the authorities with your case, you will be granted asylum after 18 months. Is that true?

**3** It is true, that according to the Danish Aliens Act § 9c 2, an asylum seeker who has received a final rejection and has been cooperating with the police regarding his/her return to the country of origin can get a temporary residence permit after 18 months (from the date of the final rejection or the date where, the applicant began to cooperate with the police) if the Immigration Service finds that it will not be possible to return the applicant to his/her country of origin in the future. Technically, it is not the same as asylum, but this type of residence permit will grant you the right to live in Denmark, work, study etc., how-

ever only for a temporary period in case returning to your country of origin should become possible in the future.

In reality, however, I’m afraid only very few persons get this type of residence permit each year. This is because the police often disagree with the asylum seeker on one of two issues:

- a) Cooperation. Even though the asylum seeker might be signing the paper of cooperation, the police sometimes believe, that the asylum seeker is not really cooperating (maybe the asylum seeker is refusing to visit the embassy or in some cases the police believes that the applicant is keeping relevant information or documentation in secret). Thus in such cases the police will inform the Immigration Service that the asylum seeker is not cooperating, and he or she will then normally get a rejection from the Immigration Service.
- b) Future possibilities of return. Sometimes the police believe, that even though it is not possible right now to return the applicant, it will become possible very soon (maybe as soon as some administrative problems have been solved). In such cases the asylum seeker might also receive a rejection.

So I will advise you to ask your caseworker with the police, whether he or she agrees, that you are cooperating regarding your return to Myanmar. If the police believe, that you are not cooperating, you should ask them to give you the exact reasons and which criteria you must fulfill to be registered as cooperating. It’s a good idea to get these reasons in writing and have them written down in the

police report. If you disagree with these criteria, please contact our legal counselling: [advice@drc.dk](mailto:advice@drc.dk) If the police agree that you are cooperating, you can inform them of your right according to the Danish Aliens Act § 9c 2, and ask them to inform Immigration Service that you are cooperating.

### 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 & Tania

## NEW TIMES ASKED DANES ON THE STREET THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What is your wish for Christmas. For yourself and for the rest of the world?
2. Do you have any New Year's resolutions?



Agnethe, 18, Holte.  
1. On Christmas Eve, I just want to have a pleasant time with my family. In my family we don't get any presents when we turn to eighteen, so I just want to have a pleasant time with my family, friends, and want to have nice vacations, and I wish same for rest of the world. 2. I wish I could spend much more lot of time with my horse during next year.



Christian, 24, Copenhagen.  
1. I guess peace in the world. People should decide and make this planet better place for living. No more war, no more money. For myself maybe some new, warm shoes because it's pretty cold around here! 2. No, I don't have any New Year's resolutions so far.



Josetine, 18, Grøndal.  
1. I love Christmas because our whole family will be together, we light lot of candles, beautiful lights, and a big Christmas tree, we have bonfire in our garden, a lot of chocolates. And for rest of world I wish a very happy, peaceful and prosperous Christmas. 2. I really don't believe in that kind of stuff like New Year's resolutions.

## NEW TIMES ASKED ASYLUM SEEKERS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What is your wish for Christmas. For yourself and for the rest of the world?
2. Do you have any New Year's resolutions?



Mahrak, 39, Iran.  
1. My desire on Christmas for myself and for my daughter, especially as an asylum seeker I would like to have good results about my case, and good news, better living conditions, and happiness for other asylum seekers as well. 2. I don't have any resolution so far, because my life and future is uncertain yet. I might have one, if I get positive.



Asif Danishyar ,  
Age 23 , Afghanistan.  
1. I would like to welcome Jesus first, and it would be good to be with my family and celebrate, but unfortunately I am not one of those lucky persons. But I have a plan to cook a cake and invite friends and sit like a family and have fun. 2. I have no resolutions.



Saeed, 30, Iran.  
1. This year gonna be the second year for me in Denmark. I want to enjoy Christmas Eve with my friend. I want to move around different places in Copenhagen. I just want to know the way Danes celebrate Christmas. For the rest of the world, I just want to convey a message ' let peace prevail and help each other to make this world a better place for living '.  
2. As an asylum seeker, I have wasted a lot of time here. I don't want to waste my time anymore, and I will try my best to make things happen next year.

# A LETTER TO OUR DANISH READERS

## MY DEAR FRIEND,

Yesterday, my daughter had her seventh birthday. I had a party for her in Sandholm Centre where we have lived for more than two years. A short time after the music started, she burst into tears without any apparent reason. However, when I thought about the past few years, I could find many reasons. She is so young and has experienced a lot of stress - and still does.

Maybe one of my daughter's birthday tears was for the small fishes in the lake in the park in our town where she used to play.

One for her toys, especially the big giraffe that her father bought her from Italy that we had to leave behind. She doesn't know who plays with them now or if the bad boys who occupied our town "killed" both the fishes and the toys.

One tear could be for the life in the camp on chaotic days when people are fighting and the sounds of police cars are louder than their games.

One tear was certainly for the pushing on the school bus by some of the older children.

One tear, I suppose, was for her friend who moved from the camp and lives in a real house now.

One tear must also be for the "too expensive" ice cream in Netto.

One could be for remembering my tears to her questions about a new home.

And the saddest tear was probably due to a long withheld sorrow for her father

who died seven months ago.

All these long months she has not cried. Even in the hospital, when we kissed her father for the last time and came back to our room, she wanted to cheer me up, to dance for me.

One of my daughter's most difficult questions to me is, "What is 'deport' and why isn't it fun since we should fly by plane?" How do I explain to a seven year old child that for us, that plane is the modern "train of death" and that although we don't have yellow tape around our arm we are here in Denmark looking for our Schindler.

I am unable to promise her a real dog or a cat in a "new home." There is no space for them in the two suitcases that, for now, contain all our possessions.

Please, don't misunderstand me. I don't feel envious, I don't blame anybody. I know that everybody has a destiny, with or without having been personally responsible for it. I just wish that when you talk about the asylum seekers and refugees that you also think about the children whose parents' dream is the "Danish dream" - a variant of the "American Dream" - a dream of freedom, security, protection and a right to live and work.

Best wishes  
Yolanda



# ENERGY CAMPAIGN IN ASYLUM CENTRES

There has been a big campaign in all Red Cross asylum centres to save electricity and water.

■ By: Hana

The Red Cross has just finished a week-long awareness campaign. In every asylum centre across the country there have been video clips, posters and activities like a climate bicycle ( a bike that produces energy). The campaign manager, Lisbet Nielsen, has also run a painting competition in the kindergartens.

## EDUCATION

“There are several reasons for having this campaign, the most important reason is to educate the asylum seekers about energy, the environment and the country which they live.”

In this campaign they can learn about the cost of water and energy.

“It is not just about the environment”, says Lisbet Nielsen.



“Many asylum seekers are getting a very unpleasant surprise when they are granted asylum and have to pay for the energy themselves. It’s a serious problem if you can not pay the electricity bill. What do you do

without it?” She asks.

## EXPENSIVE

Nowadays energy and water are very expensive, they are easy to use but we have to know how to economise. For example, flushing your toilet will cost about 7,738 Kr. a year, but If your toilet isn’t functioning and the water runs it could cost 21,279 Kr. in one year.

“The Red Cross pays for all the expenses in asylum centres. If asylum seekers save the energy and water, the Red Cross can use this saved money on other things to improve the conditions in the asylum centres,” says Lisbet Nielsen.

## HOPE FOR CHANGE

Lisbet Nielsen hopes some employees and asylum seekers will now be more aware of how to save energy in a friendly way.



## Practical tips for saving energy and water

- Turn off the lights when nobody is in the room! This goes especially for bathrooms and common rooms when they aren’t occupied.
- Turn off the television and computer – and the screen - when you have finished using them.
- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, shaving, washing your hands or washing the dishes. This can save up to 6 litres of water per minute.
- Monitor the amount of time you spend in a shower and challenge yourself to reduce that time. One extra minute in the shower uses around 9 litres of water and in addition to saving water you would also reduce energy usage and reduce your carbon footprint.
- When washing dishes, use a full sink of warm water instead of running the tap continuously.
- Wash vegetables and fruit in a bowl rather than under a running tap. The water collected might even be used for watering pot plants.
- Recycle as much as you can. Make it a way of life!

<http://www.biggreensmile.com/how-to-save-water-energy.aspx>

<http://www.ecohusky.uconn.edu/dormtips.htm>

Photo: Pezhmann

## 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 made by asylum seekers. At the moment we are group of 14 asylum seekers writing the stories that we find important for you to know. Contact your job centre 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 WE WORK NOW?

There are many rumours in the centres about the new asylum agreement. For instance many think that it is now possible to work outside the centres. Not yet.

By: Robin Ahrenkiel El-Tanany

As written on this magazine's homepage, a new agreement has been reached between the government, Liberal Alliance and the Red-Green Alliance.

The agreement is good news for asylum seekers, and it will - among other things - make it possible for asylum seekers to work and to live outside the centres.

## LOTS OF CONFUSION

But there is a lot of confusion about when the agreement will come into force. Maja Rettrup Mørch, leader of the secretariat of Red Cross' Asylum Department, is leading a group of Red Cross staff

who are advising the Immigration Service about how to implement the new agreement.

"The entire agreement has to be turned into law, and that takes a long process through parliament", she says.

## COMPLICATED

"The part about working is complicated as it may be necessary to change the labour law of Denmark and it will also take time to find a satisfactory tax-paying model for the asylum seekers", Maja Rettrup Mørch explains.

But one thing in the agreement is already being implemented. Families who have been rejected asylum - but cannot

return to their home countries - are offered the opportunity to live outside the centres 12 months after their rejection. Before, families needed to wait 18 months after rejection.

"We are already in the process of talking to the relevant families", says Maja Rettrup Mørch.

## NEXT YEAR

But the rest of the agreement requires more patience from the asylum seekers. The Ministry is working on the proposals for new laws in the last part of this year, and they will be going through the law-making machinery in the first part of 2013.

"I expect we will reach spring before the laws are ready", says Maja Rettrup Mørch.

So asylum seekers will have to wait with patience for a little longer before the agreement is fully implemented.

## FACTS:

Stay updated on the asylum agreement and find out when it is possible to work. Check [www.newtimes.dk](http://www.newtimes.dk)



Everyone is talking about the new asylum agreement. But when will things happen?  
Photo: Vahid