

# **new** times

A magazine by the Danish Red Cross Asylum Centers > September 2004 > Issue # 61

## CENTER CHECK

**Taking the temperature of asylum  
centres across Denmark**

Pages 3-9

Photo: Mohammed/Montage: Jens/Model: Zena



# IRAQIS MAKE NEW ORGANISATION

81 Iraqi asylum seekers have decided to join their voices in order to be heard by the Danish authorities.



Photo: Vahe/ Iraqi demonstration in Denmark 2003

## CONTACT INFO

■ You can write reports and letters to Iraqi Refugees' Group In Denmark on [irkrf@yahoo.com](mailto:irkrf@yahoo.com)

■ Or you can contact the founding members :  
Sirwan Baban,  
mobile ph. 26 84 38 40  
([babansirwan@hotmail.com](mailto:babansirwan@hotmail.com))  
Suhad Elzاهر,  
mobile ph 51 33 28 26  
Dhia Kalaf Shaya,  
mobile ph 22 92 33 33  
([dddd555@hotmail.com](mailto:dddd555@hotmail.com))  
Salman S. Sadah,  
mobile ph 28 28 35 68  
([sss@want2work.org](mailto:sss@want2work.org))

By Elia

Untill now, asylum seekers have mostly struggled through their crisis and cases individually. But now a group of Iraqis have decided to form an organisation to let authorities and Danes know about their situation.

The idea of building the organisation Iraqi Refugees' Group In Denmark came from a group of Iraqi asylum seekers who met each other in the Danish Red Cross Culture House in Copenhagen.

"The main aim of creating the organisation is to help Iraqi refugees all over Denmark with their asylum cases, to let their voices be heard

and to prevent them from being sent back," says Sirwan Baban, one of the groups initiators.

So far, the group has collected 81 signatures from Iraqi asylum seekers who have allowed the group to speak on their behalf. Only residents on asylum centres in Sjælland has signed, but the group is working on organising Iraqis in Fyn and Jylland as well. Untill now, travel expences has made this difficult.

### Research and reports

The organisation's work consist of sending proposal and views to the Danish authorities and human rights' organisations. The group also does research to get an over-

view over the developments and reports about refugees on the internet and in other media.

Danish lawyer Helge Nørrung has promised to help the newly started organisation.

To the Danish newspaper Arbejderen he explains why:

"I am happy that a group of Iraqi asylum seekers have decided to organise themselves and speak in public about how they are treated by the Danish authorities. They are treated like second-class people, cut off from their familiess, put on the food box and left in inactivity for years".

## COMING UP

Important dates in the following months. Check your local library for events taking place near your center.

### ▶▶ September 11<sup>th</sup>

It's been three years since the attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon.

### ▶▶ September 16<sup>th</sup>

The Jewish New Year.

### ▶▶ September 21<sup>st</sup>

UN's International Peace Day. Imagine if we actually could experience just one day of world peace...

### ▶▶ October 1<sup>st</sup>

Denmark's new Opera House opens in Copenhagen.

### ▶▶ October 3<sup>rd</sup>

The Danish Red Cross has its annual door-to-door collection. The money are both spent helping victims of wars and catastrophes around the world and on humanitarian work here in Denmark.

### ▶▶ October 5<sup>th</sup>

The Danish parliament, Folketinget, opens after the summer holidays. This means that the law making process will start again. Be sure that New Times will report any law changes of interest to asylum seekers in Denmark!

### ▶▶ October 8<sup>th</sup>

Culture night in Copenhagen. Shops, cultural institutions, the parliament and many other locations around the city are open untill midnight and make special events.

### ▶▶ October 15<sup>th</sup>

The holy month for Muslims, the Ramadan, begins. If you're a Muslim, you know what it's about, if not: The Ramadan is one of the five basic pillars of Islam, and your Muslim fellow residents will be fasting from around 5 am to 5 pm.

### ▶▶ October 24<sup>th</sup>

UN Day – this is the day when the 1945 UN charter took effect.

### ▶▶ October 31<sup>st</sup>

The Danish summertime ends – remember to set the clock one hour back.

### ▶▶ November 2<sup>nd</sup>

Presidential election in USA. The big question being: Bush or Kerry?

Centre Skibby is a nice, quiet centre with many families, but depression prevails among residents.

# SILENCE AND DEPRESSION



Photos: Mohammed

By Austine

There is no one in the garden outside centre Skibby. No kids running around, no adults arguing, no staff members.

This turns out to be symptomatic of the small centre located approximately one and a half hour's train ride from Copenhagen.

Both staff members and residents describe Skibby as being a calm and quiet place.

This is also the opinion of Lillian Vigslund, social coordinator and unit manager in Skibby.

"To the best of my knowledge, there is a good atmosphere in the centre. This may be a result of the fact that it is made up of people with families contrary to what is the case in other centres," she says.

Lillian describes the relationship between the residents and the staff as being cordial.

"We spend a lot of time and energy to talk and listen to the residents.

Our professional training enables us to understand why people behave the way they do, and reasoning and talking have always been our major objectives," she says.

But the social coordinator admits that there are limits to what the staff can do to help the residents.

"We are not policy makers. We always help them to get lawyers, and we are in the position to supply their lawyers with all the necessary information that is required of us within the limits of the law. However, our main job is to guide, support and advice the residents, the outcome of their case is their own responsibility".

### Common depression

According to Lillian, Skibby has a majority of residents from Afghanistan and Iraq, and even though not many are put on the foodbox, most of them have been given a final negative.

"According to our observations

and the report made available to us by the centre doctor, depression is common among the residents. And as long as their cases are not decided upon to their own advantage, the problem will remain the same, it may even get worse if nothing is done about it. When people are staying in the same place for up to three years, not knowing what to do, there is every likelihood that they will suffer from psychological problems," Lillian explains.

The Skibby staff is working hard to make sure that the residents are engaged in daily activities by for instance organizing both Danish and English lessons. However, since most of the people living in the centre have received a final negative, the law does not allow them to attend education. And the interest in joining activation is very much affected by the fact that so many people are facing deportation and an insecure future.

Even so, it seems like Centre

Skibby has at least managed to keep the facilities fairly clean.

"This has always been a challenge, and though it has not been easy, we have been living up to expectations. But a look around the centre compound will show you that it is not one hundred percent clean. This is a result of the lack of absolute cooperation from the residents," says Lillian.

When talking to the residents in Skibby, there is general satisfaction with the conditions inside the centre. Most complaints are related to the (lack of) possibilities outside the centre.

In the opinion of Mehfoza, who is living in Skibby with her husband and three children, the centre is too far from the residential area of Skibby.

"We have to walk up to two kilometres to get to a bus stop. And there is no programme for proper integration with the outside world," she says.

**Centre Skibby**  
Red Cross, 118 residents (+ 27 in Annex), 10 on foodbox (by end August 2004)

**Location:**  
End of the city Skibby, no local residents around. 😊

**Building standard and hygiene:**  
One-floor buildings close to each other, self and daily cleaning schedule. More cleaning responsibilities are focused on children's parents. It seems not dirty. 😊😊



**Atmosphere:**  
Good and pleasant atmosphere between residents and staffs, mostly families with children. 😊😊😊

**Activities:**  
School, cleaning and staff assistant activities. 😊😊

**Children's activities:**  
Special and unique centre for the children with full time kindergarten and frequent excursions. 😊😊😊



**Integration:**  
No integration programme. 😊

**Information standard:**  
Special information board; local, national and satellite channels. Public phone, TV. 😊😊😊



# ENTER AND EXIT

**Sandholm**  
Red Cross, 804 residents, 171 on food box (by end August 2004).



**Location:**  
Isolated in the middle of an agricultural area and next to a military exercise field, 3 km away from the nearest village. ☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**  
Modern buildings well designed, occupied by the Red Cross, the Immigration Service and the Police. ☺☺☺

**Atmosphere:**  
Stress and tension due to high sensitivity amongst residents from different nationalities. The large number of rejected residents also has a negative influence on the atmosphere. No strong contact between residents and the staff. ☺

**Integration:**  
Very little integration with life outside the centre. ☺

**Activities:**  
The many phase 3-residents are not allowed to take education, and many do not wish to join internal job practise since they live in constant fear of deportation. ☺☺



**Children's activities:**  
Plenty with satisfaction. Kindergarten with 60 children, youth and children clubs. ☺☺☺

**Information standard:**  
Introduction course for newcomers. TV, but no satellite dishes for special channels. New Times and Copenhagen post. ☺☺



By Sameer

If you are or ever have been an asylum seeker, you're sure to have been a Sandholm resident. At one time or another, you have lived in this isolated Red Cross centre next to the military exercise field, the Sandholm jail and the offices of the National Police and the Immigration Service.

For many years, this center located 3 km away from Allerød and 7 km away from Hørsholm was used as the reception centre for all asylum seekers except unaccompanied children. Most of them stayed only briefly at Sandholm, as the facilities were ment and needed for new arrivals. Only a minority stayed there for a longer period of time: Residents from former Eastern European countries, the

so-called 120's (referring to their UDL-number), who were forced to stay there due to earlier problems with groups of criminal Eastern European asylum seekers.

Today, Sandholm is different. After several asylum law tightenings it doesn't serve only as a reception centre, but is mostly used as what many residents term a 'detention centre', especially after adding six more buildings to accommodate another 300 persons.

Sandholm can now house 828 residents, and the majority is made up by rejected asylum seekers.

### Stress and tension

Asylum seekers who live in Sandholm are free to move around or to be visited by friends, but the majority has no money to go places or visit friends themselves.

"It was not my choice to live in Sandholm. I cannot stay in a detention camp. However, I spend most of my time abroad and only come to present myself to the police when they want me," says H.H., a resident who prefers to be anonymous.

The Red Cross part of Sandholm includes facilities, family building, separate buildings to accommodate males and females separately, cafeteria, info-café with internet, and a big hall. Unlike other centres, the residents receive three meals per day at the cafeteria.

Asylum seekers undergo a medical check-up at the centre, after which they will be entitled to basic medical care from the health staff.

Often families with four or more members have to live in one room, which leads to stress and tensions within the families since nobody

has got a place to retreat. Not to mention the conflicts among the other residents. This mixed compulsory group consists of people of different origins, countries, religions, languages and cultures who have to learn to accept and

tolerate the others, while either just arrived in this new country or facing deportation and an insecure future.

Feryal, an Iraqi asylum seeker living with another woman in a room at Sandholm for more than one year, tried to put an end to her asylum life. She wanted to set herself on fire, but was accused of putting others at risk in the proces, so she ended with a six month's jail sentence, of which four months were spent at a psychological hospital.

**For years, Sandholm has been the Red Cross reception centre, and Avnstrup has been the transit centre. Now, large groups of rejected residents have given both these centres the nickname 'detention centres'.**

**Detention at Avnstrup**

"It is very hard for anyone to live in Sandholm or Avnstrup for years," says Kim, a staff member of the common Red Cross administration for Sandholm and Avnstrup.

Since Sandholm can no longer house all the rejected phase 3-residents, Avnstrup has just been partly turned into a 'detention centre' as well. Avnstrup still houses phase 2-residents who can cook for themselves and otherwise live a 'normal' centre life, but they are now being mixed with residents who received a final rejection and has to live by other rules.

Centre Avnstrup was established in December 1992, when the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia was going on. It is a modern place located in a forest setting about 50 km from Copenhagen and about 20 km south of Roskilde.

Centre Avnstrup is composed of a five floor main building and a three floor family building and many other separated buildings and blocks used for different purposes. It can accommodate more than 600 residents, and the rooms in the main building are equipped to accommo-

date six residents, while there are rooms for two and four residents in the family building.

Residents share toilettes, kitchen and bathroom facilities, and often also a room with other residents.

Abo Mohamad has been living in Avnstrup for almost three years.

"We don't have our own privacy and it's not a life to share utilities with other residents," he says.

**A better place to live**

While having internal privacy issues, residents are quite isolated from the Danes except the Red Cross staff. However, Avnstrup is very well equipped with facilities. It includes administration offices, reception, notice boards at each floor, cinema, information café, computer rooms with internet acces, bicycle shop, barber shop and indoor entertainment such as billiard, volleyball, chess club and fitness club.

In fact, the management has made Avnstrup a better place for asylum seekers to live. Asylum seekers who have not yet experienced the summer days in Denmark will enjoy their stay at Centre Avnstrup and the surrounding area,

which is good for a picnic in the forest.

The centre has kitchens, laundry services, clinics, school, kindergarten, education center, library, small halls and a big cafeteria serving foods for people on food boxes. By the end of August, there were 34 residents on the foodbox, and according to staff member Kim, 200 more residents are expected to be on the foodbox in Avnstrup in the near future.

Up till now, the Danish Red Cross has developed many things for the residents, for instance a kindergarten, a club for children aged 7-13, and a youth club.

Center Avnstrup has a school for children aged 6-16, and phase 2-adults can attend Danish language lessons at the centre.

120 practise jobs have been arranged for the residents at the centre, jobs include helping out in centre cafés and workshops or doing maintenance work and house cleaning.

"We try to prepare asylum seekers for the future. Regardless of whether they are granted asylum or have to leave Denmark eventually,

it is vital that they should maintain and develop their skills. For this reason, residents are offered education and various other activities, such as working in the bike repair shop or needlework and tailoring," says Kim who is the head of the centre's Activity Group.

**Theoretical information**

The wide range of activities does not seem to keep all residents happy, though.

"With the information provided to us about asylum centers in Denmark, one might think that asylum seekers are provided with a wealth and health of resources: activities and counselling of every variety. This information is theoretical and not real," is the opinion of Basem, an asylum seeker living in Avnstrup.

Partly turning Avnstrup into a 'detention centre' might also very well change the atmosphere in the centre. So maintaining an active and positive center life is probably the most important challenge for both residents and staff members in Centre Avnstrup in the time to come.

**Avnstrup**  
Red Cross, 564 residents, 34 on food box (by end August 2004).

**Location:**  
Open air in forest setting about 50 km from Copenhagen and 20 km south of Roskilde. ☺☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**  
Modern five floor buildings with regular maintenance. ☺☺



**Atmosphere:**  
Birds of same feather fly together. Most staffs are kind. ☺☺

**Activities:**  
Probably the best in Red Cross asylum centres. ☺☺☺



**Children's activities:**  
Plenty. Children are smiling in Avnstrup. ☺☺☺

**Integration:**  
Very week these days. ☺

**Information standard:**  
TV with different international channels, info café, library with newspapers, computer room, information wall boards. ☺☺



Photos: Mohammed

# CENTRE GRADE BOOKS

The New Times staff members have based these centre grade books on interviews with residents and staff members on each centre, combined with their own experiences as residents in Danish asylum centres. Please note that this is not a scientific survey, nor do we claim that the grade books contain the whole and only truth about your center.

☺ = Try harder  
 ☺☺ = Average  
 ☺☺☺ = Good

The number of residents and number of people on food boxes in each centre is from end August 2004. (Source: The Red Cross Asylum Department)

## AVNSTRUP

**Red Cross, 546 residents, 34 on food box**

### Location:

Open air in forest setting about 50 km from Copenhagen and 20 km south of Roskilde. ☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Modern five floor buildings with regular maintenance. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Birds of same feather fly together. Most staffs are kind. ☺☺

### Activities:

Probably the best in Red Cross asylum centres. ☺☺☺

### Children's activities:

Plenty, children are smiling in Avnstrup. ☺☺☺

### Integration:

Very week these days. ☺

### Information standards:

TV with different international channels, info café, library with newspapers, computer room, information wall boards. ☺☺

## BROBY

**The Emergency Service, 135 residents, 20 on food box**

### Location:

20 km from Odense, buses every 30 minutes. Easy access to transportation, shops and the local population. Close to the small town Broby. ☺☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Five houses with each their area to clean and maintain. Some houses are better than others, but in general the level is okay. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Center's surrounding environment is good, and staff has good relations with the residents. However, some of the residents have developed depression and are often very sick. ☺☺

### Activities:

Billiard room at Center, rest of the activities carried on in Ejby. ☺

### Children's activities:

After school children play with one adult whatever kind of activities they like. They share women's cafeteria. ☺☺

### Integration:

There is no integration program at the center, sometimes the houses collect money and arrange a trip. ☺

### Information standard:

Internet and TV. ☺

## BROVST

**The municipality, 161 residents, 7 on food box**

### Location:

Outside the city, next to the sea, the forest, farms, sports facilities. ☺☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Modern wooden barracks with comfort, no mice, no rats. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Very good, both among the residents themselves and between residents and staff. This is a centre that residents don't like to be moved from. ☺☺☺

### Activities:

Internal and external practice jobs, creative house, IT-rooms, language education, PC courses. ☺☺☺

### Children's activities:

School, after school activities, children's club together with Danes, playgrounds, PC-rooms. ☺☺☺

### Integration:

Good relationship with Danish volunteers. However, the youngsters are much more integrated than the grown-ups. ☺☺

### Information standard:

TV with 17 channels and residents info channel, pay phone and global card phone, newspapers, New Times. ☺☺☺

## EBELTOFT

**Red Cross (shares administration with Grenå), 145 residents, 13 on food box**

### Location:

A very beautiful place – a green area in the middle of the town. ☺☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Standard Red Cross buildings with houses accomodating 24 people, shared kitchen and bathrooms. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Average. ☺☺

### Activities:

All activities take place in the Red Cross service centre in Grenå. Regular bus service. Danish and English classes, courses such as sewing and other crafts. Cafeteria, music room and workout room. ☺☺

### Children's activities:

School, kindergarden and Youth Club is located in the service cen-

tre in Grenå. ☺☺

### Integration:

Not so much. ☺

### Information standard:

TV, internet room, New Times – no other newspapers are available. ☺

## FASAN

**(Women and children's centre)**

**Red Cross, 61 residents, 10 on food box**

### Location:

In the middle of Frederiksberg in Copenhagen. ☺☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Old, beautiful building, and the hygiene is okay, clean and fine. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Good relationship between staffs and residents. Friendly atmosphere. ☺☺☺

### Activities:

PC room, sewing room and fitness activity. Season tickets to the Zoo and monthly trips to a swimming pool. But external practise is difficult – mostly internal practice in the Culture House in Copenhagen and cleaning in the centre. ☺☺

### Children's activities:

Children go to school in Centre Gribskov, and kids under the age of six go to kindergarden at Centre Kongelunden. There's a Danish club in the neighbourhood, and Red Cross Youth visits the centre twice a week to make children's activities. ☺☺

### Integration:

Residents have the chance to see all the events in the local community, and living in the middle of Copenhagen, you can integrate by walking out the front door – if you want to. ☺☺

### Information standard:

TV-room, local newspapers, New Times, internet. ☺☺

## FREDERIKSHAVN

**Red Cross, 322 residents, 43 on food box**

### Location:

10 min. from the nature, forest, ocean, beach and 5 km away from city. ☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Old motel with small four-person appartments with own bathroom, toilet and kitchen. The hygiene of the buildings vary from good to bad. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Mostly friendly, but depending on the situation of the residents and the reaction of the staffs. ☺☺

### Activities:

Mostly internal, but some external job practise. Danish, English, hygiene and PC courses. Many activities, such as a big sports hall, internet café, gigantic outdoor space. ☺☺

### Children's activities:

School, club and kindergarden, trips, picnics and so on. ☺☺☺

### Integration:

Red Cross staff point to the external practice jobs, but residents say there is no integration programmes. ☺☺

### Information standard:

TV in every appartment with a Red Cross info-channel, two pay phones, computer room, New Times, local newspapers but no foreign papers. ☺☺

## GRENÅ

**Red Cross, 130 residents, 14 on food box**

### Location:

In a green area in the countryside, 2 km from the nearest shopping centre. Nice and quiet. ☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Standard Red Cross buildings with houses accomodating 24 people, shared kitchen and bathrooms. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Residents tend to group up according to their language. ☺

### Activities:

All activities take place in the Red Cross service centre in Grenå. Regular bus service. Danish and English classes, courses such as sewing and other crafts. Cafeteria, music room and workout room. ☺☺

### Children's activities:

School, kindergarden and Youth Club is located in the service centre in Grenå. ☺☺

### Integration:

Not so much. ☺

### Information standard:

TV, internet room, New Times – no other newspapers are available. ☺

## GRIBSKOV

**(Children's centre)**

**Red Cross, 44 residents, no one on food box**

### Location:

In the biggest forest in Denmark, 15 km from Hillerød. Very idyllic and quiet – if you are young, maybe sometimes too quiet? ☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Three houses and one hut, two children in each room. Cleaning standards are set by the teenagers living there, so... but it's not too bad. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Good and close relations between the staff and the residents. The residents also have an individual contact person. Sometimes teenage-problems and fights. ☺☺

### Activities:

Centre has its own school and a lot of activities such as PC room, night discos, bingo, trips, and sports such as swimming, football, basketball, volleyball and a small workout-room. ☺☺☺

### Integration:

Good integration with the local community – especially for those residents who speak Danish very well, and for those who have external practise jobs. Good contact to Hillerød International School. ☺☺

### Information standard:

Private TV in every room, and TV with national and international channels and video in common rooms and PC room. Children under the age of 15 get a phone card every second week, the older boys and girls mostly pay for their mobile phones themselves. New Times, The Copenhagen Post and Frederiksborg Amts avis. ☺☺☺

## HANSTHOLM

**The municipality, 145 residents, 11 on foodbox**

### Location:

Close to Hanstholm – however, Hanstholm is not exactly the centre of the world! Next to a Youth Club and a Red Cross shop, the rest is silence. ☺☺

### Building standard and hygiene:

Wooden Barracks with little privacy – but no mice or rats. ☺☺

### Atmosphere:

Residents and staff are not very close, but residents are close to each others, like a family. ☺☺

### Activities:

Many practice jobs, language education, IT-rooms, sports facilities



and more ☺☺☺

**Children's activities:**

School and Kindergarten located in the centre, and the staff has much focus on the children. PC room, fishing, trips to different locations in Denmark. ☺☺☺

**Integration:**

Medium – residents have external practise jobs, but only a few speaks Danish well. ☺☺

**Information standard:**

Only private TV-sets in almost every room, the center provides international and national channels. Good computers with internet acces, prepaid phones, New Times, no other newspapers. ☺☺

**HJALLELSE**

**Emergency Service, 293 residents, 35 on food box**

**Location:**

Outside the city, 5 km from train and bus station. ☺☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**

Residents arrange the cleaning themselves. ☺☺

**Atmosphere:**

Very open, residents and staff have a good connection. ☺☺☺

**Activities:**

Most educational activities are located at a central school 5-10 km away. Center has only a workshop with wood machine and metal cutting machine, a women's café and sewing room. ☺☺

**Children's activities:**

School only. Playground outside. ☺

**Integration:**

The staff staff introduce residents to Denmark - the country, educational system, social system, tradition and culture. ☺☺

**Information standard:**

Each house has a TV, there is Arabic, Bosnian and Danish newspapers and New Times. ☺☺

**JELLING**

**Red Cross, 195 residents, 17 on food box**

**Location:**

Beautiful nature around, very close to railway station, shops (Superbrugsen), and Danish Youth club. ☺☺☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**

New buildings which used to be a home for elderly people. Nice and clean. ☺☺☺

**Atmosphere:**

Active, communicative. ☺☺

**Activities:**

Internal and external job practise, separate resident's office, IT rooms, trips to Legoland and more. ☺☺☺

**Children's activities:**

Kindergarten, school (three days a week), Danish club, trips. ☺☺☺

**Integration:**

Danes are visiting often; some residents have friends in the city. ☺☺

**Information standard:**

TV with foreign TV channels, phone, newspapers, New Times. Every week local center information, pre-paid card phones, internet. ☺☺☺

**KONGELUNDEN**

**(Health and care centre)**

**Red Cross, 146 residents, 16 on food box**

**Location:**

16 km from the centre of Copenhagen. In the countryside near the airport. ☺☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**

Old, worn-out military buildings, the rooms are identical, some have bathrooms, some not. Shared kitchen facilities. Cleaning has been worse, but still... ☺

**Atmosphere:**

Not so good, mostly due to the fact that many of the residents are sick. ☺

**Activities:**

Courses take place in the Culture House in Copenhagen. The centre has a bicycle workshop, an internet room, a sewing room, a workout room and a football-field outside. ☺☺

**Children's activities:**

Kindergarten, girl's club and boy's club. Red Cross Youth comes once a week to make activities with the children. ☺☺

**Integration:**

Is pretty much up to the residents themselves. ☺

**Information standard:**

One shared TV which is rarely used, internet, New Times, The Copenhagen Post, no other papers and a card-phone. But the staff and volunteers are good at giving the residents the information they need. ☺☺

**MIDDELFART**

**The Emergency Service, 206 residents, 24 on food box**

**Location:**

Five minutes' walk from the train station, situated in the middle of the city. ☺☺☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**

The activity house is neat, but the actual accomodation building, and especially the toilets and bathrooms, are not properly cleaned. ☺

**Atmosphere:**

People are very friendly and open, the residents and the staff have a good connection. ☺☺☺

**Activities:**

The activity house is 25 minutes from the accomodation building and the train station. It offers ceramic, bicycle and sewing workshops, 2nd hand clothes shop, adult Danish classes, internet room, cafeteria and billiards' room. ☺☺☺

**Children's activities:**

Danish classes in Ejby activity house, transport provided by centre. Children club at centre 4 days a week. ☺☺

**Integration:**

The locals has donated things for the activity house, and you're not so far from them if you want to integrate. ☺☺

**Information standard:**

Internet, television, Bosnian and Arabic newspapers, Danish newspapers and New Times. ☺☺

**SANDHOLM**

**Red Cross, 804 residents, 171 on food box**

**Location:**

Isolated in the middle of an agricultural area and next to a military exercise field, 3 km away from the nearest village. ☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**

Modern buildings well designed, occupied by the Red Cross, the Immigration Service and the Police. ☺☺

**Atmosphere:**

Stress and tension due to high sensitivity amongst residents from different nationalities. The large number of rejected residents also has a negative influence on the atmosphere. No strong contact between residents and the staff. ☺

**Integration:**

Very little integration with life outside the centre. ☺

**Activities:**

The many phase 3 -residents are not allowed to take education and many do not wish to join internal job practise since they live in constant fear of deportation. ☺☺

**Children's activities:**

Plenty with satisfaction. Kindergarten with 60 children, youth and children clubs. ☺☺☺

**Information standards:**

Introduction course for newcomers. TV, but no satellite dishes for special channels. New Times and Copenhagen post. ☺☺

**SIGERSLEV**

**(Closing soon)**

**Red Cross, 215 residents , 47 on food box.**

**Location:**

100 m away from the sea shore, 3 km away from the nearest shopping center. ☺☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**

Old army building with rooms for 3-4 persons. ☺

**Atmosphere:**

Residents accommodate the living situation with no protest. Red Cross staffs only meet residents between 13 and 15 hours. ☺

**Activities:**

They have the possibilities, but few people participate in the available activities. ☺☺

**Children's activities:**

Satisfactory. ☺☺

**Integration.**

No integration programmes are available, and the centre is far from any real city. ☺

**Information standards:**

Typical, nothing special, residents cannot get their post any time. ☺

**SKIBBY**

**Red Cross, 118 residents, 10 on foodbox**

**Location:**

End of the city Skibby, no local residents around. ☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**

One-floor buildings close to each other, self and daily cleaning schedule. More cleaning responsibilities are focused on children's parents. It seems not dirty. ☺☺

**Atmosphere:**

Good and pleasant atmosphere

between residents and staffs,

mostly families with children. ☺☺☺

**Activities:**

School, cleaning and staff assistant activities. ☺☺

**Children's activities:**

Special and unique centre for the children with full time kindergarten and frequent excursions. ☺☺☺

**Integration:**

No integration programme. ☺

**Information standard:**

Special information board; local, national and satellite channels. Public phone, TV. ☺☺☺

**THYREGOD**

**Red Cross, 123 residents 22 on food box**

**Location:**

In the outskirts of the town Thyregod, next to industrial zone, with view to the fields, close to centre and shops, close to railway station. ☺☺☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**

Village buildings, no mice, no rats. ☺☺

**Atmosphere:**

Very isolated, mostly men live in the center. ☺

**Activities:**

Boxing room, sewing room, café, billiard room - other activities are located in Centre Jelling. ☺☺

**Children's activities:**

None, activities for children are located in center Jelling. ☺

**Integration:**

Low. ☺

**Information standard:**

TV like in centre Jelling, phone, newspapers, New Times, prepaid card phone. ☺☺☺



Photos: Tommy

**Centre Middelfart**  
**The Emergency Service, 206**  
**residents, 24 on food box**  
**(by end August 15<sup>th</sup> 2004)**



**Location:**  
 Five minutes' walk from the train station, situated in the middle of the city. ☺☺☺

**Building standard and hygiene:**  
 The activity house is neat, but the actual accomodation building, and especially the toilets and bathrooms, are not properly cleaned. ☹

**Atmosphere:**  
 People are very friendly and open, the residents and the staff have a good connection. ☺☺☺

**Activities:**  
 The activity house is 25 minutes from the accomodation building and the train station. It offers ceramic, bicycle and sewing workshops, 2nd hand clothes shop, adult Danish classes, internet room, cafeteria and billiards' room. ☺☺☺

**Children's activities:**  
 Danish classes in Ejby activity house, transport provided by centre. Children club at centre 4 days a week. ☺☺

**Integration:**  
 The locals has donated things for the activity house, and you're not so far from them if you want to integrate. ☺☺

**Information standard:**  
 Internet, television, Bosnian and Arabic newspapers, Danish newspapers and New Times. ☺☺

# ACTIVE BUT DIRTY

**Residents in Centre Middelfart can use their skills and obtain new ones at the centre's new activity house. However, residents are not satisfied with the accomodation.**

By Ranjan

Just outside by the entrance is a big container to collect clothes. Inside, there is a big workshop on the left hand side, and a ceramics place is situated in the corner. The bike workshop is well equipped with all kinds of tools, and all in all there are lots of activities going on in the fairly new activity house in Centre Middelfart, which is run by the Emergency Service.

There is an internet room with six computers, two Danish class rooms for adults, a second hand shop, a cafeteria and a sewing workshop. The broken or fixed bicycles are stored in the basement.

The activity house is fulfilling The Emergency Service's (Beredskabsstyrelsen Fyns) vision to make asylum seekers waiting time meaningful.

"People in Middelfart and the asylum seekers have been very cooperative and helpful. The locals have donated old bicycles and clothes which can be used after small reperation, and the asylum seekers have shown us enthusiasm and interest in the activities," says center leader Tommy.

The repaired bicykles are sold for 100 kroner each, and the money is used to buy new tools for the workshop.

### Living like chickens

Centre Middelfart is a three floor building accomodating 215 residents. It also has a playground and a few rooms for administration work.

But despite the new activity house and the staffs determination to fulfill The Emergency Service's vision, the residents are not satisfied with center life. They especially criticise the accomodation facilities.

"Families of five or six members with teenage sons and daughters are still put together in one small room, like chickens, even though we requested many times for a separate room. Three sets of washing and drying machines, two kitchens in the basement and four toilets and bathrooms are not accessible for 215 residents, when we need to use them. All residents from both 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor have to go to the basement to cook their meal," says a centre resident.

The residents agree that the staff

members are doing their best, and that it's the authorities who are not paying attention to the problems. An asylum seeker living in the centre also points to the residents' own behaviour.

"Most of the residents leave their shoes out in the corridor, trash cans and toilets are not properly cleaned, and it stinks. Some residents even wash their clothes in the bathrooms, and changing all this is hard when we cannot communicate very well with each other," he says.

### Police case raised and dropped

Recently, a former staff member reported Centre Middelfart to the police. He claimed that the centre management was cheating with the number of residents actually living in the centre in order to receive more money from the Immigration Service.

However, by the time of New Times' deadline, the local chief police officer refused to raise a case against the centre, and the Immigration Service announced that they would look into the registration procedures in general, but that they had no suspicion of fraud going on in Centre Middelfart.



**The residents in Centre Hanstholm are active and well integrated in the local society. But some of them complain that the pressure from laws and rules is too hard.**

# MORE OFFERS, MORE RULES

By Buba

Far away from Copenhagen, close to the sea, close to Norway, and close to city Thisted lies Centre Hanstholm which is run by Hanstholm municipality (kommune).

The center is surrounded by Hitler bunkers back from the Second World War; and next to it there is a Red Cross shop whose customers are only asylum seekers. There is also located a Youth Club for both Danes and asylum seekers.

Center Hanstholm is rich with activity possibilities. It offers both internal and external practice jobs, education and sports such as bowling, swimming and fishing, a library with a large number of books and other materials, IT-rooms, school, kindergarten and so on. Many people work in local shops and firms, but they are not allowed to work in pizzerias and grocery shops. The center staff has a rule saying that everybody should have practice jobs and get education, and they have a good system of finding jobs for the residents.

“Mostly, the residents understand

Danish better than they speak it, but they should still attend language courses and participate in practice job, and that is their focus,” says Henrik, a staff member who has been working in Centre Hanstholm for almost three years.

One of the residents is 29-year-old Mustafa Kemal from Turkey, who has been in Denmark for four years and has two sons with a Danish woman.

Mustafa works in Aldi, and although time is his only enemy, he likes spending it in a useful way.

27-year-old Senam Alhan, who is also from Turkey, has been in Denmark for six months and is already working in Super Brugsen. He also enjoys using his time learning things.

“I would like to be in any activity available, otherwise life in the center is boring,” he says.

#### Key to the community

Shirko Aldhni is 30 years old and from Syria. He has been alone in Denmark for six years, all his family is abroad. Center Hanstholm is

the 5th centre that he lives in.

“People use to say that any refugee camp run by Red Cross is better than a camp run by a municipality (kommune) because the municipalities use any rules strictly, toughly. For instance, if you do not go to school once, they can cut your pocket money. Many residents would like to move from Hanstholm to a Red Cross center, but it’s almost impossible,” says Shirko.

“Every asylum seeker from all centers in Denmark should be treated the same way, no matter if the center is run by Red Cross or someone else,” he adds.

Having lived in five different centers himself, Shirko says that, to him, the centers are in general the same. But the good life and the atmosphere depends on the center staff and the location of the centre.

“If you are close to the city, you are close to the Danes, and if the centre is isolated, you will be isolated. In order to lead an active life, you have to be mentally relaxed, otherwise no activity programme is going to work,” explains the young

Syrian who believes that the Danish language is the key to the local community and to Danish everyday life.

“Unfortunately, few people have that key, and even less use it,” he says.

#### Laws and rules

Shirko does not believe that Centre Hanstholm is extraordinary successful in making people more active, which has been the argument of for instance the Danish Integration Minister Bertel Haarder.

“They just use the rules to press people to do their duties, but they don’t achieve anything. When residents have a problem, they try to establish a closer relationship with the center staff in order to open up their heart, because many people in the center lack families. Unfortunately, some of the staff members has build up a wall, and they call that wall a law or a rule that they have to follow. But the staff members have themselves chosen to work with refugees, they should accept them and not ignore them. Being ignored brings a mental pressure on people,” says Shirko.

**Centre Hanstholm Hanstholm municipality (kommune), 145 residents, 11 on food-box (by end August 2004)**



**Location:** Close to Hanstholm – however, Hanstholm is not exactly the centre of the world! Next to a Youth Club and a Red Cross shop, the rest is silence. 😊😊

**Building standard and hygiene:** Wooden Barracks with little privacy – but no mice or rats. 😊😊

**Atmosphere:** Residents and staff are not very close, but residents are close to each others, like a family. 😊😊

**Activities:** Many practice jobs, language education, IT-rooms, sports facilities and more 😊😊😊

**Children’s activities:** School and Kindergarten located in the centre, and the staff has much focus on the children. PC room, fishing, trips to different locations in Denmark. 😊😊😊

**Integration:** Medium – residents have external practise jobs, but only a few speaks Danish well. 😊😊

**Information standard:** Only private TV-sets in almost every room, the center provides international and national channels. Good computers with internet acces, prepaid phones, New Times, no other newspapers. 😊😊



Photos: Buba

# SHORTCUTS

## Rise in medical expenses for asylum seekers

Within the past four years, expenses for asylum seekers suffering from depressions, psychosis and other sicknesses requiring treatment outside the asylum centre system, has risen from 30 to 40 million Danish kroner. Last year, the Immigration Service received 4,243 applications for medical care from asylum centres, and only a minority of these applications are rejected. The head of The Danish red Cross Asylum Department, Jørgen Chemnitz, says that he is convinced that the poor prospects of obtaining asylum has an influence on asylum seekers' health condition. Integration Minister Bertel Haarder replies that sick asylum seekers should get proper treatment, but that being depressed from getting rejected is no grounds for asylum.

(Politiken)

## Bertel Haarder in charge of development aid

A switch in the Danish government has given Bertel Haarder, the Minister for Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, yet another field of responsibility: development aid. Some opposition politicians have stated that they find it worrying that the same man who has been accused of bringing Denmark on the verge of human rights will now decide which countries should receive Danish development aid, partly based on their willingness to abide by international human rights conventions. However, the Danish Refugee Council believes that refugees will benefit from the fact that

asylum politics and development aid is now part of the same political administration.

(New Times)

## Continued debate on family reunification

Changing the age limit for obtaining family reunification from 28 to 24 has not spared the Danish government of criticism. Opposition politicians and even leading members of the governing party Venstre are still not satisfied with the law, and the political disagreement on foreigners seems very likely to be a dominant issue in the next parliamentary election campaign. Moreover, a test case at The European Court of Human Rights concerning the Danish law tightenings on family reunification has been put on hold, since the Danish Integration Ministry has decided to reconsider the case. This has made the head of the Danish Documentation and Advisory Centre on Racial Discrimination, Niels-Erik Hansen accuse the ministry of having a 'cowardly strategy'.

(New Times/Politiken)

## UN dislikes the Danish food box

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) is worried about Denmark putting Iraqi asylum seekers on the food box. UNHCR spokesman Måns Nyberg says that they are against any form of pressure aimed at getting Iraqis to go home, however, legally it's hard to determine whether the food box arrangement is in conflict

with the human rights conventions. Danish Integration Minister Bertel Haarder refuse the idea that there's anything wrong with putting Iraqi as well as other asylum seekers on the food box.

(Berlingske Tidende)

## Still fewer seek asylum in Denmark

In the second quarter of 2004, 754 persons applied for asylum in Denmark. This is almost 20 percent less than in the first quarter of 2004. By end July, a total of 1,873 persons has applied for asylum in Denmark this year. The largest nationality groups were people from Serbia-Montenegro (404 persons), Afghans (171 persons) and Iraqis (117 persons). The Immigration Service's approval rate for asylum cases decided between January 1st and August 1st was as low as 9 percent. The approval rate for the whole year 2003 was 22.

(New Times)

## Refugees asked to help in asylum cases

The Danish public prosecutor in special international criminal cases is now asking refugees to help solve cases about asylum seekers who might have committed war crimes. In folders distributed to asylum centres and police stations, the public prosecutor is urging persons with knowledge of genocide or other serious crimes committed in their home country to step forward and share this information with the prosecutor. So far, the Immigration Service has forwarded 47 asylum cases

to the criminal case prosecutor, because the asylum seekers themselves have told the Danish authorities that they have committed serious crimes back home. However, the Immigration Service suspect that some of these asylum seekers have made up their stories because they have the mistaken notion that it will help them obtain asylum.

(Berlingske Tidende)

## New number for Iraqi hotline

The Immigration Service's Iraqi hotline, which is open for any questions regarding voluntary return to Iraq, has got a new telephone number: 35 30 86 67. The phone hotline is open Mondays to Fridays between 1 pm and 3 pm.

(New Times)



Photo: Mohammed

## ASYLUM SEEKERS MET COPENHAGENERS

On August 28th, the Red Cross Culture House in Copenhagen participated in Copenhagen's International Day. The Culture House tent at the sea brink was visited by a lot of locals, curious to hear about asylum life from members of the Asylum Seekers' Information Group (ASIG), and enjoying the live music played by refugee musicians.

New Times

Legal Letters is your direct way to learn more about asylum seekers and the law. Claus Juul, an

# LEGAL LETTERS

experienced legal counsellor at Dansk Flygtningehjælp, will do his very best to answer all your questions.

**Can an asylum seeker raise a civil case for loss and damage against The Danish Immigration Service? If yes, at which court?**

Filing a civil case against the Immigration Service (IS) would be an unusual step to take, but it can be done. Starting the case is done by taking out a so-called writ of summons against the IS at the Eastern High Court. The writ of summons is a document that you present to the Court, in which you state your claim 1) what you want in compensation, and 2) why the conduct of the IS gives rise to compensation for loss and damage. Even though it is not required, it is advisable to ask a law firm for assistance. When filing the case a court fee must be paid. In practice, however, it is not likely that you will be successful in filing a lawsuit against IS for loss and damage. Firstly, you must be able to prove that you have suffered a concrete economic loss, secondly, you must be able to prove that this concrete economic loss is due to negligence by the Immigration Service. Not just a mistake, but gross negligence. This is very hard to prove, even for a lawyer.

**I am an ethnic Armenian from Azerbaijan who has been living in Denmark for four and a half years. My asylum case was finally rejected two years ago, and I signed my deportation papers, but I am still waiting to be deported. The law saying that my request for residence should be revised after 18 months of co-operating with the authorities does not seem to**

**apply on me, why is that? And why am I still living in Sandholm, without getting normal pocket money, when I am co-operating with the police?**

According to the Danish rules you should be given residency IF deportation has not been possible for 18 months AND if during this period you have co-operated regarding the deportation, AND if the deportation at the present time is considered futile (hopeless). According to information from the police negotiations with authorities from Azerbaijan regarding the return of ethnic Armenians with Azerbaijani citizenship are ongoing. Therefore, deportation is not considered futile (hopeless) for the time being. If you are still living in Sandholm without getting normal pocket money, it must be that you are considered NOT to be cooperating regarding your deportation. If for example the police is of the opinion that during the deportation efforts you have been giving false information, you will be considered as uncooperative. If you believe that you are NOW co-operating loyally, and you are doing whatever you can to facilitate your departure, then you should ask the Immigration Service to review the question of normal allowances.

**Who makes decisions at The Ministry of Refugee Immigration and Integration Affairs concerning humanitarian residences? Is it the responsible staff of the case, a judge or a committee? What is the role of the asylum seeker's lawyer in this context?**

Applications for humanitarian residence permit in Denmark should be sent to the Ministry of Integration,

where they are considered by civil servants and formally decided on by the minister of Integration. You are not granted free legal aid to write the application, so you have to either write it yourself or pay for a lawyer. Previously, the lawyer that had assisted an asylum seeker in processing the asylum application before the Refugee Board, would be paid to write the application after the asylum case had been rejected by the Board. Now, the application for humanitarian assistance has to be filed within 15 days after the asylum application has been rejected by the Immigration Service. Otherwise you may not be allowed to stay in the country while the application is being considered. In asylum cases that are dealt with as manifestly unfounded, an application for humanitarian residence must be sent immediately after the rejection of the asylum case.

**Why does The Immigration Service (IS) ask the asylum seeker to sign that they can contact the person that she named during the interview, when the initial promise was that the case would be treated secretly, and that no one other than the IS would be informed about your reasons to run away from your country? The IS must know that this will complicate your case, since the person will know where you are and that you mentioned his name.**

The reason why the Immigration Service would want to contact other persons is probably to verify the asylum claim. Due to the confidentiality of asylum cases, the Immigration Service cannot contact anyone concerning the asylum seeker

and the case without the consent of the asylum seeker. The Immigration Service cannot force you to sign such a document of consent, but you should explain why you don't want to do so. However, the basic rule is that the Danish authorities must not go to persons or institutions in your country of origin and ask for information about you (without your consent), because it could seriously expose you to persecution, if it became known that you had applied for asylum in another country.

**What is the maximum amount of time that The Immigration Service and the Refugee Board respectively can spend on an asylum seeker's case before they have to give an answer?**

There is no time limit for case processing, but the decisions must be within reasonable time according to the general rules on public administration. Depending on your case, 'reasonable time' can, regrettably, be anything from 4 to 12 months. If the case is proceeded to the Refugee Board 'reasonable time' can be even longer.

**I know a young ethnic Armenian family from Azerbaijan with two small children who has been living in Denmark for five years. They were forced by the by police to sign papers for their deportation to Armenia, even though they have nothing to do with Armenia and lived half their lives in Azerbaijan. They provided the authorities with all necessary documents, how can the police force them**

**to sign on their deport? Are there any laws about this?**

The police have no right to force people to sign any kind of documents. If the family regrets signing the papers, they are free to withdraw their consent to go voluntarily to Armenia instead of Azerbaijan. If the police want to force them to go to Armenia anyway, the Board of Refugees has to approve of this in advance. However, not knowing the details of the case it is hard to give a precise answer. But it is a basic principle that you cannot deport rejected asylum seekers to a country, where they have not resided legally before their arrival in Denmark. So, what you write, indicates that the Danish authorities believe that the family is in fact from Armenia.

## ASK US

### Any questions?

Write your question to:  
New Times  
DRC Culture House  
Strandgade 100E  
1401 København K

You can also email your question to:  
[newtimes@redcross.dk](mailto:newtimes@redcross.dk)

Please feel free to ask anonymously.

You can also contact  
**Dansk Flygtningehjælp**  
Legal Councillor  
Unit – Asylum Department  
Borgergade 10  
Postbox 53  
1002 København K  
Webpage: [www.flygtning.dk](http://www.flygtning.dk)  
E-mail: [advice@drc.dk](mailto:advice@drc.dk)

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Sharing the  
**silence**

New Times is a newspaper, and normally, newspaper pages are full of words. However, we did not succeed in finding words for what's going on in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Darfur, in Beslan....  
Instead, we would like to share this page of silence with you, our readers, remembering the victims of wars and conflicts all over the world.

– The New Times staff –

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

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E-mail: newtimes@redcross.dk

Editor-in-chief:  
Henrik Ravn  
Managing Editor:  
Mette Trudso  
Staff:  
Buba, Sameer, Eleonora, Austine,  
Francoise, Mohammed, Ranjan, Mette  
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