

The Kingdom of Denmark

Positions for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

I. Utilizing the Global Needs Assessment

With 23,401 registered refugees, 527 asylum seekers, and 3,687 stateless persons residing in the Kingdom of Denmark as of January 2009, Denmark must take a proactive role in both determining the Global Needs Assessment and in closing the gap between the determined Global Needs Assessment and the current availability of funds to deal with refugees. In 2009, The Kingdom of Denmark was a top contributor to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), contributing \$55,779,338 to the continued operations of this committee, making it the third largest contributor per GDP¹.

As a member of the European Union, the Kingdom of Denmark is working to coordinate refugee policies across Europe. This includes improving procedures for identifying and receiving persons in need of protection, as well as coordinating funding for refugees across the globe. As part of the European Union, the Kingdom of Denmark responded to the needs of 375,537 Croatian and Bosnian refugees in Serbia when the European Commission on Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) increased aid to these refugees by Euro 2.5 million, to a total of Euro 50 million annually. These funds were allocated following a joint effort between the UNHCR and World Food Program (WFP) to respond to the food needs assessment of 40% of these refugees².

The Kingdom of Denmark made further efforts in a 2007 decision by ECHO to allocate Euro 10.2 million to the Iraqi refugee crisis. After assessing priorities and the security situation within Iraq and the neighboring countries of Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, ECHO focused this increase in aid on the issues of basic healthcare, basic education, distribution of food, and distribution of household items to Iraqi refugees. According to Commissioner Michel, this approach aims to limit the squandering of funds and ensure, "...that European taxpayers' money will be used effectively and will be properly managed by humanitarian professionals that have the implementing capacity and can make a difference for the better."³

As the third largest per capita contributor of funds to the UNHCR, the Kingdom of Denmark views utilization of the Global Needs Assessment as a means to put a halt to excess expenditures and wastefulness of funds when tackling the issue of refugees. This includes streamlining the refugee documentation process within countries so that refugees may seek out the advice and help of the UNHCR more quickly, working with individual nations to prioritize refugee needs, advising nations in the development of a national response to their particular refugee situation, and allocating funds based on a comparison needs and priorities for each country.

¹"Denmark." *United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees*. January 2009. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, Web. 17 Oct 2009. <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=48fdebe311&query=denmark>>.

²"Commission allocates a further EUR 2.5 Million in Humanitarian Aid for Serbia." *EUROPA*. 12 December 2001. The European Union, Web. 17 Oct 2009. <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/01/1802&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>>.

³"Commission Plans New Humanitarian Funding of Over €10 M for Victims of Iraq Crisis." *EUROPA*. 15 February 2007. The European Union, Web. 17 Oct 2009. <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/191&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>>.

II. Return and Reintegration of Refugees

One Iraqi with refugee status in Denmark summed up his attempted repatriation to Iraq as this, "I can tell you that from the start I felt like a stranger in my own country...it was hard for me, I was alone. I could not mix with the others." Believing that reintegration is a necessary step in the repatriation of refugees and is the only sustainable solution for refugees, the Kingdom of Denmark has worked to establish durable agencies and processes through which refugees in Denmark can aspire to return to their nation of origin. The Danish government, in its passage of the Danish Act on Repatriation (DAR), made clear that it is committed to taking the necessary actions, including counseling and financial incentives, to facilitate refugees in their voluntary repatriation, and the option for refugees to return to Denmark within twelve months of their reintegration³.

The Kingdom of Denmark has seen firsthand that refugees cannot be successfully repatriated without effort being made to reintegrate them into the current society of their homeland. Since the establishment of the DAR in 2000, 1,278 refugees living in the Kingdom of Denmark have opted to be returned to their country of origin, including 306 Iraqi refugees. Of these 306 Iraqi refugees, 73 have chosen to return to the Kingdom of Denmark within twelve months, a cause for concern in the overall effort to repatriate refugees. In response, the Kingdom of Denmark launched an investigation into why these refugees were unable to reintegrate themselves into their native country. Upon interviewing 35 of the returned Iraqi refugees, it was determined that several factors combined to cause their return to the Kingdom of Denmark.

One factor was that the homeland which the refugees knew before their exile had changed in the time that they were living abroad³. Often times, refugees are returning to post-conflict societies, societies scared by war and revolution, societies that are barely comparable to their status five or ten years before. This makes reintegration difficult as refugees maintain a mental picture of their homeland and expectations for what they will encounter upon return. Another factor which contributes to failed repatriations is the changes that occur within a refugee while they are in exile. While abroad, refugees experience new ways of living and new ideas. As one Iraqi refugee summed it up, "If I had not lived in Denmark, and had not experienced justice and democracy and freedom of speech, then maybe I could have dealt with the state of things in Iraq."³ A third problem is a sense of vulnerability upon return to their country of origin. Often times, refugees are shunned when they return to their society post-conflict. Their fellow citizens who did not flee view them as being wealthy outsiders instead of natural citizens like them. This is hard for refugees who are returning home in hopes of familiarity and companionship. Finally, the refugees interviewed cited having a lack of information about the current affairs of their homeland, especially in terms of security. The refugees did not understand the danger they were placing themselves in to return home.

The Kingdom of Denmark believes that for there to be success in the repatriation of refugees, countries must make efforts to reintegrate refugees. This means cooperation and effort by both the country of origin and the country of exile. The country of origin must adopt policies which aim to protect returning refugees from discrimination so that they can feel secure upon their return to their homeland. The country of exile must ensure that refugees have a full

³"Circular Repatriation: The Unsuccessful Return and Reintegration of Iraqis with Refugee Status in Denmark." *New Issues in Refugee Research* (2008). 17 Oct 2009. <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=48eb34c72&query=denmark>>.

understanding of the changes in their homeland and an understanding of changes within themselves. The Kingdom of Denmark encourages member states to offer greater counseling and education to refugees to help them in their decision to repatriate themselves.

³"Circular Repatriation: The Unsuccessful Return and Reintegration of Iraqis with Refugee Status in Denmark." *New Issues in Refugee Research* (2008). 17 Oct 2009. <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=48eb34c72&query=denmark>>.