

## **Motivating measures and other forms of degrading treatments**

- *Experienced by volunteer contact persons in refugee camps*

*Long residency in refugee centres, where (without any time limits) asylum seekers live in uncertainty and anxiety and have no influence on their own situation and that of their children, is generally the most serious cause of psychological breakdown. In addition, many concrete conditions affecting their daily lives, especially in connection with the seemingly endless waiting, humiliate, stress and erodes the quality of life unnecessarily.*

*These conditions further weaken the asylum seekers in relation to their role as parents, both in relation to securing basic trust from their children and also in relation to acting as positive role models and authority figures.*

*Physical and social pedagogic improvements have taken place in the refugee camps in recent years, but the conditions described below still apply.*

### **Stressful routines in relation to police practices**

Asylum seekers are required to report to the police twice a week to answer questions regarding return to their homelands.

*Many asylum seekers say that this is extremely anxiety provoking in that it reactivates earlier experiences and reminds them of their vulnerable situation.*

### **Stressful routines in relation to practices in the refugee camps**

An economic subsidy is paid to all asylum seekers on a specific day, the so-called allowance day. In Centre Sandholm this is done from 13 to 15 hours, when all 500 asylum seekers living at the centre must be processed, resulting in lines where they must sometimes wait for more than an hour. Sandholm's long-time residents have learned to come late in order to avoid the long wait, but this is not possible for everyone. Since the nursery school closes at 12 on allowance day, some parents have no one to stay with the children and must take them along to wait in line.

*The long lines are experienced as humiliating. Especially young women feel harassed by the many waiting men.*

The police are also present when the allowance is paid. Persons the police want to talk to can thus be taken aside, also in order to imprison them – a common practice to ensure deportation.

*Picking up one's allowance can thus be associated with chronic anxiety for also being deported.*

### **Documents are not translated**

Official letters are written in Danish. The centres provide no professional help to translate them.

*Misunderstood documents lead to unnecessary chock, or the opposite.*

### **Long drawn-out processing of cases by the immigration authorities**

Example: A lawyer requested reconsideration of a case on 29.03.07 for a resident permit on humanitarian grounds. The negative answer arrived on 22.02.08. Or the same history with a positive result from 04.05 to 11.03.08

*Waiting so long for a crucial decision provokes anxiety and stress.*

### **Insufficient and limited health care**

- **Insufficient treatment by medical doctors and dentists**

Only a general health examination on arrival in Denmark

Only the most necessary treatment is provided: No preventive treatment, e.g. by a physical therapist or dentist, e.g. for paradentosis.

*Asylum seekers thus suffer from extremely many untreated symptoms that reduce the quality of their lives.*

- **Insufficient access to psychological and psychiatric therapy and crisis intervention**

*Many are suffering from untreated traumas – the old ones, and the new ones experienced during their stay in the camps, e.g. attempted suicide and deportations of neighbours and friends with the use of force.*

- **Lack of interpreters during health care visits in Centre Sandholm**

*Leading to many misunderstandings.*

- **Delays, changes and cancellations of appointments in the health care system at Centre Sandholm**

*Experienced as humiliating.*

- **General lack of information regarding the effects of diagnosed illness, medication and the reasons for choosing specific medication**

*Experienced as humiliating. Weakens possibilities for assuming responsibility for one's own treatment and thus delays cure.*

### **Location of refugee camps in stressful surroundings, difficult access to city facilities**

- Center Avnstrup lies hidden in a large wood. Public transportation is insufficient.
- Center Kongelunden lies near the landing and take-off strips at the Copenhagen International Airport in Kastrup, where the noise from aircraft flying low over the camp every three minutes is ear-shattering.
- Center Sandholm lies in an open landscape surrounded by military training areas, with unannounced exercises with tanks, soldiers and shooting about four to five times a month.

*War exercises and other sudden noises have a retraumatizing effect. Isolated location prevents contact with everyday life in Denmark, which is disabling especially for women, children and young people.*

### **Housing of varying quality, some with difficult conditions for living together**

Single residents typically live in small rooms housing four persons. Sometimes they do not understand each other's language.

*No form of private life is possible.*

In many cases, even when a family has their own family room, they must share kitchen and bathroom with other asylum seekers.

*Regardless of the housing's quality, space is constrained. This causes much friction between residents. Parents have difficulty protecting their children from knowledge and experiences they cannot understand and contain emotionally.*

**Lack of opportunities for paid work**

*This is deeply disabling on all levels.*

**Loss of civil rights**

An asylum seeker must have special permission from the resident municipality in order to marry.

*Far from everyone who applies receives such special permission.*

**21.03.08 Gerd Gottlieb in cooperation with 15 voluntary contact persons connected to Amnesty Now**