

Briefing on the expulsion of Syrian refugees in Denmark

Syrian refugees are being expelled from Denmark since May 2020 based on the Immigration Service's country report from February 2019, which is based on interviews between 16 and 27 November 2018 in Beirut and Damascus

The Danish Immigration Service's country report from February 2019

In spring 2019, the Danish Immigration Service started to review the protection needs and residence permits of Syrians with temporary protection status, who originated from Damascus. This followed a statement from the Refugee Appeals Board in February 2019 that the general security situation in Syria had changed which was partly based on information from a joint fact-finding [report](#) from the Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council published in February 2019. **The report is based on interviews between 16 to 27 November 2018 in Beirut and Damascus.**

In late 2020, the Danish Immigration Service expanded their focus on reassessing the protection needs for Syrians to include the whole area of Rural Damascus. The assessment that the security situation has improved beyond “completely temporary” is based on a reduced level of conflict and less security incidents following the Syrian government establishing full control of Damascus (May 2018) and Rural Damascus (March 2020) respectively. The Danish government has been actively involved in initiating the review of the cases of Syrians and repeatedly and vocally expressed confidence in the claim of the asylum authorities that Damascus and Rural Damascus is safe for return. **At present, Syrian refugees are being expelled based on the country report from February 2019 which is based on interviews between 16 to 27 November 2018 in Beirut and Damascus**

In a very volatile and fragile context with armed conflict as in Syria, the security, political and humanitarian situation is changing day by day. **How can a 3-year-old report still be relevant?** There is a recent [report from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) of March 2021, which is being used as a reference document.

[Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) and other [INGO](#) documented in 2021 that if a Syrian refugee returns to Syria, he or she could be persecuted, raped, arbitrarily detained, tortured and even disappear in the Syrian detention facilities. [Danish experts](#) in the field of asylum law believe that many of the decisions were taken on an inadequate basis and that the cases should be [re-examined](#), and the documentation is [incomplete](#)

Despite all this, the government and the right-wing to vote down the bill to stop the return of Syrian refugees on 17.12.2021.

QUESTION: How come the Immigration Service will not use recent reports from INGO or develop a new more actualized report? Especially since several of the [main sources](#) in the report question the main conclusions that form the basis of the expelling.

Double moral standard of the government of Denmark

On 30 June 2020, during the fourth annual Brussel conference on the conflict in Syria for all countries in the EU, the Danish Foreign Minister, Jeppe Kofod, made a video in which he stated that: “We are entering the 10th year of the conflict in Syria. Yet, the crimes of the Syrian regime continue. Barrels bombs. Poison attacks. Chemical attacks. Torture...The regime is well known for torture and arbitrary detentions” and people “disappeared into regime detention facilities. Numerous reports describe the worst types of torture” ... (See video attached and [twitter](#))

However, on 28 June 2020 (only two days before the conference), the Danish government issued a [press release](#) stating that the government would start reassessing the protection needs of Syrian refugees. And at the same time, the Danish Immigration authorities started stripping Syrian refugees of residency permits and said it was safe to go home.

QUESTION: How can Denmark, represented by the Danish Foreign Minister, Jeppe Kofod, member of the Danish government, condemn the Assad regime and explain all the violations in details on 30 June 2020? And only 2 days earlier, the Danish Minister of Integration and Immigration, Mattias Tesfaye, makes a press release that indicates that Denmark will start expelling Syrian refugees in need for protection? Two Ministers from the same government of Denmark saying the exact opposite and acting in each direction?

CONCLUSION: This states that the Danish government is clearly aware of the situation in Syria and is expelling the Syrians deliberately to either Assad's regime or to retention centers destroying people mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. This is an example of double moral standards and Denmark needs to respect the United Nations Refugee Convention!

Detention centres

However, since Denmark has no agreement with the Assad regime, the rejected Syrian refugees cannot be forcibly evicted. People don't dare go back either. Therefore, they are detained in detention centres indefinitely in very poor conditions with rats and poor access to healthcare. These conditions, the uncertainty of the future and the separation from the family can lead to mental disorders such as stress, depression and the reactivation of trauma, also the relatives are at risk to stress, depression and the reactivation of trauma are feeling really bad.

The Council of Europe's Torture Committee in 2020 described these centres as some of the worst places they had seen in the EU, effectively trying to pressure refugees to 'voluntarily' go home?

QUESTION: Why does Denmark use these centres especially for Syrian Refugees who cannot return? Is this the kind of values and human rights Denmark is fighting for?

Written by Elise Bjerkrheim, 17.01.2020