

## BRIEFING PAPER NO.4 – OCTOBER 2010 **Accelerated removals: a study of the human cost of EU deportation policies, 2009-2010**



'Camp of Shame' Remembering Yahya Tabbabi who died at Vottem foreigners' detention centre in Belgium in January 2010

**As debt-reducing measures and austerity packages are introduced all over Europe, will governments be forced to abandon plans to build more immigration removal centres? One way that European governments could cut costs is by removing as many legal obstacles to deportation as possible and thereby speeding up the process of removal.**

This briefing paper and list of thirty-eight asylum- and immigration- related deaths (see Appendix 1, p.19) examines developments over eighteen months (from January 2009 to 30 June 2010) which suggest that, in the countries of northern and eastern Europe the scale and pace of deportations is accelerating, even as the number of new arrivals declines. (The pattern is more varied in southern Europe.) In one country, Norway, the number of rejected asylum seekers forcibly returned in the first six months of 2010 rose by a staggering 72 per cent. Speedier removals have been accompanied by the increased use of force, as well as measures that both

deny asylum seekers access to justice (which in itself ensures a faster rate of removal) and limit the ability of NGOs to scrutinise the system and provide independent oversight.

We also attempt the difficult task of quantifying the human cost of deportations. In contrast to the constant collection of data on the numbers of people entering Europe, the EU as well as national governments consistently fail to quantify the human cost of deportation policies. There is no comprehensive data on the use of force (including injury or death caused by state violence); nor is there consistent and meaningful data on incidents of self-harm or suicides of those held in pre-deportation detention. There is evidence that speeding up the pace of removal puts individuals under abnormal levels of stress that are deleterious to health and can even undermine the will to live. For the first time since we began to record the human cost of detention and deportation, three men have died in circumstances related to a hunger strike in Austria, Switzerland and

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Germany. Young people are often regarded as the most resilient amongst the displaced, but in another shocking new development our research reveals that two children have committed suicide and countless others have self-harmed. Young men in the 18-30 age bracket also feature prominently in our list of suicides.

### **Arrivals and removals: what the statistics say**

Of the €5,866 million allocated by the EU to what it calls 'solidarity and management of migration flows' for the period 2007-2013, nearly €3,000 million is allocated to external border controls and returns (with an additional €80 million annually going to FRONTEX from other funds, amounting to a further €500 million over the seven years).<sup>2</sup> Only €628 million is allocated to refugees, of which nearly 30 per cent is spent on voluntary returns, and another unknown proportion on removals among member states under the Dublin regulations. The statistics on funding reflect the EU's priorities and those of its member states: to keep refugees and migrants out, to send them away and, only as a last resort, to allow them to stay.<sup>3</sup> A breakdown of recent national statistics on arrivals and removals (see Appendix 2, p.27) shows some variations in approach between northern and eastern Europe on the one hand, and southern Europe, on the other.

In the first band of countries, the deportation rate is on the whole increasing. But this pattern is not repeated across southern Europe, although there are variations within the southern European band. The reason for the variation between the two bands of European countries is that in southern European frontier states, such as Malta, Cyprus, Italy, Greece and Spain, greater emphasis is placed on removing people before they even arrive. This has been achieved through the militarisation of maritime borders, policed by the EU agency for border controls, FRONTEX, and through the introduction of specific national measures, such as Italy's infamous 'push-back' policy (an unprecedented decision to intercept migrants and asylum seekers at sea and send them back to Tripoli without assessing their need for refugee and international protection).<sup>4</sup> As the *EU Observer* noted, in relation to European policy on 3 August 2010, 'The major change in 2008-09, was that Italy and, to a lesser extent Spain, began turning back thousands before they ever officially arrive. Italian interior minister Roberto Maroni, of the Northern League, said in April 2010, 'The Italian model of fighting illegal immigration has produced exceptional results and we think it should be copied by

other European countries,' [while] Human Rights Watch's Bill Frelick calls it 'a dirty deal to enable Italy to dump migrants and asylum seekers on Libya and evade its obligations'.

Militarised borders give rise to stresses and horrors on a vast scale. According to the organisation United for Intercultural Action, since 1993 at least 13,824 people have died attempting to reach Europe.<sup>5</sup> That such deaths will increase is most certain, given the hardening of attitudes towards refugees. Indeed, across the Global North we have seen refugee movement curtailed over the last decade by the steady introduction of a global system of coercive control measures as well as the military fortification of borders, most visibly at the US-Mexico border, the outer perimeter of 'Fortress Europe' and the northern coastline of Australia.<sup>6</sup>

### **Targeting specific categories**

Even though there are national variations in European policies, it is clear that at a European-wide level generic decisions are made to single out particular categories of asylum seekers, such as the Roma and unaccompanied children, as well as homeless EU nationals, for easier removal, and target specific national groups. In order to facilitate the process of sending back large numbers of asylum seekers from particular countries, EU governments have reached readmission agreements or memoranda of understanding with specific countries. Under an agreement signed by Greece and Turkey in May 2010 to achieve effective implementation of their ten-year-old readmission agreement, Turkey agreed to approve a thousand readmission requests a year. However, in southern European countries, it is African asylum seekers who are most likely to be subjected to group deportations linked to specific readmission agreements. Italy has or has sought readmission agreements with Tunisia, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Gambia, as well as its 'push-back' agreement with Libya.<sup>7</sup> Spain has agreements with Cape Verde, Mali, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Nigeria preventing 'illegal emigration' from west African states. In northern European countries, in recent years there has been a specific drive to increase returns to Iraq and Afghanistan as well as, in the case of Norway, to expel Somalis - who are not returned to Somalia but to the first country in which they sought asylum.<sup>8</sup>

Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and the UK have all concluded agreements with Iraq. Other countries have removed, or threatened to remove refugee status from certain national groups, which,

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although not necessarily resulting in mass removals (many will have residence rights), does make the process of expulsion easier, especially if an individual has committed a criminal offence. In Switzerland, a leaked letter sent by the Federal Migration Department reveals that the Swiss government currently plans to withdraw refugee status from nationals from the former Yugoslavia, with the exception of those from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This has long since been a policy favoured by the Germans who only granted temporary protection (and therefore residence permits renewable ever three, six or twelve months) to war refugees from the former Yugoslavia and then moved to deport them from the late 1990s. Germany is currently targeting refugees from Kosovo for removal. Despite their long length of stay in Germany, the federal government now plans to deport up to 2,500 Kosovars annually under a bilateral agreement signed in April 2010, eleven years after the end of the Kosovo war. Under threat are around 14,000 Kosovars of whom 10,000 are Roma.<sup>9</sup> According to Pro Asyl, an analysis of the statistics suggests that if existing trends continue, forced deportations of Roma to Kosovo would double.<sup>10</sup> UNICEF adds that about half of the Roma to be deported from Germany to Kosovo are children, the majority of whom are German-born and raised.<sup>11</sup> But Germany, of course, is not alone in targeting the Roma, whether asylum seekers or not. Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in January 2007, which means that Roma from these countries, just like other Bulgarian and Romanian citizens, are entitled to visa-free travel throughout the EU, subject to the no recourse to public funds test. Yet they have been targeted for deportation, either for begging (which in many European countries is not a criminal offence) or on grounds of preserving public order and health.<sup>12</sup>

But every day the list of unwanted peoples grows. The latest group to be targeted is of Syrian Kurds, many of whom were politically active in Syria and forced to flee its notorious security services. Despite widespread evidence that deported Syrian Kurds are arrested and tortured on arrival in Damascus, both Germany and Norway have carried out deportations to Syria. As evidence mounted that Khaled Kenjo, deported from Berlin to Damascus in Autumn 2009, was tortured on arrival, the German government was forced to conduct an independent investigation and temporarily halt deportations. Norway has also resumed deportations to Syria. Abdekarim Hossain, the politically-active Vice Chair of

the Association of Syrian Kurds in Norway was flown back to Damascus in August 2010. He was immediately arrested and incarcerated in the notorious Al Faiha prison despite SOS Racism's warning that 'Hossain ... has been very active in the struggle for human rights in his native country. The Syrian authorities know this, and this activity is regarded as criminal' by them.<sup>13</sup> Following protests, he was released, but only after an order was made prohibiting him from leaving Syria. He managed to secretly cross the border into Turkey where he has applied for political asylum.

### **Charter flights engender increased levels of force**

According to the European Council on Refugees and Exile (ECRE), one of the most remarkable developments in 2009-2010 has been the transformation of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders, better known as Frontex, from an inter-state project to a fairly large EU authority with a vastly expanded capacity to organise joint returns flights. Frontex was established in October 2005. It has seen its annual budget and workforce increase yearly and it now has an annual budget of €87million and a staff of around 280. Irrespective of the economic climate, its steady amassing of finance and resources shows no signs of diminishing, and in March 2010, the European Commission published plans to enlarge Frontex's role so as to give it extra powers to charter aircraft for joint returns operations.<sup>14</sup> Already, in 2009, Frontex organised thirty-two joint charter flights for returns and doubled its operational days at air borders in comparison with 2008. By the end of July 2009, twenty-seven flights departing 1,338 persons from the EU were coordinated and partly organised by Frontex.<sup>15</sup> Nigeria topped the list of deportation countries for Frontex flights in 2009, followed by Georgia, Kosovo and Albania.

While many charter flights are jointly organised by a number of EU countries under the auspices of Frontex, individual member states, sometimes working in conjunction with others, can also commission their own charter flights. Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, France and the UK all regularly expel by charter flight. Ireland has carried out at least sixteen expulsion charter flights to Nigeria and has been involved in joint charters with EU partners including the UK, Spain, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Italy and Malta. The Swedish Migration Board has speeded up group expulsions, with charter flights taking Iraqis to Baghdad and Mongolians to Ulan Bator.<sup>16</sup>

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Recently it emerged that over the last three years, and in conditions of secrecy, the French ministry of interior has been using small rented planes for deportations, particularly of children.<sup>17</sup> In 2009, there were sixty-four charter flights from the UK, some involving other EU member states including Denmark, Sweden and France, deporting nearly 2,000 people to countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, Cameroon, Nigeria and the DRC.<sup>18</sup> The link between the use of force and deportation flights are revealed by Swedish Migration Board statistics for 2008-2009 which suggest that the number of deportations involving the use of force increased by 500 to 2,200 cases (an increase of nearly a third).

With the greater numbers of charter flights comes increased evidence of brutality by police and private escort agencies. The control techniques and holds used by such escorts involve applying pressure to people's joints or strikes to their body to cause pain. In the UK, according to a major investigation by the *Independent* newspaper, private security escorts (who may be recruited despite criminal convictions, including for assault) are authorised to use a variety of techniques to restrain deportees including a 'Goose Neck' wrist lock, 'thumb and strait arms locks' as well as a procedure entitled 'Nose Control' – which presumably refers to pressure or a strike on the base of the nose, and 'Head control'. The private company G4S instructs its escorts on the type of restraints they can use, including 'rigid bar', 'chain link' and double-locked handcuffs, as well as leg restraints. Rigid bar handcuffs are used by some specially trained police officers to put pressure on an individual's wrists in order to force compliance.<sup>19</sup>

Sometimes, as in Switzerland, planes are especially equipped to deal with the large number of deportees (invariably men) who will inevitably resist boarding or disembarking from such flights. In this context, and because such flights take place in secret, it is possible for police and immigration officials to lose all restraint; there are no passengers on board chartered flights to question escorts' use of force and they can rest assured that the airline pilot will not certify the deportee as unfit to travel.

Violence has been particularly associated with deportation flights from Switzerland, Ireland and Austria to Lagos, Nigeria. (Deportees on these jointly organised flights were handcuffed and restrained by leg irons and chains around their waists.)<sup>20</sup> In March 2010, 29-year-old **Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa**, who had been

on hunger strike, died shortly after he was forcibly restrained and placed in shackles at Zurich's Kloten airport.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Schnyder of the Association of Independent Doctors spoke out against the violence of such forced deportation attempts, pointing out that 'Forced immobilisation for more than ten hours, including having to wear a helmet, the inability to urinate or eat without assistance – these are not only inhumane and unworthy practices but also significant stress factors.'<sup>22</sup> This is the third deportation death to have taken place in Switzerland, and the second death of a Nigerian during a deportation flight from Switzerland to Nigeria. (In response, Nigeria put a halt to its readmission agreement with Switzerland.)<sup>23</sup> Six of the thirteen people who are known to have died in European deportation attempts since 1991 were Nigerian.<sup>24</sup>

But Nigerians are not the only Africans to experience this level of force and intimidation. In the UK there have been a number of forced deportation flights to the DRC and Cameroon; in France, helicopters hovered over Lyon airport to ensure the deportation of an Angolan family on a chartered flight, and in Spain, a nine-minute video, which was widely circulated on the internet, showed police at Barajas airport violently restraining a Senegalese deportee. (It was broadcast on African television stations, sparking an angry debate in the Spanish parliament with members of the Catalonia Greens parliamentary grouping asking whether the Executive believed that 'the best image for a modern and democratic society' is that of a person 'thrown to the floor, hands tied and immobilised when she or he is going to be repatriated'.)<sup>25</sup> The use of such force against Africans dragged onto aeroplanes restrained by instruments such as leg irons and chain-belts inevitably conjures up images of slavery. But the authorities justify this level of force with references to the especially violent criminal propensities of failed asylum seekers from African countries. In Switzerland, the police briefed the media that Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa was 'a Nigerian known to the police for drug trafficking'; only to refuse to release details of his convictions on the grounds of 'protecting his personality'. The newly-appointed director of the Federal Office for Migration, Alard du Bois-Reymond, argued that a new asylum task force was needed to deal with the increasing rate of deportations, adding that '99.5 per cent of Nigerian asylum seekers will not obtain asylum', as 'they do not come here as refugees, but to make illegal business'. One newspaper asked whether it



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was appropriate for the new director to pass off Nigerians as the 'number one enemy of the people' in the same breath as talking of the need for a new deportation initiative.<sup>26</sup>

African countries such as Nigeria, Senegal and the DRC are not the main source of new asylum applicants to northern Europe today and EU countries have set their sights on increasing returns to Iraq and Afghanistan. According to UNHCR statistics, Afghanistan and Iraq are the countries from which most refugees flee to apply for asylum in the industrialised countries of northern Europe. A number of European countries return failed asylum seekers to Afghanistan. In the UK charter flight removals to Afghanistan take place every other Tuesday evening under the codename Operation Ravel. By 2009 European states were prepared to drive through the forced return of Iraqi asylum seekers to Baghdad, in breach of UNHCR guidelines. Whereas in 2007 a limited number of forced deportations of Iraqis were carried out by Denmark, Greece, Poland, Sweden and the UK, these were to Irbil in Kurdish-controlled Northern Iraq (permitted under UNHCR guidelines). Denmark and Sweden were the first to breach UNHCR guidelines,<sup>27</sup> both signing Memoranda of Understanding with the Iraqi authorities, the details of which were later questioned by the Iraqis who claimed that the Memoranda were only ever meant to apply to voluntary returns. During 2008-2009, Sweden was to double its deportation rate, deporting more Iraqis than any other Scandinavian country, most notably through the use of chartered flights to Baghdad. (The human costs were instantly noted – with the Left Party calling for an official investigation into the reports that violence was used on most of the deportees on a February 2009 deportation flight, and that some were even drugged.)

The Swedish Border Police confirm that since December 2008, 460 Iraqi men, women and children have been forcibly returned on large charter flights. (While there were seven charter flights in 2009, there were eight in the first six-and-a-half months of 2010.)<sup>28</sup> An estimated 3,000-4,000 Iraqis, many part of the Christian-Assyrian minority, are faced with deportation and are in hiding.<sup>29</sup> Danish attempts to push through forced deportations of Iraqis in August 2009 led the police to storm the Brorson Church in Norrebro, where rejected Iraqi asylum seekers had taken shelter. (There followed a media campaign denouncing the church priest for giving them shelter, with calls for the organi-

sation 'Church Asylum' to be banned, even as police interviewed several of its members whom they accused of aiding foreigners to illegally reside in Denmark.)<sup>30</sup> Video clips of the police storming the church showed refugees being dragged away and clubbed by the police, while a female supporter was beaten by a baton-wielding police officer. Even the former prime minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen joined in the criticism of the police raid, saying that it went 'beyond the bounds of common humanity and decency'. In 2010, the UK joined with Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands in joint deportation flights to Baghdad, after its own attempt to deport thirty-four Iraqis in October 2009 ended in failure.<sup>31</sup>

The targeting of Iraqis has come at immense cost. In a number of ways it threatens the underpinnings of the international protection regime,<sup>32</sup> also paving the way for the breaching of UNHCR guidelines in relation to other countries.<sup>33</sup> The deportation of terrified Iraqis to Baghdad can only be enforced if police and immigration authorities use violence, both to force them onto the plane and to force them to disembark. And as the news of the deportation drive travels across the Iraqi refugee community, those vulnerable to deportation, including children and young isolated men and women, live in terror of what awaits them. In Germany, **Mahmum O**, a 26-year-old Iraqi asylum seeker who first came to Germany aged 18, and was being treated for depression, hanged himself in detention in Nuremberg prison. In Sweden, an **unaccompanied minor**, no older than 16, committed suicide in an accommodation centre in Värmland after finding out that his asylum claim had been rejected. And in Denmark, in January 2010, a study showed that nearly every Iraqi child in a family which was about to be deported suffered from depression and had suicidal thoughts.<sup>34</sup>

The structured violence built into such group deportations also generates a climate of fear and apprehension within the wider refugee and migrant communities. Those without papers fear any police identity check. In Spain, in a case that bears similarities to the April 2008 death of a Malian man who jumped into the river Marne after being chased by police in a Paris suburb,<sup>35</sup> a 19-year-old Algerian without documents, known to his friends as '**Kader**', drowned after jumping into a river in Bilbao to escape the police who mistook him for a street robber. In Greece a major investigation into policing and the migrant community is long overdue after the discov-

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ery of the bodies of two more migrants (**Husein Zahidul** and **Mazir**) in the stream of Votanikos, close to the Aliens Board in central Athens. (In 2008, there were allegations of police brutality after the body of a Pakistani migrant, who had earlier been seen pursued by police, was discovered in the same riverbed.)<sup>36</sup> In the UK, the suicides of two migrants, hours after being questioned by immigration police, has raised issues for the Independent Police Complaints Commission which is investigating whether the police adequately explained procedures to **Mohammed Iqbal Safi** and **Jianping Liu** and whether specialist translation services were accessed.

### **Speedier deportations, less justice**

Lawyers and refugee support groups have been extremely tenacious in seeking judicial reviews and other legal interventions aimed at forcing governments to abide by the principles of the Refugee Convention as well as humanitarian law. But the acceleration of the deportation rate has been accompanied by moves to make such interventions more difficult. Even prior to the recession, there had been a variety of EU measures, as well as those taken at a national level, that limited asylum seekers' ability to use the law to challenge deportation orders, closed down rights of appeal, or simply accelerated the deportation process.<sup>37</sup> In some countries, such as Greece, the asylum system is so poorly resourced that legal assistance for those detained pending deportation is extremely limited, if not non-existent. Amnesty International (AI) notes the severe obstacles to accessing justice, adding that 'navigating the heavily bureaucratic and complicated legal system of administrative detention in Greece is not a realistic expectation for detained irregular migrants and asylum-seekers especially when there is no access to free legal assistance and lack of adequate interpretation during the court hearing.'<sup>38</sup>

In Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain legal safeguards against expulsion have been curtailed in new administrative measures. In Spain, the ability to challenge deportations has been limited by the simplification of the expulsion process for undocumented migrants. This now takes no more than ten days and sometimes only hours, when before it took up to forty days, according to Giovanna Bustillos, Coordinator of the Association of Bolivian Migrants in Spain (Amibe).<sup>39</sup> In the UK, certain categories of asylum seekers (including unaccompanied children and those at risk of self-harm) have had lesser rights to challenge removals. Under the

'exceptions policy' these categories were subjected to speedy removals through exemption from the general UK Border Agency (UKBA) practice of giving those facing removal 72 hours notice of removal directions. Following a successful challenge by Medical Justice, in July 2010, the High Court deemed the procedure 'unlawful' on the grounds that it violated the constitutional right of access to justice. But the UKBA has appealed the decision. Meanwhile, as the judge noted, legal aid cuts have more than halved the number of lawyers' firms able to assist asylum seekers, from over 500 in 2001 to fewer than 240 in 2009, so that more and more asylum seekers are forced to conduct their own appeals.

But now governments are erecting a number of new barriers aimed at limiting legal interventions. In each country the barriers may be different but the overall intention is the same: to close off detention centres from organisations that might play an advocacy role. In Austria, where the Aliens Law Amendment Act 2009 reduced the period for appealing against rejection decisions from two weeks to one week,<sup>40</sup> access to justice is limited through policies that impose a territorial restriction on asylum seekers while applications are pending and then go on to isolate them in remote areas, where legal support is non-existent.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, contracts to provide social assistance in these isolated reception centres are limited to one government-funded human rights association (which has been criticized by AI and NGOs for its lack of independence). In Greece, NGOs providing legal assistance to asylum seekers, including those in detention, told AI that the fact that the authorities were delaying payments to them under the European Refugee Fund was leading to serious difficulties, including the loss of the key services of lawyers and interpreters.<sup>42</sup> In France, the NGO CIMADE, which previously provided counselling and legal advice for foreigners inside detention centres, was marginalised after the government put its contract out to tender. The contract was subsequently divided among several agencies (some of them entirely government-funded)<sup>43</sup> which were then placed under a contractual obligation to carry out the work bound by principles of 'neutrality and confidentiality'.<sup>44</sup> (This new clause appears to be an attempt to gag those who speak out against poor conditions, institutional neglect and human rights abuses inside detention centres.) There are also concerns in France about the proposed abolition of the National Commission on Ethics and Security (Commission

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Nationale de Déontologie de la Sécurité –CNDS), and the children’s guardian, both of which had demonstrated a significant degree of independence from the state and had intervened in the case of unlawful actions against children held at airports, and their replacement by a general rights defender. The new rights guardian will be appointed by the Council of Ministers and as such will lack independence, according to NGOs.

In Ireland, NGOs are currently challenging the introduction of new legislation that would allow the state to deport people without any prior notice, thereby preventing them from accessing justice (the current law allows people fifteen days to present their case before they can be deported). The situation is all the more desperate still in the UK where there have been large cuts to the legal aid budget,<sup>45</sup> and where many asylum seekers and irregular migrants attempting to fight deportation orders have been cast out of the legal system following (the government induced) closure of the charity Refugee and Migrant Justice (RMJ) which previously represented 100,000 asylum seekers a year, and was particularly successful in taking UK government forced deportation attempts to judicial review.<sup>46</sup> The isolation and despair these men and women are now suffering was thrown into stark relief at the end of July 2010, when the 27-year-old destitute Iraq-Kurd asylum seeker, **Osman Rasul**, committed suicide by jumping from the seventh floor of a tower block in Nottingham. Rasul, who had arrived in Britain in 2001 claiming he was in danger from Kurdish political factions that controlled Northern Iraq, had been refused permission to stay in Britain but was preparing a fresh claim with RMJ. But when it was forced into administration, he was denied access to legal aid and expert immigration advice. Receiving the letter from the RMJ stating that it could no longer help him was apparently the last straw. He had gone to the Home Office in London, asking them to either ‘send me home or help me’ and had been turned him away.

In some southern European countries, as well as France (which is currently considering whether to establish ad hoc ‘transit zones’ anywhere that migrants are discovered on French territory),<sup>47</sup> there are further concerns over the development of what is described as ‘subsidiary law’. Under this, immigration police and border control agencies are making life and death decisions about the fate of asylum seekers, sometimes using secret procedures and dubious measures that circumvent international law. Already, in Italy, the ‘push-back’

policy was introduced, in complete violation of international law.<sup>48</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW) states that Greece’s asylum system is not only dysfunctional but entirely in the hands of the police, who create obstacles to filing claims and deny asylum seekers fair hearings and assessments, ensuring that deportations are in no way regulated by formal procedures. HRW has singled out for criticism Presidential decree 81/09 that assigned the examination of asylum claims exclusively to police directors and abolished the Appeals Board.<sup>49</sup> The Spanish police, for its part, stand accused of circumventing aspects of Spanish national law, and creating subsidiary law, in direct opposition to an instruction by the Ombudsman (Public Defender) that all circulars and instructions in the field of immigration control be published in official publications to avoid the development of police procedures outside the knowledge of judges and the legal profession. On 25 January 2010, the interior ministry issued a circular on ‘police procedures’ (Circular 1/2010) ordering police to fast-track deportations which should be implemented with ‘maximum brevity’ through procedures which should be as secret as possible so as to avoid any obstacles lawyers might place in the way of a deportation order. This was seen as a way of circumventing aspects of the new Foreign Nationals Act which introduced important safeguards to the deportation procedure.<sup>50</sup>

### **Detention misery**

One reason why states want to place obstacles in the way of advocacy organisations which have a presence in removal centres is to limit the leaking of information about appalling conditions and the growing resistance amongst the detained. In countries where speedy deportation has not been possible, the number of refused asylum seekers detained has overburdened an already overloaded, overcrowded detention estate to such an extent that the centres are quite literally exploding from within. In the last two years, there has been a concerted wave of hunger strikes. No European country has been immune. In many European detention centres, particularly in Italy, Greece and Malta, detainees seem to be in a permanent state of revolt. The authorities would like to deny the scale of the revolt (in the UK, the Home Office still officially denies that a February 2010 hunger strike by around forty women at Yarl’s Wood even took place). But this becomes impossible in cases when detention centres are burnt to the ground or riot police are called in to quell unrest, or when detainees are later

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prosecuted for their part in detention unrest. (**Mohammed El Abbouby**, one of fourteen men convicted of arson following major disturbances at the Via Corelli Centre of Identification and Deportation in Italy in 2009, was, in January 2010, found dead in his cell at San Vittore prison, Milan.)

There is, then, no way of knowing the true extent of the desperation and violence, but in the most serious revolts, information does get into the newspapers. Over the last eighteen months we have noted the following incidents.<sup>51</sup>

■ **January, February 2009, Italy:** At the overcrowded Lampedusa removal centre, where many detainees were forced to sleep outdoors in what has been described as a rubbish-strewn 'tent city', there were two mass break-out attempts. The Lampedusa centre had recently been changed from a reception centre to an expulsion centre, severely aggravating the overcrowding problem. During the revolt, the building was partially destroyed by fire, and forty people treated for smoke inhalation. Lampedusa mayor Bernardino De Rubeis warned of the 'risk of a catastrophe involving the immigrants, the people who work at the detention centre and the island's inhabitants'. The UNHCR said that the 'Lampedusa centre has never previously seen such human fury, such self-harm, or arson attack'.<sup>52</sup>

■ **February, March 2009, Malta:** Policeman and soldiers were drafted in to restore order at Lyster Barracks at Hal Far after mainly Tunisian detainees set their mattresses on fire and were seen dangling dangerously on sheets hanging from third floor windows.<sup>53</sup> Following further disturbances, during which several fires were started and an undisclosed number of migrants escaped, riot police backed by military reinforcements were drafted in to restore order.<sup>54</sup>

■ **March 2009, Netherlands:** Refugee support organisations and Migrant to Migrant radio (m2m) documented a pattern of abuse and brutality at the detention centre at Schiphol airport, near Amsterdam, during a hunger strike protest. It is alleged that armed and masked riot police were brought in to restore order during the hunger strike.<sup>55</sup>

■ **August 2009, Italy:** Following major disturbances at the Via Corelli centre, fourteen people were arrested and accused of arson.<sup>56</sup>

■ **August, September 2009, Greece:** Children who had been on hunger strike clashed with guards after setting fire to mattresses in a detention centre on Mytilene,

capital of Lesbos. The 'uprising' at the centre was described as the 'latest in a series of revolts by immigrants'. Previously, in August, approximately 150 unaccompanied minors went on hunger strike at the Pagani immigration detention centre in Lesbos, protesting against the length and poor conditions of detention. There was a renewed protest in September by unaccompanied minors, mainly from Afghanistan, Somalia and Palestine. The centre was temporarily closed in November.<sup>57</sup>

■ **October 2009, Bulgaria:** Around 200 migrant detainees staged a protest following the death of **Hasun Albaadzh** at the Busmantsi detention centre, near Sofia.

■ **February-March 2010, UK:** Public Interest Lawyers have issued a lawsuit, claiming that a few days into a peaceful hunger strike of over forty women at Yarl's Wood detention centre in Bedfordshire, the women were corralled into a small corridor and subjected to the public order crowd-control technique of 'kettling' as well as physical and racial abuse by staff. Lawyers are fighting a legal battle to gain official recognition that the protest even took place – something the Home Office and the private security firm which runs Yarl's Wood dispute – and to secure an inquiry into claims of violence and racial abuse by guards. Many of the protesters have been deported.<sup>58</sup>

■ **March 2010, Italy:** To mark 1 March and the first strike of migrant labour in Italy, detainees in five detention centres in Milan, Turin, Bologna, Gradisca and Rome went on hunger strike. In the Ponte Galeria detention centre in Rome, where the hunger-strike started, mattresses were set on fire.<sup>59</sup>

■ **April, 2010, UK:** Riot police were called in to restore order at Oakington immigration removal centre following the death of **Eliud Nguli Nyenze**, a 40-year-old man from Kenya. Cambridge Migrant Solidarity said that unrest broke out after detainees, fearing a cover-up, tried to prevent the dead man's body being removed from the centre. Sixty detainees were arrested and/or removed, including the closest friends of the dead man.<sup>60</sup>

■ **May 2010, Spain:** Detainees at the Foreigners' Internment Centre of Zona Franca, Barcelona staged a protest at what they described as structural violence inside the centre following the death of **Mohamed Abagui**.

■ **Summer 2010, Norway:** Arson and unrest occurred



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at several Norwegian detention centres in July 2010. The Fagerli centre in the municipality of Askershus was partially destroyed in a suspected arson attack. Unrest then spread to a centre in the Lier municipality during which three sleeping barracks were destroyed by fire. The sixty-five inmates were then transferred to Stange and Haslemoen in Hedmark. At the Haslemoen centre there were further incidents during which the police were called in and in one week alone the fire brigade was called to the centre on twenty occasions.<sup>61</sup>

■ **August 2010, UK:** A hunger strike involving 147 people started at Campsfield immigration removal centre in Oxfordshire in protest at inmates' prolonged detention (some had been detained for over three years) which they said was leading many to develop mental health problems.<sup>62</sup>

In all the hunger strikes, escape attempts and other protests, the main complaints highlighted by the detained were overcrowding, lack of medical care as well as the total absence of any hope for the future. Kurdish asylum seekers who led the protest in Lier, twenty-three of whom were subsequently arrested, said the conditions were so intolerable that violence was the only answer. In Malta, *Medicins Sans Frontières*, which previously had a presence within the Hal Far centre, issued a statement in March saying that it was pulling out of the centre because staff could no longer operate in such appalling conditions.

### **Institutional neglect, hunger strikes and self-harm**

At least three of the deaths we record in this report occurred after a detainee had been on hunger strike. This is a new phenomenon in our record of deaths. The fact that there are so many hunger strikes is one potent indicator of the stress that the system and its 'inmates' are under. Statistics on hunger strikes are very hard to come by (as are guidelines for the medical care of hunger-strikers), but in Austria the interior ministry has acknowledged that of 5,398 asylum applicants in preventive detention in 2008, 1,549 had been on a hunger strike. It also stated that 1,223 of the 3,923 people who had been in preventive detention between the beginning of January 2009 and August 2009 had, at some point, been on hunger strike a 31 per cent increase. The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights in Vienna pointed out that under Austrian law, asylum seekers and migrants can be held in preventive detention for as long

as ten months. They are held in police holding facilities (*Polizeianhaltezentrum* – PAZ), often dating back to the 19th century, and originally designed to serve a punitive purpose, that are not suitable for long-term detention. The poor conditions, the inadequate medical care and restricted access to legal services, are the reasons so many of those detained go on hunger strike. The European Committee for the Prevention for Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (CPT) has noted that police doctors in Austria lack independence and that this could interfere with their ability to determine whether a detainee on hunger strike is fit for detention. It notes that at the PAZ in Klagenfurt, detainees on hunger strike were punished by being placed in segregation and that facilities for the care of such detainees was inadequate.

And where there are so many hunger strikes, the risk of complications and even death is not far behind, particularly if health is insufficiently monitored by doctors who are independent of the police. **Gaganpreet Singh**, a failed Sikh asylum seeker from India, was just 20-years-old when he died in September 2009 of a heart attack four weeks into a hunger strike. He was being held in preventive custody at Vienna-Hernals police centre. Vienna police said that an initial investigation showed no clear connection between the hunger strike and the heart attack, but further tests were ordered to ascertain whether the cardiac arrest was linked to the hunger strike. Asylum rights groups have voiced serious doubts about the medical care he received in detention. In Germany, too, the authorities have attempted to delink the suicide of a young man from Georgia, who feared deportation under the Dublin regulations, from the medical care he received during his hunger strike. The age of **David Mardiani** has been disputed, so it is not clear whether he was a minor. He committed suicide at the Hahnöfersand juvenile detention centre on 7 March 2010. The Hamburg refugee support organisation, which called for an independent inquiry into his suicide, claims that institutional neglect and sub-standard medical care in the detention centre hospital (due to financial cuts), as well the systematic denial of the young asylum seeker's legal rights whilst in detention, all contributed to his suicide.

Structural violence, denial of medical care, institutional neglect: these are the pressing concerns of the detained all over Europe. (Similar concerns, particularly about standards of medical care are also mounting in reception centres. See the cases of an **unnamed**

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**Ivorian** asylum seeker and **Yahya Tabbabi** in Belgium.)<sup>63</sup> We have linked eleven of the thirty-eight cases we document to allegations of medical neglect. But it should also be borne in mind that medical neglect was also cited as a contributory factor in the eight suicides that took place in detention (as well as in one reception centre) in the period under review. Taken together, the twenty-one cases clearly demonstrate the institutionalised neglect which is pervasive throughout the detention estate. The neglect of the medical care of detainees encompasses a range of issues – from inadequate diet,<sup>64</sup> leading in some detention centres to malnutrition, and restricted access to clean water and toilet facilities; unhygienic detention conditions breeding endemic disease;<sup>65</sup> lack of doctors, medicines, treatment and psychological support; inadequate suicide prevention measures and of clear guidelines on how to care for the health of hunger strikers. In one case in Sweden, **Mir Abbas Safari**, an Afghan asylum seeker, who greatly feared persecution if returned to Afghanistan, on account of his sexuality, tried to kill himself by setting himself on fire. He was prosecuted for arson and sentenced to a five-year jail term.<sup>66</sup> When Mir Abbas Safari was released early and taken into police custody for deportation, he committed suicide by hanging himself from a sheet in a prison cell.

There is evidence that incidents of self-harm or threatened suicide are being seen from a security/control perspective, compounding the problems of the seriously ill. Those who self-harm in detention can be viewed by the authorities as problem detainees threatening the peaceful running of the detention centre. One response is to isolate 'the offender', thereby aggravating his/her suicidal feelings. **Slawik C**, a 58-year-old asylum seeker from Armenia who committed suicide in a deportation prison in Lower Saxony, had been placed in an isolation cell and treated with anti-psychotic drugs after suffering an emotional crisis. And SOS Racismo in Spain believes that isolation was a contributory factor in the suicide of **Mohamed Abagui** in a Barcelona detention centre. Another response is force. The Everyone Group in Italy has documented the violent response of the authorities to an incident of self-harm at the Bari Palese Centre for Identification and Expulsion (CIE). When a young man started to shout, protest and self-harm by cutting himself in the middle of the night, the guards responded by rushing at him and beating him with a truncheon. He was eventually removed from his cell on a stretcher.<sup>67</sup>

Other cases we document draw attention to the lack of access to appropriate medication in detention. As we were concluding research for this paper, news came of the death of **Zahara Bare**, a 32-year-old pregnant Somali asylum seeker at an asylum centre in the Netherlands. It is alleged that her medical condition was totally neglected and that she was abandoned on a mattress in the hallway, with no attempt to call an ambulance. In Bulgaria, **Hasun Albaadzh**, a Syrian asylum seeker held for three years at the Busmantsi detention centre, near Sofia, suffered from chronic illnesses, yet despite his urgent need for specialist care was only treated with painkillers. Following his death in October 2009, Iliana Sarova, director of the refugee and migrants programme at the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, commented that 'alongside protracted periods of detention, malnutrition and lack of psychological support, one of the most recurrent problems reported by detainees is extremely poor levels of medical care, lack of medicines and treatment'. In two other cases we document, in Belgium (**Yahya bin Mbarek Tabbabi**) and Italy (**Mohammed El Abbouby**) the authorities claimed that the detainees were 'drug addicts' who died of either substance abuse or a drugs overdose. It is disturbing that the authorities' version of events is taken as fact, without proper investigation. In both cases, family and campaigners dispute the authorities' simplistic explanation of the deaths. (But whatever the truth, it needs to be pointed out that if detainees are not properly treated with the correct medication, if they are subjected to prolonged periods of detention which is itself destructive of mental health, then no one should be surprised if they turn to forms of self-medication to erase their pain and deal with their misery.)

The cases we researched show that poor medical care is not confined to detention centres. In Belgium, the Human Rights League has called for a full independent investigation into the death by 'natural causes' of a seriously ill **asylum seeker from the Ivory Coast** who arrived at a reception centre in Charleroi totally mute and refusing to eat, and yet was not psychologically assessed.

But it should also be underlined, that in many other cases, doctors, and organisations representing medical professionals, make enormous efforts to care for their sick patients, only to come up against the iron will of the immigration authorities. As we have already noted, the Association of Independent Doctors in Switzerland was

quick to draw attention to the levels of stress engendered by the forced deportation of Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa. The Association, which is critical of the government's plan to legitimise forced deportations by placing medical teams on board deportation flights, has stated that it would be against a doctor's ethical code to take part in any forced deportation attempt. And in the UK, Medical Justice, a network of doctors, lawyers and ex-detainees, campaigns against inadequate health provision in immigration detention and the structural violence of forced deportations,<sup>68</sup> and assists around 1,000 detainees each year. Individual doctors have also spoken out. Ulf Horlyk was the doctor of 25-year-old Fathia Ahmed Omar, a rape survivor who was recovering from surgery when she was deported from Norway to Italy under the Dublin regulations alongside her 6-year-old son, Munir. He took the decision to travel to Genoa to be able to continue to treat both mother and son, both of whom had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Once there, he pleaded for their return to Norway, adding that while he was not interested in immigration policy as such, he could have no respect for an asylum system that would not allow the return of a sick person to Norway for continuity of specialist treatment.<sup>69</sup>

### Alarming patterns

In addition to finding deaths from hunger strikes, another feature in our catalogue of deaths is just how many of the dead are young men, under the age of thirty. We continue to see relatively young men dying of heart attacks (**Jonson Ibitui**, **Hasun Albaadzh**, **Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa** and, although not officially confirmed, **Eliud Nguli Nyenze**) or committing suicide following prolonged periods of meaningless incarceration. We also document the suicides of three women (**Yeni P**, Germany; an **unnamed Tunisian woman** and a **Brazilian transsexual**, both in Italy).

As in previous reports, we record allegations that deaths arose after emergency and life-threatening situations were ignored, that there was a failure to render assistance to those seriously ill and pleading for medical intervention, and note repeated patterns of violence against detainees. According to detainees, the 'riot' at Oakington detention centre occurred after **Eliud Nguli Nyenze's** repeated pleas to see a doctor and be given painkillers were ignored; he was seen 'crawling around the floor in pain' but when fellow detainees called an ambulance, they claim the detention centre staff turned

it away.<sup>70</sup> From the perspective of detainees, this is a depressingly familiar pattern. In June 2008, France's largest detention centre, at Vincennes, Paris, burned down a day after the death of Tunisian detainee Salem Souli. Souli was a certified asthma sufferer who died the day after his request to be hospitalised was ignored. Detainees state that the police's heavy-handed response to a silent protest over his death (during which some detainees were sprayed with tear gas) led to the violence that followed.<sup>71</sup> More recently, in August 2009, there were protests at the Ponte Galeria CIE in Rome after allegations that a young Algerian transferred from the Bari Palese, suffering from a serious heart condition, was placed in a special isolation cell and beaten after asking for the medication he needed to keep him alive. When he returned to the general area of detention, he was covered in blood and bruises and was subsequently taken to hospital. A number of fellow Algerians, who asked for news of his condition, were then placed in isolation.<sup>72</sup>

### Identifying future trends

Particular categories of asylum seekers are now emerging as particularly vulnerable in the climate of accelerating deportations.

### Unaccompanied minors

Young people are increasingly being subjected to force in removals.<sup>73</sup> And, for the first time since the IRR started monitoring asylum and immigration-related deaths, we are seeing teenagers, often the most resilient in asylum and migrant communities, committing suicide in reception facilities where they are parentless, alone and psychologically traumatised. (Two such deaths, one of a **16-year-old Iraqi boy**, occurred in Sweden.) These teenage deaths and many other shocking suicide attempts (like that of 18-year-old Lorraine Thulambo, who tried to hang herself in Yarls Wood<sup>74</sup> and that of a 16-year-old Afghan boy who suffered critical burns to his torso and head when he set himself on fire at a reception centre in Narvik, Norway),<sup>75</sup> need to be set alongside the routine neglect of young people's mental health needs. Unaccompanied minors, often deeply disturbed by the circumstances of their flight, are not being given adequate access to mental health services in Europe. Many of them fear that under the Dublin regulations<sup>76</sup> they will be deported to another European country where, despite the provisions of the EU Reception Directive, there are poor systems of guardianship, limit-

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ed reception facilities and they could end up destitute, in prostitution, or forcibly deported to their homeland. (In many countries, such as Sweden and in the past, the UK, neither the children nor their guardians receive any prior warning of the arrival of the deportation police.) In Finland, the Helsinki Deaconess Research Institute is carrying out a major study of the mental health needs of severely traumatised refugee children, including former child soldiers and rape victims. According to its preliminary findings, 25 per cent of such children display alarming trauma-related symptoms, while only 7 per cent of these children receive any care.<sup>77</sup>

Information on suicide attempts amongst young people is hard to obtain. Indeed, the UK Home Office has admitted that it does not record suicide attempts of young people, and that records of the number of self-harm incidents that require medical treatment do not differentiate between adults and minors.<sup>78</sup> Medical professionals and NGOs are the only ones attempting to document incidents of severe depression and self-harm amongst unaccompanied children faced with deportation. This seems to have reached crisis levels in the Swedish town of Malmö, where children, informed that they will be deported under the Dublin regulations to countries such as Malta and Romania, have developed extreme symptoms of self-injurious behaviour; they stop eating, cut themselves and in one incident a young boy attempted to jump off a balcony.<sup>79</sup> In another incident in Eskilstuna, a 17-year-old Iraqi boy locked himself into his room, drenched himself and the furniture with lighter fluid and set himself on fire. Crisis experts were called in to persuade the boy against his suicide bid and he was subsequently placed in a hospital psychiatric care unit.<sup>80</sup> The Swedish government was forced to back-track in another Dublin case. This involved Nimo, a 14-year-old pregnant Somali girl. She was living in a detention centre in Gothenburg but ran away fearing deportation to Italy, the European country where she first ended up, aged 12, destitute on the streets. Her social worker had pleaded for a more humane response to a girl who was alone, ill and whose health, as well as that of her baby, was being placed at risk by the callous attitude of the authorities. But in the UK, a 16-year-old Eritrean girl, was not so lucky. She had been raped and also forced to work as a prostitute in Italy but was seized in a dawn raid, returned to Italy, with no attempts made to ensure she was supported on arrival. This case is now the subject of a judicial review in the UK.<sup>81</sup>

There is, however, a new threat to these young people's health and safety. In 2009-2010, the courts in a number of European countries, most notably Sweden, Norway<sup>82</sup> and Germany, have challenged the deportation of unaccompanied children to Greece via the Dublin regulations. One way for governments to bypass the inconvenience of legal judgements that set limits to the deportation of children has been found in the EU's new common approach to unaccompanied minors, most notably the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council proposal to foster special returns programmes for unaccompanied minors. Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK have all announced plans to identify suitable care centres in Iraq and Afghanistan. In June, it emerged that the UKBA plans to set up a £4 million 'reintegration' centre in Kabul.<sup>83</sup> This is basically a re-run of its 2006 plan to construct and fund orphanages in countries of origin in order to justify the return of children to some of the most violent regions of the world, or countries where child trafficking is rife. The children's rights lobby then pointed out that state-run orphanages were phased out in western Europe long ago, in recognition of the degrading conditions, neglect, abuse (sometimes sexual) that vulnerable children experienced in such institutions.

### **The elderly and the seriously ill**

The elderly and the seriously ill, some of whom are not asylum applicants but have come in on visits and subsequently applied for residence permits to live alongside relatives in Europe, are also extremely vulnerable to emotional and physical abuse in the current climate. This is for two reasons. First, the acceleration of deportations has been accompanied by a decline in the numbers of people being granted exceptional leave to remain in Europe on humanitarian grounds. Second, there has been a major attack across Europe on family reunification rights. In a number of particularly harsh judgements, seriously ill elderly people have been issued with deportation orders. For example, in Finland, Eveline Fadayal, a 64-year-old grandmother from Egypt, who doctors say is no longer capable of caring for herself, was issued with a deportation order. Her husband died two years ago, and her sons, who are Finnish citizens and have lived in Finland for seventeen years, are the only ones who can take care of her. Her case and that of 82-year-old Russian grandmother Irina Antonova, who is wheelchair-bound and in poor health, have become causes celebres in Finland, with protesters challenging



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the immigration authorities' ruling that grandparents are not a part of the nuclear family. Such was the uproar, that the law is likely to be changed in 2011, but not soon enough to protect these two vulnerable grandmothers from deportation.<sup>84</sup>

Faouzie Khoury, a 76-year-old asylum seeker from the Lebanon who is dying of lung cancer, was threatened with deportation from Sweden despite the fact that her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren live in the country. Khoury spends most of her time in bed due to pain and breathing difficulties and requires assistance with everyday tasks. A medical certificate confirmed that in no circumstances could she be deemed fit to travel to the Lebanon. The Migration Board said that while deportations on health grounds can be stayed in exceptional circumstances, Faouzie Khoury's ill-health did not constitute an exceptional circumstance.<sup>85</sup>

Similar inhumane and incomprehensible decision-making by the Swedish authorities led to the arrest of a rejected asylum seeker from Kosovo with no functioning kidneys when he reported to hospital for dialysis,<sup>86</sup> and the attempted deportation to Nigeria of John Olasupo, a 28-year-old man with Parkinson's disease, who was no longer able to change his clothes or feed himself. (The Migration Board said that deportation rulings cannot be overturned simply because someone is dying.)<sup>87</sup> A terminally-ill 2-year-old girl, who suffers from a rare condition which makes it impossible for her to digest food has been threatened with deportation to the Lebanon.<sup>88</sup> That such decisions, made by bureaucrats who seem to have lost all powers of human empathy, should occur in Sweden, a country that was once renowned for its Social Democratic values, is profoundly depressing. But as the writer and refugee rights advocate Sanna Vestin has pointed out, these cases take place against a New Right orthodoxy on issues of welfare and human rights. In Sweden, it is argued that if 'a country's resources belong to its citizens', 'it is only natural to exclude the undocumented from social support and even, to argue that human rights must be earned'. Sanna Vestin believes that if such regressive thinking is to be challenged 'we need to emphasise that the welfare state also shelters human rights, and this we do by collective means.'<sup>89</sup>

***Thanks to Frances Webber, Jonathan Burnett (Medical Justice), Natasha Dhumma (United for Intercultural Action) and Sara Cerretelli (COPSE) for their help in preparing this article.***

The following organisations are attempting to monitor on a European-wide level the number of asylum and migration related deaths

#### **United for Intercultural Action**

Postbus 413  
NL-1000 AK Amsterdam  
Netherlands  
[www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org)  
[info@unitedagainstracism.org](mailto:info@unitedagainstracism.org)

#### **Migreurop**

CICP  
21ter, rue Voltaire F-75011 Paris  
France  
[www.migreurop.org/](http://www.migreurop.org/)

#### **PICUM**

Gaucheretstraat 164  
1030 Brussels – Belgium  
[www.picum.org](http://www.picum.org)  
[info@picum.org](mailto:info@picum.org)

#### **Institute of Race Relations**

2-6 Leeke Street  
London WC1X 9HS  
UK  
[www.irr.org.uk](http://www.irr.org.uk)  
[info@irr.org.uk](mailto:info@irr.org.uk)

#### **See also the following websites**

[www.fortresseurope.blogspot.com/](http://www.fortresseurope.blogspot.com/)  
[www.no-racism.net](http://www.no-racism.net)

## Endnotes

**1** The UK, which already has the largest network of immigration detention centres in Europe, has announced plans to double the capacity of Harmondsworth, near Heathrow. If the plan goes ahead, it would make it the largest processing and deportation centre in Europe (630 detainees would be held at any one time), with the new block built to higher security prison standards. The UK is also collaborating with France to build a new detention centre in Calais to replace an existing temporary centre. France is also funding, to the tune of €20M, the erection of a new detention centre in its overseas territory of Mayotte, and Spain has recently completed construction of a Foreigner Internment Centre at Zaragoza. The purpose of this 200-capacity centre is to ease overcrowding in existing internment centres.

**2** €1,770 million is allocated to what is described as 'integration of third country nationals', but this turns out to include spending on 'developing common admissions procedures', which appears to include visas and testing intending migrants.

**3** The breakdown of statistics was provided by Jonathan Burnett and Frances Webber. For more on the solidarity and management of migration flows programme and funds see <[http://www.2007-2013.eu/by\\_scope\\_solidarity.php](http://www.2007-2013.eu/by_scope_solidarity.php)>

**4** The number of irregular migrants apprehended at EU borders is down by 50 per cent since Italy introduced its 'push-back' policy. Eurodac showed a rise of 62.3 per cent in apprehensions of irregular migrants at EU borders between 2007 and 2008, but in 2009 the numbers halved. In Italy, only 7,300 apprehensions were recorded in 2009 compared to 32,052 in 2008 - less than a quarter - and figures for the first quarter of 2010 show a 96 per cent drop compared with the same period of 2009. Irregular migration to Spain by sea dropped from 7,068 to 1,994 - just over a quarter. Greece now has the highest number of irregular migrants - 60 per cent of all those coming to Europe. See *EUObserver*, 3 August 2010.

**5** United for Intercultural Action has a table documenting basic information on known deaths. <<http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/>>. Another useful source of information is the blogspot, Fortress Europe <[http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/02/immigrants-dead-at-frontiers-of-europe\\_16.html](http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/02/immigrants-dead-at-frontiers-of-europe_16.html)>

**6** See Leanne Webber and Sharon Pickering, *Globalisation and Borders: death at the global frontier*, Palgrave, forthcoming, 2011.

**7** *Migration News Sheet*, May, June, July 2010.

**8** An estimated 120 Somali asylum seekers are currently awaiting the results of a review of a March 2010 ruling by the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board that Mogadishu is safe for returns.

**9** The Left party and the Greens won a public hearing on the

proposed forced deportations, pointing to the statement of the local office of UNICEF/UNHCR that returns to Kosovo are not sustainable.

**10** <[http://www.proasyl.de/de/news/detail/news/immer\\_mehr\\_abschiebungen\\_in\\_den\\_kosovo/back/764/](http://www.proasyl.de/de/news/detail/news/immer_mehr_abschiebungen_in_den_kosovo/back/764/)>

**11** For a poignant description of the difficulties such children face in Kosovo, see 'Kosovo hurdles for Roma kids expelled from Germany', *AFP*, 19 August 2010.

**12** It was the Italian government which first started this, though ostensibly it was Romanians who were targeted for removal, and not specifically Romanian Roma. Italy's emergency decree to expel or imprison economically inactive EU citizens was condemned by the European Commission for violating EU directives. Initially, in Summer 2010 when the French embarked on exactly the same procedure, but this time targeting Romanian and Bulgarian Roma, there was no protest from the Commission. But after a memo from France's interior ministry was leaked to the press, confirming that the French police were instructed to specifically target the Roma for accelerated removals, the European Commission Vice President and Commissioner for Justice called on the European Commission to take legal action against France.

The French action against Roma followed disturbances in Grenoble and Saint Aignan, in the Loire Valley, the shooting dead of two young Travellers, one of whom was a Roma, and confrontations with police. President Sarkozy ordered the dismantling of 300 camping sites occupied by Travellers and Roma, leading to the expulsion of Romanian Roma on board specially chartered flights. (The French deny these are expulsions describing it instead as a 'voluntary returns procedure'.) It is estimated that a total of 805 Roma will have left France by the end of August 2010. Following the French initiative, the Italian interior minister, Roberto Maroni suggested that a new EU citizen expulsion policy should be introduced allowing for the mandatory expulsion of EU citizens who are unable to support themselves. Other countries, such as Denmark, have also targeted Romanian Roma for expulsion. The UK has adopted a coercive expulsions policy towards homeless east Europeans and many of these policies target the Roma.

**13** See 'Urgent Appeal to the Norwegian government to stop the deportation of Kurdish activist Abdulkarim Hossain to Syria', initiated by International Support Kurds in Syria Association and others, 18 August 2010.

**14** For a critique of Frontex's expanded role see AI and ECRE *Briefing on the Commission proposal for a Regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) 2007/2004 establishing a European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX)*, September 2010.

**15** Statistics from *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19 August 2010, as cited by UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines.

**16** *Migration News Sheet*, January 2009.

**17** In an interview with *France Info*, a police officer revealed that small rented planes, with a maximum capacity of fifteen, were being used for deportations involving children who were supported by activists. The RESF network documented a case of a Georgian family who was deported on one such plane, piloted by a policeman from a small aerodrome on the outskirts of Lyon (rather than from the main airport next to the detention centre where the family was held). <<http://www.france-info.com/france-justice-police-2010-08-06-sans-papiers-des-petits-avions-pour-des-expulsions-plus-discretes-473175-9-11.html>>

**18** A Freedom of Information Act request by *The Independent* newspaper revealed that charter flights cost the UKBA more than £10m in the past financial year. In the same period, the cost of removing people on scheduled flights increased to £18m. See Billy Kenber, 'Abused, humiliated and abandoned. What really happens when the UK deports failed asylum seekers', *The Independent*, 5 July 2010.

**19** *Ibid.*

**20** See statement from Cork Anti-Racism Network.

**21** Some insight into the police operation on the deportation flight that led to the death of Chiakwa was given to a Swiss newspaper by two other deportees, named only as Julius and Emmanuel. They said that a group of sixteen Nigerians were taken to Zurich airport at about 10pm where they were met by sixty police officers who 'shackled our feet, knees, hands, hips, arms and torso and made us wear a helmet like those worn by boxers'. Julius said that he was tied to a chair and carried onto the plane by police officers, who then removed him from the chair and tied him to the airplane seat. (Two sympathetic police officers from the Canton where they were accommodated then released them.) See also Swiss Refugee Council report to UNCAT, April 2010.

**22** 'Deportation flights resume to Africa', *Swissinfo*, 4 July 2010.

**23** Samson Chukwu died in May 2001. Following Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa's death, all forced deportation flights were temporarily cancelled, but resumed again to all countries, save Nigeria on 21 May 2010. Following the investigation into Chiakwa's death, which concluded that he died of a heart attack exacerbated by a recent hunger strike, deportations to African countries were resumed.

<[http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/internal\\_affairs/Deportation\\_flights@to\\_resume\\_to-Africa.html?cid=15351866](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/internal_affairs/Deportation_flights@to_resume_to-Africa.html?cid=15351866)>

**24** The six Nigerians were Samson Chukwu (1991, Switzerland); Marcus Omofuma (1993, Germany); Kola Bankole (1994, Germany); Semira Adamu (1998, Belgium); Osamuyi Aikpitanhi (2007, Spain) and Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa (2010, Switzerland). See *The deportation machine: Europe, asylum and human rights*, IRR, 2005; 'Europe's Shame: a report on 105 deaths linked to racism or govern-

ment migration and asylum policies', *European Race Bulletin* no. 66, Winter 2009.

**25** As reported at <<http://www.lavanguardia.es/>>, 18 June 2009. The video was apparently recorded by a passenger embarking on the flight to Senegal. It was made public by the Federation of Immigrant and Refugee Organisations.

**26** The views of the director and the criticisms to his statement were documented in *Solidarité sans Frontières*, no. 2, May 2010.

**27** UNHCR guidelines state that Iraqi asylum applicants originating from Iraq's governorates of Baghdad, Diyala, Ninewa and Salah-al-Din and Kirkuk province, should continue to benefit from international protection because of the volatile security situation, high levels of violence and human rights abuses. UNHCR eligibility guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of Iraqi asylum-seekers, May 2009, Iraqi update, August 2010.

**28** Swedish Radio, 15 July 2010 as cited in UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines.

**29** BBC World Service, 19 August 2010 as cited in UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines.

**30** The public prosecutor had argued that as 'Church Asylum' could only be banned if it were proved that its aims were in violation of the law, it made more sense to prosecute individual members. Another newly established organisation, the 'Support Committee for Hidden Refugees' had its bank account frozen after the bank ruled that its aims were in violation of Danish law. (UNHCR and Baltic Headlines 16-17 September 2009).

**31** See Owen Boycott, 'Iraqis claim abuse and assault after failed deportation', *Guardian*, 18 October 2010.

**32** UNHCR has repeatedly warned that European states are undermining the international system for the protection of refugees in other parts of the world by setting a poor example to countries neighbouring Iraq which shelter hundreds of thousands of refugees, and that the February 2008 memorandum of understanding signed between Sweden and Iraq could not guarantee the safety of the returned Iraqis as the Iraqi government lacked the capacity to do this. There have been further criticisms of the deportation of Iraqi religious minorities such as Christians and homosexuals.

**33** Despite reports from UNHCR and AI concerning the level of violence in Mogadishu, as well as several judgements in the European Court, the Dutch authorities have signed a readmission agreement with the Somali transitional government and are preparing to return Somali asylum seekers to Mogadishu. *ECRE Weekly Bulletin*, 11 June 2010.

**34** UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines 9-11 January 2010.

**35** See 'Europe's Shame: A report on 105 deaths linked to racism or government migration and asylum policies', *European Race Bulletin* no. 66, Winter 2009.

**36** See 'Europe's Shame', *op.cit.*

**37** The EU Procedures Directive of 2005 institutionalised

accelerated procedures for a wide range of claims including those from so-called 'safe countries of origin', which could include 'non-suspensive appeals' whereby refused claimants could appeal only after leaving the country and permitted member states to deport asylum seekers to 'safe third countries' without considering their claims. In the UK, in 2007, automatic deportation was introduced for persons committing crimes for which they were sent to prison for a year or more, with no appeal rights except on asylum or human rights grounds. In Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain, legal safeguards against expulsion have been curtailed in new administrative measures.

**38** AI, *Greece Irregular migrants and asylum-seekers routinely detained in substandard conditions*, July 2010. AI Index: EUR 25/002/2010.

**39** <<http://cajpe.org.pe/gep/>> 30.6.10.

**40** See Joint submission by AGENDA Asyl for the 10th session of the UPR Working Group in January 2011.

**41** SOS Mitmensch states that there has been a steady build-up of measures to isolate asylum seekers from community support networks. Asylum reception centres are built up to 50km outside major cities, far away from NGOs which could provide legal support. And a Law of Obligatory Residence is also being introduced, akin to the system practised in Germany, whereby asylum seekers are prevented from leaving their area of registration.

**42** AI, *Greece, Irregular migrants and asylum-seekers routinely detained in substandard conditions*, July 2010. AI Index: EUR 25/002/2010.

**43** For instance, the funding of ASSFAM (Association Service Social Familial Migrants) comes almost entirely from government sources and it works closely with government departments including the ministry for immigration, and official bodies such as the HALDE (Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité).

**44** In May 2009, immigration minister Eric Besson warned CIMADE that if it continued with its criticisms of detention conditions it would risk having its state funding withdrawn as it could not continue 'permanently biting and spitting on the hands that feeds it'.

**45** The Justice Ministry proposes to cut 25 per cent from its civil legal aid budget. In 2009, a tenth of this budget was spent on asylum and immigration cases.

**46** In June 2010, Refugee and Migrant Justice was forced into administration after the new Conservative-Liberal government refused to pay the £2m owed for work already done under its contract with the Legal Services Commission until each of the cases involved was finished – a process which frequently takes years. Another move by the new government, introduced at the same time as it promised to end child detention, was aimed at speeding up deportations, this time of families. According to a leak of the new policy, families are to be given a two-week ultimatum to leave the

country, sometimes without being given a specific date or time to get ready. 'Children in immigration centres face deportation within weeks', *Guardian*, 5 August 2010.

**47** 'Transit zones' (*zones d'attente*) are not considered to be part of French territory and anyone detected in such a zone would not be able to claim asylum, according to the government, although this is contrary to the Refugee Convention and to the European Court of Human Rights' judgment in the case of *Amuur v France*.

**48** Frontex director Ilkka Laitinen acknowledged in August 2010 that those intercepted in Frontex operations in the Mediterranean and off the west coast of Africa were given no opportunity to claim asylum, something he said European governments had to deal with. (Euroasylum monthly interview, September 2010.)

**49** The Greek Council for Refugees reported in May 2010 that as a result of these procedures, only forty of the 700 who registered as asylum seekers each month were admitted to the asylum procedure, *Migration News Sheet*, July 2010. See also Human Rights Watch, press release, 12 October 2009.

**50** <<http://www.heraldo.es/>>, 8 February 2010.

**51** One of the most significant detention revolts in recent years occurred at the Vincennes centre in France in June 2009 with disturbances breaking out following the death of Salem Souli, a Tunisian detainee, following alleged medical neglect. In March 2010, ten former detainees of the Vincennes detention centre were given prison terms of between eight months and three years for their role in the disturbances at the centre. Migreurop monitored the trial and concluded, alongside defence lawyers (who walked out of the proceedings after the fourth of eight hearings), that the convictions were unsafe, pointing out that, among other things, evidence was selected almost exclusively by the police (including edited and inconclusive video recordings) and that no opportunity was provided to consider detention conditions, overcrowding and police violence as a cause of the disturbances. See Yasha Maccanico, 'France: Ten convictions over Vincennes detention fire', *Statewatch* (Volume 20, no 1, 2010).

**52** *Kronos International*, 18, 19 February 2009.

**53** *Times of Malta*, 19 February 2009.

**54** *Earth Times*, 23 March 2009.

**55** PRIME press release, 'Unveiling the truth in the Netherlands: attack on hunger strikers inside Amsterdam's Schiphol airport detention centre' by Helen Hintjens. <<http://www.theporcupine.org/>>

**56** Information from Solidarity report, polisson blogspot <<http://polisson.blogspot.de/>>.

**57** *Observer*, 27 September 2009, AI World Report.

**58** Karen McVeigh 'Asylum seekers win new strength to fight after Yarl's Wood hunger strike', *Guardian*, 2 August 2010.

**59** UK *Indymedia*, 'Detainee hunger strikes and arrests in Italy', 9 March 2010.



- 60** *Guardian*, 16 April 2010, Cambridge Migrant Solidarity <<http://cambridgemigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/>>.
- 61** UNHCR & Baltic Nordic Headlines, 6-7, 14 July 2010, 17 August 2010.
- 62** *Guardian*, 4 August 2010.
- 63** As we were finalising this report, we also learnt of the death in August 2010 of a 28-year-old asylum seeker from the DRC in the Glenvera hostel, Cork, one of Ireland's network of fifty asylum accommodation centres across the state. It also emerged that at least forty-seven asylum seekers have died in Ireland while living in direct provision centres over the past decade. No records are kept by the Reception and Integration Agency on cause of death in these cases. See *Irish Times*, 31 August 2010.
- 64** The Everyone Group states that the food in Italian detention centres is rank and often contains maggots and dead flies.
- 65** In many parts of southern Europe, filthy conditions, lack of toilets and showers and the fact that bed linen is never washed are factors behind mass outbreaks of skin diseases. A fact-finding mission by the Hellenic League of Human Rights of Thessalonica to detention centres in Evros and Rodopi drew attention to the presence of rats and cockroaches and concluded that detention conditions at the Venna (Rodopi) centre were reminiscent of 'cages from the Middle Ages'. See *Rapport de la ligue grecque des droits de l'homme sur les structures de detention des immigrants sans documents de voyage et de séjour, dans les départements frontaliers de Rodopi et d'Evros en Grèce*.
- 66** We came across a similar prosecution in Sweden, involving a 28-year-old asylum seeker from Kosovo, who in April 2010 set himself on fire outside the Migration Board offices in Alvesta. But although the asylum seeker was prosecuted for arson, he was acquitted after the court accepted his defence that he only ever intended to hurt himself. Sverges TV, 5 May 2010, as cited in UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines.
- 67** 'Serious cases of abuse taking place in the Italian CIEs', 23 September 2009. <<http://www.everyonegroup.com>>
- 68** See *Outsourcing Abuse - The use and misuse of state-sanctioned force during the detention and removal of asylum seekers* by Birnberg Peirce & Partners, Medical Justice and NCADC. This report, that documented over 300 cases, led to an official investigation.
- 69** *Aftenposten*, 24 March 2010, as cited in UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines.
- 70** As reported in *Guardian*, 16 April 2010.
- 71** Following his death, Souli's mother, who says the family were not properly informed, filed a complaint for 'withholding information, manslaughter due to a failure to comply with security duties, and failure to provide assistance'. Cimade and the Franco-Tunisian organisation Fédération des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des deux Rives (FTCR) will be civil plaintiffs in the case. See Yasha Maccanico 'France: Ten convictions over Vincennes detention centre fire', *Statewatch*, Vol 20, no 1, 2010.
- 72** 'Serious abuse reported in connection with the treatment of an Algerian', Everyone Group, 6 August 2010.
- 73** Following a freedom of information request by the Children's Rights Alliance for England, the Home Office confirmed that force had been used on several occasions to remove young people under 18 years of age from the UK.
- 74** 'Asylum seeker in hanging bid', *The Star* (South Yorkshire), 19 February 2009. In the UK, symptoms of extreme depression have also been found amongst children detained in family units. The organisation Medical Justice carried out the first large scale exploration in the UK of the physical and psychological harms caused and aggravated by the detention of children for immigration purposes, considering 141 cases, involving children who were detained between 2004 and April 2010. Seventy four children were reported to have been psychologically harmed as a result of being detained. Symptoms included bed wetting and loss of bowel control, heightened anxiety, food refusal, withdrawal and disinterest, and persistent crying. Thirty four children exhibited signs of development regression, and six children expressed suicidal ideation either whilst or after they were detained. Three girls attempted to end their own lives. Medical Justice, *State Sponsored Cruelty: Children in immigration detention*, 2010.
- 75** UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines, 5-6 November 2009.
- 76** The infomobile project has created an on-line diary about refugees who have been returned to Greece under the Dublin II regulations. See <<http://w2eu.net/>>
- 77** UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines, 24-28 June 2010.
- 78** Information supplied on the Home Office website following a Freedom of Information request by the Children's Rights Alliance for England. See Emma Ginn 'UKBA: incidents of PCC use in IRCs', Medical Justice Newsletter. <<http://www.medicaljustice.org.uk/content/view/1382/80/>>
- 79** UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines, 5 July 2009, 27 February-1 March 2010, 8-9 June 2010.
- 80** UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines, 14 August 2010.
- 81** *Independent*, 11 April 2010. Lawyer Liz Barratt, Bindmans.
- 82** While judicial interventions in Norway were aimed at preventing the return of unaccompanied minors, Norway currently has one of the highest rates in Europe of deportation to Greece under the Dublin regulations and in the first six months of 2010, 196 asylum seekers were returned to Greece, a country which has no credible asylum policy. *Dagbladet*, 30 July 2010, as cited in UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines, 31-July-2 August 2010.
- 83** 'UK to deport child asylum seekers to Afghanistan', *Guardian*, 7 June 2010.
- 84** These ongoing cases continue to be extensively covered in the summaries provided by the UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines.

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**85** *Hallands Nyheter*, 16 June, 8 August 2009.

**86** *Migration News Sheet*, May 2010.

**87** The Nigerian authorities refused to grant him entry and he was returned to Sweden where he was hospitalised after developing blood clots in the lungs as a result of the deportation attempt. Christian Democrat politician Alf Svensson commented 'This has become a case of pure torture for this man, plain and simple, and now we need to take care of him in Sweden.' *The Local*, 4 June 2009.

**88** UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines, 23-24 March 2010.

**89** Email correspondence with Sanna Vestin. See her excellent website at <<http://www.sanna-ord.se/>>

## Appendix 1: Asylum - and immigration-related deaths 1 January 2009-30 June 2010

### TOTALS

Nature of death	number	Country of origin of deceased	
Deportation-related death	1	Afghanistan	3
Suicides (detention)	8	Algeria	2
Suicides (non-detention)	13	Armenia	1
Medical Neglect alleged	11	Bangladesh	1
Police	3	Brazil	1
Unknown	2	China	1
		Ecuador	1
		Georgia	1
<b>Gender</b>		India	1
Male	30	Indonesia	1
Female	8	Iraq	6
<b>Deaths by country</b>		Ivory Coast	1
Austria	1	Kenya	1
Belgium	2	Lebanon	1
Bulgaria	2	Morocco	2
Germany	5	Nigeria	2
Greece	4	Pakistan	1
Italy	5	Russia	3
Netherlands	1	Somalia	2
Norway	1	Syria	1
Spain	3	Tunisia	1
Sweden	3	Unknown	4
Switzerland	1		
United Kingdom	10		

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**Key**

D – Deportation-related death  
S – Suicide  
M N – Medical neglect alleged  
P – Police-related death  
U – Unknown

**AUSTRIA****Gaganpreet Singh, Indian (MN)**

On 13 September 2009, Gaganpreet Singh, a 20-year-old Sikh failed asylum seeker from India, died of a heart attack four weeks into a hunger strike and while being held in preventive custody at Vienna-Hernals police centre. Vienna police said that an initial investigation showed no visible connection between the hunger strike and the heart attack but further tests were ordered to ascertain whether the cardiac arrest was linked to his hunger strike. An inquiry into Gaganpreet Singh's death, carried out by the Bureau for Internal Affairs, a special unit within the police attached to the federal ministry of interior, has been criticised for its lack of independence. Source: *Times of India*, 14 September 2009.

Further information: SOS Mitmensch. Email: office@sosmitmensch.at.

**BELGIUM****Yahya Tabbabi, Tunisian (MN)**

On 4 January 2010, Yahya Tabbabi, a 31-year-old irregular migrant from Tunisia died in the Vottem foreigners' detention centre near Liège, two days after he was detained there. The Fédération Tunisiens pour une Cittyoyeneté des Deux Rives (FTCR) describes the circumstances of his death as 'obscure' and have called for a full investigation in his death. After police described the death as 'suspicious', the Belgian interior ministry foreigners' office claimed that Tabbabi had a 'drug habit' and that he died of an overdose. The public prosecutor in Liège later confirmed this version of events.

But the FTCR and fellow detainees spoke of the possibility that the death may have resulted from an illness that received inadequate medical care. The Collectif de Résistance Aux Centres Pour Etrangers (CRACPE) said that 'regardless of what the causes of the death may be, detainees with whom they spoke prior to the death had complained about their 'not having been allowed to see the doctor even when they asked to do so', stressing that there is no doctor working full-time at the centre.

Source: Statewatch News Online, 8 January 2010, *La Meuse* 9

January 2010, *Libre Belgique* 5 January 2010.

Further information: Fédération Tunisiens pour une Cittyoyeneté des Deux Rives (FTCR), <<http://www.ftcr.eu/>>; Collectif de Résistance Aux Centres Pour Etrangers (CRACPE) <<http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/group.php?gid=35903650806>>

**Unnamed Ivorian asylum seeker (MN)**

On the night of 2/3 June 2010, an asylum seeker from the Ivory Coast, died in a corridor of a reception centre in the southern city of Charleroi, in, as yet, unexplained circumstances. The Ivorian man had only been recently transferred to the reception centre on account of his deteriorating mental health. As reception centres, managed by the federal agency, Fedasil, are notoriously overcrowded in Belgium, he had previously been living in a hostel where for two months he was unable to access any social or medical services. When the hostel manager assessed his behaviour as 'unstable', he was transferred to Charleroi where he apparently arrived mute, and refusing to eat. He was in no way aggressive but did not respond to any attempts to communicate with him. A source says he was clearly ill and emotionally stressed but Fedasil made no attempt to assess his condition. He died five days after his transfer to the centre. An autopsy ruled out suicide or substance abuse and the death was registered as from 'natural causes'.

Source: <[http://www.liguedh.be/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=914:deces-dun-demandeur-dasile-au-centre-ouvert-de-charleroi%E2%80%94lindifference-aussi-tue&catid=110:communiqués-de-presse-2010&Itemid=283](http://www.liguedh.be/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=914:deces-dun-demandeur-dasile-au-centre-ouvert-de-charleroi%E2%80%94lindifference-aussi-tue&catid=110:communiqués-de-presse-2010&Itemid=283)>

Further information: La Ligue de droits de L'Homme. Email: ldh@liguedh.be.

**BULGARIA****Jonson Ibitui, Nigerian (MN)**

Jonson Ibitui, a former university lecturer in Nigeria, died in early 2009 after suffering a heart attack shortly after being released from the Busmantsi detention centre on the outskirts of Sofia. The Justice 21 Civil Initiative said that 'the heart attack, coming as a result of psychological stress, is a direct consequence of the one year of meaningless stay in the detention centre'.

Source: <[http://www.georgebakalov.com/\\_blog/Current/post/Bulgarian\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Organizations\\_Demand\\_Transparency\\_and\\_Accountability\\_from\\_the\\_government/](http://www.georgebakalov.com/_blog/Current/post/Bulgarian_Human_Rights_Organizations_Demand_Transparency_and_Accountability_from_the_government/)>

Further information: Justice 21 Civil Initiative. Email: edyankova@prelom.bg.

**Hasun Albaadzh, Syrian (MN)**

On 6 October 2009, Hasun Albaadzh, an extremely ill



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Syrian asylum seeker, who had been detained since November 2006 (these thirty-four months exceeded the maximum legal period of detention in Bulgaria), died at the Busmantsi detention centre. The Justice Civil 21 Initiative linked his death to institutional neglect, saying that he was denied specialist medical care. Chronic illness was only treated with painkillers. The Justice 21 Civil Initiative, the Centre for Legal Help – Voice in Bulgaria, Legal Clinic for Refugees and Immigrants at Sofia University and the Centre for Torture Survivors demanded a full inquiry into the circumstances of Albaadzh's death.

Source: <<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=48903>>, *Sofia Echo*, 19 October 2009.

Further information: The Justice 21 Civil 21 Initiative. Email: [edyankova@prelom.bg](mailto:edyankova@prelom.bg).

## GERMANY

### **Mahmum O, Iraqi (S)**

On 21 August 2009, Mahmum O, a 26-year-old asylum seeker from Iraq, was found hanging in his cell in the Justizvollzugsanstalt Nürnberg (Nuremberg), Bavaria. Attempts were made to resuscitate him and he was taken to hospital where he died four days later.

Source: ANZEIGEN für 'Bundesdeutsche Flüchtlingspolitik und ihre tödlichen Folgen' (1993 bis 2009).

Further information: Anti-Racist Initiative. Email: [ari-berlin-dok@bethanien.info](mailto:ari-berlin-dok@bethanien.info).

### **Mrs T, Lebanese (S)**

On 24 August 2009, Mrs T, a 32-year-old mother of three from the Lebanon, died after taking an overdose in protest against the relocation of her family. After taking the overdose, Mrs T lay down in front of the furniture van that had arrived to remove the family. There were allegations that the authorities delayed calling an ambulance and that they acted inhumanely towards her husband, who was forced to transport the family's belongings to the new accommodation, even as his wife lay dying in the hospital. Although Mr and Mrs T had argued against the relocation on the grounds of the family's strong connections with the local community in Mittweida in the State of Saxony, and Mrs. T's repeated threats of suicide, a spokesperson for the authorities who dealt with the family's case described her suicide as a 'surprise'.

Source: Anti-Racist Initiative, List of Deaths (see above).

Further information: Anti-Racist Initiative. Email: [ari-berlin-dok@bethanien.info](mailto:ari-berlin-dok@bethanien.info)

### **David Mardiani, Georgian (S)**

On 7 March 2010, David Mardiani, a young Georgian asylum seeker, whose age was disputed, committed suicide in pre-deportation detention in Hamburg. Campaigners alleged institutional neglect, stating that his legal rights were not observed whilst in custody, that decisions were not explained to him in a language that he could understand, and that medical neglect was a contributing factor in his death. The young man had been on hunger strike and a psychologist had assessed him as at risk of suicide. The Hamburg Refugee Legal Advice Centre believes that an inadequate standard of care, due to poor staff levels and general cost-reducing measures, was provided by the central hospital within the detention centre.

Source: Website of Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg <<http://www.fluechtlingsrat-hamburg.de/>>. World Socialist Web, <<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2010/mar2010/germ-m18.shtml>>.

Further information: Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg. Email: [info@fluechtlingsrat-hamburg.de](mailto:info@fluechtlingsrat-hamburg.de).

### **Yeni P, Indonesian (S)**

On 16 April 2010, a 34-year-old Indonesian woman held in pre-deportation detention in Hamburg, identified only as Yeni P, was found dead in her cell, where she hanged herself after receiving a deportation order for 'violation of the Residence Act'. The press subsequently attempted to portray her as a gold-digger, married three times to different German men, and adopting different identities.

Source: Website of Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg (above).

Further information: Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg. Email: [info@fluechtlingsrat-hamburg.de](mailto:info@fluechtlingsrat-hamburg.de).

### **Slawik C, Armenian (S)**

On 2 June 2010, Slawik C, a 58-year-old asylum seeker who had lived in Germany for eleven years, hanged himself with the cord from a kettle in a cell in the Langenhagen deportation prison, Winsen (Lühe), Lower Saxony. The man had been arrested a week before when he went to the local aliens department to extend his exceptional leave to remain. As Mr C had been issued with a 'laissez passer' by the Armenian Embassy, the idea was to deport him prior to his wife, for whom travel documents had not been obtained. The Lower Saxony Refugee Council believes that Slawik C's original detention was unlawful adding that once in detention he had suffered an emotional crisis after which he had been placed alone in a cell and treated with anti-psychotic

drugs. The authorities did not believe that the family were from the persecuted Azerbaijan minority in Armenia, and had arranged for Slawik C to be deported to Eriwan, the capital of Armenia. The authorities insisted that Mr C's wife must also leave and advised her to leave Germany voluntarily to avoid an 'escalation' of the situation.

Source: *Taz*, 7 July 2010, *Pro Asyl Newsletter*, No. 161, August 2010.

Further information: Niedersächsischer Flüchtlingsrat e.V.  
Email: [nds@nds-fluerat.org](mailto:nds@nds-fluerat.org).

## GREECE

### **Husein Zahidul, Bangladeshi (U)**

On 3 January 2009, the body of Husein Zahidul, an immigrant from Bangladesh, was found in the stream of Votanikos, close to the offices of Aliens Board in central Athens.

Source: <http://www.no-racism.net/>

Further information: United for Intercultural Action. Email: [info@unitedagainstracism.org](mailto:info@unitedagainstracism.org).

### **Mazir, unknown (U)**

On 23 March 2009, a 24-year-old migrant, named only as Mazir, died. He had been in a coma since he was found on 6 December in the stream of Votanikos, close to the offices of the Aliens Board, near Central Athens.

Source: <http://no-racism.net/article/3196>

Further information: United for Intercultural Action. Email: [info@unitedagainstracism.org](mailto:info@unitedagainstracism.org).

### **Arivan Abdullah Osman, Kurdish Iraqi (P)**

On 3 April 2009, Arivan Abdullah Osman, a 29-year-old Kurdish Iraqi undocumented migrant, died four months after being reportedly severely beaten by coastguards at Igomenitsa's harbour on 3 April 2009 as he attempted to board a ferry travelling to Italy. Eyewitnesses claim that the officers violently banged his head onto the tarmac. An investigation into his death was opened, but failed to identify who was responsible for the death. The Greek minister of the navy, Anastassios Papatigouras called for the case to be reopened.

Source: <http://www.fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/01/pes-tato-sangue-dalla-polizia-greca-come.html>, summary in English Statewatch News Online, <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2009/aug/01fortress-europe.htm>

Further information: United for Intercultural Action. Email: [info@unitedagainstracism.org](mailto:info@unitedagainstracism.org).

### **Mohammed Kamran Atif, Pakistani (P)**

In October 2009, an undocumented Pakistani worker,

Mohammed Kamran Atif died after being left in a coma following a violent police arrest. On 27 September, following an unsubstantiated allegation, police went to a hostel for Pakistani migrants in the Nikaia district of Athens where they allegedly dragged the migrant, who was by this time semi-conscious, out of the hostel, and continued to use force on him at the police station.

Source: [http://libcom.org/news/immigrant-dies-after-police-torture-athens-10102009?quicktabs\\_1=0](http://libcom.org/news/immigrant-dies-after-police-torture-athens-10102009?quicktabs_1=0)

Further information: Amnesty International Greece.

## ITALY

### **Salah Soudami, Algerian (MN)**

In March 2009, Salah Soudami, a 42-year-old Algerian died in the Ponte Galliera detention centre in Rome. There were allegations that he was beaten after asking for medical treatment.

Source: United, List of deaths.

Further information: CARTA. Email: [carta@carta.org](mailto:carta@carta.org).

### **Unnamed African woman (S)**

On 7 May 2009, an un-named woman from Tunisia committed suicide in the Ponte Gallera detention centre in Rome.

Source: *International Herald Tribune*, 14 May 2009.

Further information: United for Intercultural Action. Email: [info@unitedagainstracism.org](mailto:info@unitedagainstracism.org)

### **FA, Moroccan woman (S)**

On 6 August 2009, FA, a 27-year-old woman from Morocco, without papers, committed suicide by throwing herself into the Brembo river at Ponte San Pietro in the province of Bergamo. Her brother, Mohammed, who has a residence permit, said that his sister was living a clandestine existence and greatly feared deportation.

Source: EveryOne, 8 August 2009. <http://www.everyone-group.com/>

Further information from EveryOne group. Email: [info@everyonegroup.com](mailto:info@everyonegroup.com).

### **Brazilian transsexual, named only as 'Carlos' (S)**

On 25 December 2009, a 34-year-old transsexual of Brazilian origin, committed suicide by hanging herself with a sheet in the Via Corelli Centre for Identification and Expulsion (CIE) in Milan, where she had recently been detained. The Everyone Group pointed out that since the government introduced the crime of illegal entry, which means that immigrants without a permit to remain in Italy are under constant threat of arrest, there have been an increase in suicide attempts in overcrowded detention centres, particularly amongst transsexual or transgender immigrants.

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Source: EveryOne, 31 December 2009, <[http://www.everyonegroup.com/EveryOne/MainPage/Entries/2009/12/31\\_Milan%2C\\_transexual\\_commits\\_suicide\\_in\\_an\\_italian\\_detention\\_centre.html](http://www.everyonegroup.com/EveryOne/MainPage/Entries/2009/12/31_Milan%2C_transexual_commits_suicide_in_an_italian_detention_centre.html)>

Further information: EveryOne Group. Email: [info@everyonegroup.com](mailto:info@everyonegroup.com).

#### **Mohammed El Abbouby, North African (MN)**

On 16 January 2010, Mohammed El Abbouby, one of fourteen men convicted for arson following a mass revolt at the Via Corelli detention centre in 2009, was found dead in his cell at the San Vittore prison, Milan. The prison authorities stated that he died after inhaling the fumes from a canister of camping gas. An investigation has been launched. The authorities deny that it was suicide.

Source: <[http://www.informazione.info/milano\\_una\\_morte\\_di\\_stato\\_sulluccisione\\_di\\_mohamed\\_el\\_abbouby](http://www.informazione.info/milano_una_morte_di_stato_sulluccisione_di_mohamed_el_abbouby)>, <<http://www.articolo21.org/1417/rubrica/morte-in-carcere-di-mohammed-el-abbouby-le.html>>

Further information: EveryOneGroup. Email: [info@everyonegroup.com](mailto:info@everyonegroup.com).

### **NETHERLANDS**

#### **Zahara Bare, Somali (MN)**

In the last week of June 2010, Zahara Bare (also referred to in some reports to as Sahro Barre Mohamed), a Somali woman who was three months pregnant, died at the Leersun asylum centre in Utrecht. She had been sick for several days, and there were claims that she was denied proper medical attention. It was said that she was left unattended on a mattress in a hallway of the centre and no ambulance was called. A spokesperson for the Geen Party, Femke Halsema, called for an independent inquiry.

Source: <[http://warkamaanta.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1535%3Arefugee-woman-dies-for-recklessness&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=112](http://warkamaanta.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1535%3Arefugee-woman-dies-for-recklessness&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=112)>

### **NORWAY**

#### **Unnamed man, Somali (MN)**

In November 2009, a Somali man in his thirties died of swine flu at a reception centre in Norway. The authorities state that no doctor had been called because the man showed no signs of any life-threatening symptoms.

Source: UNHCR Baltic & Nordic Headlines, 26-30 November 2009.

### **SPAIN**

#### **Jonathan Sizalina, Ecuadorian (MN)**

On 18 June 2009, Jonathan Sizalina, a 20-year-old man from Ecuador, was found hanged in a detention centre in Barcelona. The police claim that the young man committed suicide but the family, assisted by the Ecuadorian Consulate, called for a full investigation into his death, amidst allegations that Sizalina was beaten by the police before his body was allegedly discovered in the cell.

Sizalina died a few hours after the police arrested him during an identity check on the grounds that he did not have the correct papers. He was apparently due to be released when his body was discovered. His parents were only allowed to view their son's blanket-covered body through a glass window.

Source: <[http://www.ultimasnoticias.ec/noticiaUN.asp?id\\_noticia=30083&id\\_seccion=56](http://www.ultimasnoticias.ec/noticiaUN.asp?id_noticia=30083&id_seccion=56)>, <<http://noticies.sirius.cat/2010/05/qui-va-matar-mohamed-alcie-de-bcn.html>>

Further information: Federacion de Asociaciones de Inmigrantes del Vallés. Web [www.faiiv.org](http://www.faiiv.org). Email: [edaso-cia@gmail.com](mailto:edaso-cia@gmail.com).

#### **Abdelkader H, (Kader), Algerian (P)**

On 6 November 2009, Abdelkader H a 19-year-old Algerian without documents, known to his friends as Kader, drowned after jumping into a river in Bilbao in a bid to escape the police who mistook him for a street robber.

Source: *El Pais*, 25 November 2009.

Further information: SOS Racismo. Email: [sosracismo@sos-racismo.org](mailto:sosracismo@sos-racismo.org).

#### **Mohamed Abagui, Moroccan (MN)**

On 13 May 2010, Mohamed Abagui, a 22-year-old Moroccan man, was found dead in his cell at Barcelona Foreigners' Detention Centre where he was held awaiting deportation to Morocco. Unbeknownst to his cousin, who had been searching for him ever since he left their home on 15 April, Mohamed Abagui had been arrested on the streets for having no documents and detained. His cousin finally established that he was in detention and visited him a few days before his death, where he found him red-eyed and rambling incoherently. His cousin told the officials at the centre that Mohamed had been receiving psychiatric treatment and was desperately in need of attention. A few days later he was dead.

SOS Racism and the Federation of Immigrations Associations of Valles (FAIV), which are supporting the family, are calling for a full investigation into the death.

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The director of the detention centre refused to give SOS Racism any information, but the National Police Directorate press office confirmed that the official cause of death was suicide. SOS Racism states that according to other detainees at the centre, Abagui was being held in isolation at the time of this death. SOS Racism refuses to accept the chief of police's denial that Mohamed's death was preventable or caused by his isolation.

Source: <<http://www.kaosenlared.net/noticia/entrevista-familiares-mohamed-abagui>>

Further information: SOS Racism. Email: [sosracisme@sos-racisme.org](mailto:sosracisme@sos-racisme.org).

## **SWEDEN**

### ***Mir Abbas Safari, Afghan (S)***

Around 27-29 May 2009, Mir Abbas Safari, a 36-year-old failed Afghani asylum seeker committed suicide while being held at the remand prison in Gävle prior to deportation to Afghanistan where he feared persecution on account of his sexuality. Safari had previously attempted suicide, following the rejection of his asylum claim, by attempting to set fire to himself. But though he survived, the fire was treated as an arson and he was jailed for five years. His punishment was subsequently shortened, but as he was due to be deported, and the Migration Board refused to take responsibility for him, he was taken into police custody, amidst medical warnings that he would certainly attempt to take his life again. He was held in police custody for sixty-seven days, during which time he was apparently kept on constant suicide watch, and monitored every fifteen minutes. Nevertheless, he managed to hang himself with a sheet. The police closed the investigation into his death, saying that there were no suspicious circumstances. However, according to some reports, the public prosecutor is reconsidering the case.

Sources: Sverges Television, SVT 29.7.09, Mana website entry, 2 June 2009, <<http://www.uppmana.nu/>>

Further information: Swedish Network of Asylum and Refugee Support Groups (FARR). Email: [info@farr.se](mailto:info@farr.se). See also <<http://www.sanna-ord.se/>>

### ***Unaccompanied child, Iraqi (S)***

In June 2009, an unaccompanied child from Iraq, aged 15 or 16, committed suicide after finding out his asylum claim had been rejected. He was staying in accommodation for asylum seekers in Värmland, and had made previous attempts on his life. Some days prior to his suicide he was involved in a fight about bus tickets and was placed in a psychiatric clinic by police. However, his con-

dition was not considered serious enough for him to remain there and he was taken to a state establishment for children. Fifteen hours after being taken to the centre in handcuffs, he attempted suicide and was declared dead four days later. A report by Värmland county council reveals that he had made several suicide attempts during the Spring and had been in contact with the children and young people's psychiatric authorities, although not considered ill enough to be detained under mental health regulations. The National Board for Health and Welfare launched an investigation.

Source: *Värmlands Folkblad*, 17 June 2009.

Further information: Swedish Network of Asylum and Refugee Support Groups (FARR). Email [info@farr.se](mailto:info@farr.se). See also <<http://www.sanna-ord.se/>>

### ***Unnamed unaccompanied male minor (S)***

In April 2010, an unaccompanied minor took his life after being refused asylum. The youngster had become severely depressed and was being treated by the Child and Adult Psychiatry agencies. The doctor had recommended institutional care and a request had been made to the youth housing department but it did not reach the personnel in charge. The National Board of Health and Welfare recognised that failures within the system contributed to the young man's suicide.

Source: Sveriges Radio, 3 April 2010.

## **SWITZERLAND**

### ***Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa, Nigerian (D)***

On March 17 2010, Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa, a 29-year-old Nigerian asylum seeker died at Zurich's Kloten airport prior to his forced deportation to Lagos. Joseph had been on hunger strike for several days and he fell ill shortly after he was subjected to the so-called level 4 procedure of expulsion, which consists of binding the hands and legs of the person in such a way that he is forced to remain motionless and carrying him on board a specially chartered plane as if s/he were a parcel. Immediate attempts to resuscitate Chiakwa failed and he died on the tarmac of the airport. An autopsy failed to provide any clues to the cause of death and the public prosecutor announced that further investigations were taking place into the circumstances that led to the death. In June 2010, the authorities in Zurich announced the findings of the investigation (the full report remains confidential), stating that Chiakwa died as a result of a serious heart condition that was practically impossible to diagnose, the hunger strike which he had carried out before his death and his state of extreme agitation and



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anxiety in view of his impending expulsion.

Sources: Swissinfo online, 18, 22.5.10, *Migration News Sheet*, August 2010.

More information: Solidarité sans frontières. Email: secretariat@sosf.ch.

## UNITED KINGDOM

### **Hassan Rahimi, Afghan teenager (S)**

In August 2009, Hassan Rahimi, who arrived as an unaccompanied minor and whose age is disputed, was found hanged in west London. It seemed that he feared eviction from his accommodation.

Further information: Institute of Race Relations. Email: mit@irr.org.uk.

### **Heval Huseyn Ismail, Kurdish Iraqi (S)**

On 9 August 2009, Heval Huseyn Ismail, a 28-year-old failed Kurdish asylum seeker from Iraq, hanged himself in a park in South Tyneside. He had been in the country for four years, and was refused asylum in 2008. In May 2010, a coroner's court recorded an open verdict on the death. The coroner stressed that he was not satisfied that the young Kurd had intended to take his life and that he may have been trying to bring attention to his desperate plight.

Source: *The Shields Gazette*, 24 May 2010.

Further information: Institute of Race Relations. Email: mit@irr.org.uk.

### **Mohammed Iqbal Safi, Afghan (S)**

In October 2009, 18-year-old Mohammed Iqbal Safi committed suicide by jumping into the river Thames shortly after being released from police custody where he had been questioned for immigration offences. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) set up an investigation into the circumstances of the death and specifically considered whether the police adequately explained to the young man, prior to releasing him, that it would take no further action him, and whether interpreters were used during his questioning. IPPC Commissioner Rachel Cerfontyne said that the investigation would consider whether Mr Safi displayed any indications while in custody that he was at risk of self harm and whether his grasp of English should have warranted the use of specialist provision such as a translation service.

Source: *Independent*, 30 December 2009.

Further information: Institute of Race Relations. Email: mit@irr.org.uk.

### **Jianping Liu, Chinese (S)**

On 12 November 2009, Jianping Liu, a 35-year-old

Chinese woman, fell from a bridge on the outer edges of Heathrow airport, three hours after being released by Metropolitan police officers at Heathrow's terminal 1 in the early hours of 12 November after being questioned on suspicion of overstaying her agreed period of residence in the UK. She was questioned for more than eight hours and released without charge after it was found that she had leave to remain in the UK. She was pronounced dead at the scene. The case was referred to the IPPC for investigation.

Source: *Independent*, 30 December 2009

Further information: Institute of Race Relations. Email: mit@irr.org.uk.

### **Seguei Serykh, Tatiana Serykh, Stefan Serykh, Russian (S)**

On 7 March 2010, a Russian couple and their 19-year-old son, all of whom were failed asylum seekers, committed suicide by jumping from the window of their fifteenth floor flat in the Balornock area of Glasgow where asylum seekers are housed by the YMCA under contracts with the UK Border Agency. The family, who had refugee status in Canada but were refused citizenship, had travelled to the UK where they applied for asylum again but were refused in 2007. It is believed that the family were facing eviction from their accommodations. Campaigners called for a fatal accident inquiry to be held into their deaths.

Source: *Guardian*, 8 March 2010.

Further information: Positive Action in Housing, 98 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1PJ. Web: [www.paih.org](http://www.paih.org)/E-Mail: [home@paih.org](mailto:home@paih.org).

### **Eliud Nguli Nyenze, Kenyan (MN)**

On 15 April 2010, Eliud Nguli Nyenze, a 40-year-old man from Kenya, died of an unknown medical condition at Oakington Immigration removal centre. The authorities said they were not treating the death as suspicious. Detainees and campaigners allege that he was denied medical care and that repeated pleas for a doctor and painkillers were denied and that an ambulance called by fellow detainees was turned away.

Source: *Guardian*, 16 April 2010, Cambridge Migrant Solidarity campaign literature.

Further information: Cambridge Migrant Solidarity, <<http://cambridgemigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/>>

### **Alan Rasoul Ahmed, Iraqi (S)**

On 2 May 2010, Alan Rasoul Ahmed, an Iraqi asylum seeker, was found hanged in accommodation in the Kensington area of Liverpool.

Further information: Institute of Race Relations. Email: mit@irr.org.uk.

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***Osman Rasul, Iraqi Kurd (S)***

On 25 July 2010, Osman Rasul, a 27-year-old destitute Iraqi-Kurd asylum seeker committed suicide by jumping from the seventh floor of a tower block in Nottingham.

Source: *Guardian*, 2 August 2010.

Further information: Nottingham and Notts Refugee Forum.

Email: [info@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk](mailto:info@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk).

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## Appendix 2: Statistics on arrivals and removals by Frances Webber

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**A breakdown of recent national statistics on arrivals and removals<sup>1</sup> show a different pattern between northern and eastern Europe on the one hand, and southern Europe, on the other.**

### *Northern and Eastern Europe*

In most of the countries of northern and eastern Europe, asylum claims are now a fraction of the levels they reached in the early years of the century, while removals and in particular, orders to leave the territory, have increased. Austria saw first asylum claims fall by 2007 to a quarter of the 2002 total, rising a little in 2008 and 2009, while removals doubled from 2007 to 2009 (although they were still less than two-thirds of the 2001 figure).<sup>2</sup> In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, asylum claims are now less than a tenth of their 2001 level. The accession to the EU of Bulgaria and Romania was one of the main causes of the drop in asylum claims in these three countries. But removals from the Czech Republic, which in 2008 were a tenth of their 2001 level, started rising again and in 2009 were 45 per cent higher than in the previous year, while removals from Slovakia increased by 50 per cent from 2001 to 2007.<sup>3</sup>

In France, first asylum claims, while rising from 2007-9, remain well below their 2004 peak, while removals have risen steadily to their highest point in 2008 and 2009.<sup>4</sup> Germany has seen claims drop to a third of their 2001 level - and while removals have fallen too, the number of orders to leave the territory rose by a quarter between 2008 and 2009.<sup>5</sup> In Ireland, where asylum claims are barely a quarter of their 2002 level, removals are over twice what they were in 2002, and rising;<sup>6</sup> the Justice Ministry announced plans in April 2009 to speed up the expulsion of rejected asylum seekers.<sup>7</sup> The Netherlands has experienced a halving of asylum claimants since 2001, but the number of orders to leave the territory increased by over 40 per cent from 2008 to 2009, following the establishment of a new enforcement unit.<sup>8</sup> (While forced removals dropped, this is because of the emphasis of the unit on 'independent' departure.) In the UK, first asylum claims are less than a third of their 2002 peak of over 100,000, but removals increased to nearly 68,000 in 2008, falling a little in 2009.

Asylum claims remained higher or peaked later in the Scandinavian countries, but there too they are

declining while removals are increasing, with a sharp increase in the use of force.<sup>9</sup> In Finland, claims quadrupled and in Norway they doubled between 2007 and 2009,<sup>10</sup> but they are now dropping in both countries – in the first half of 2010 the numbers arriving in Norway have fallen dramatically,<sup>11</sup> while in Finland, the authorities abolished 1,000 places in reception centres after a 33 per cent drop in arrivals. Both Finland and Norway have seen sharp increases in removals and orders to leave the territory from 2008 to 2009/10.<sup>12</sup> In Sweden, asylum claims peaked in 2007 (when half came from Iraq) and have since fallen, but a 42 per cent increase in orders to leave the territory took place from 2008 to 2009, with removals rising towards their 2004 high.<sup>13</sup> In early 2009, migration minister Tobias Billström announced that 2009 would be the 'return home year'.

Denmark saw an unexpected rise in asylum applications in 2010 (it had budgeted for 2,300 arrivals but the Ministry of Integration has assessed that the final tally will be in the region of 3,600). The government has come up with a novel way of financing the budget deficit. The money will be taken from other government departments, such as international development aid.<sup>14</sup> The Norwegian parliament is also reviewing a proposal to reduce humanitarian aid to countries that fail to take back its own citizens (while increasing it to those that do).<sup>15</sup>

### *Southern Europe*

There tends not to be such a strong emphasis on removal of those already in the country in southern Europe, where the focus has been on removing people before they even arrive. First asylum claims peaked in 2007 or 2008, along with the numbers of undocumented migrants apprehended. The decline in numbers arriving since then is due to the surveillance and interception activities of FRONTEX and of national maritime and air surveillance activities (including those of West African countries such as Senegal and Mauritania under agreements with European partners). An increasing number of Iraqis, Afghans, Somalis and Pakistanis are apprehended on the coast or at sea in Greece, as FRONTEX operations reduce landings elsewhere.

In Cyprus, asylum claims halved from 2007 while removals went up by nearly a third between 2008 and 2009.<sup>16</sup> Greece saw first asylum claims peak in 2007 and

decline by nearly a third since then.<sup>17</sup> Removals were down in 2009 from the height of 2008 (although this was under half the 2001 figure). By far the largest group apprehended and removed are Albanians (95 per cent of removals in 2007).<sup>18</sup> In Italy, the number of those claiming asylum has dropped by over 40 per cent from 2008's historical high as a result of Italy's 'push-back' policy, implemented in May 2009, involving joint Italian/Libyan patrols intercepting migrant boats at sea and returning them to Libya under a bilateral agreement signed in August 2008.<sup>19</sup> The policy has virtually stopped landings on Lampedusa, which has seen a 96 per cent drop in boat migrant arrivals. In the first quarter of 2010, fifty-two irregular migrants were intercepted at sea, compared with 4,450 in the first quarter of 2009. Italy has also given speedboats to Egypt.<sup>20</sup> About a tenth of those ordered to leave Italy are actually removed (68,175 orders in 2008, 53,440 in 2009). Malta saw numbers arriving illegally peak in 2008 as FRONTEX operations displaced 'boat migrants' from other routes, then reduce following further patrols in the Mediterranean. Removals increased by 74 per cent from 2008 to 2009 (although absolute numbers remain low).<sup>21</sup> The number of boat migrants arriving in the Canary Isles has gone down from 39,000 in 2006 to just over 2,000 in 2009, because of aerial and naval surveillance by Spain's border surveillance system SIVE, by FRONTEX's Operation Hera off the West African Coast and by Spanish agreements with Senegal and Mauritania, providing equipment to assist in preventing illegal migration from those countries. Since December 2008 the 'Sea Horse' satellite surveillance network, funded by the EU and developed by Spain in co-operation with Portugal, Mauritania and Cape Verde, has watched the Atlantic coast to stop the small boats leaving.<sup>22</sup>

In Spain, asylum claims have dropped to a third of their 2001 level, while removals have remained fairly steady.<sup>23</sup> But Spain conforms more to the northern European pattern in that orders to leave the territory numbered 82,940 in 2008, rising to 103,010 in 2009 (an increase of 24 per cent). Portugal has seen asylum claims remain extremely low, declining from a 'high' of 244 in 2002 to 140 in 2009 (a 43 per cent drop). Removals peaked at over 6,000 in 2006 and have declined since, although the number of orders to leave the territory rose by a quarter from 2008 to 2009 (from 8,000 to 10,000).

## Endnotes

1 The analysis here is based on statistics and reports produced by the European Migration Network under the auspices of the European Commission, to which all EU member states submit national reports and statistics (<http://emn.sarenet.es/html/index.html>); official statistics on international migration produced by Eurostat ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/publications/migration\\_asylum](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/publications/migration_asylum)); and occasionally, UNHCR statistics on asylum claims published in *Migration News Sheet*.

2 There were over 39,000 claims in Austria in 2002, just under 12,000 in 2007 and 15,800 in 2009. But there were only 5,000 claims in the first six months of 2010. Removals were cut from 11,000 in 2003 to 3,200 in 2007 but rose to nearly 7,000 in 2009.

3 Asylum claims in the Czech Republic were over 18,000 in 2001 but just 1,250 in 2009. Removals dropped from 6,300 in 2001 to 500 in 2007 and 850 in 2009. In Slovakia, there were 8,000 claims in 2001, rising to 11,400 in 2004 and falling to 820 in 2009. Removals have fluctuated between one and three thousand during this period, falling to 900 in 2009.

4 First asylum claims in France rose from 47,000 to 58,500 between 2001 and 2004, falling back to 29,400 in 2007. There were 38,400 in 2009 and 25,200 in the first six months of 2010. Removals have increased from 8,600 to 29,300 between 2001 and 2009.

5 First asylum claims peaked at 88,200 in 2001, dropping to 19,000 in 2007. They rose to nearly 29,000 in 2009 and 15,000 in the first six months of 2010, but the figures from 2008 onwards are inflated by the inclusion of German-born children of asylum seekers, previously omitted. Removals declined from 44,200 in 2001 to just under 12,000 in 2009. But orders to leave increased from 12,000 in 2008 to 14,500 in 2009.

6 First asylum claims in Ireland were running at 11,600 in 2002 and were down to under 2,700 in 2009. Only 1,000 claims were made in the first six months of 2010. There were 360 removals in 2001, rising to 830 in 2009.

7 *Migration News Sheet*, May 2009.

8 There were over 32,500 asylum claims in the Netherlands in 2001, and 7,100 first claims in 2007, rising to just under 15,000 in 2009 and 6,600 in the first six months of 2010. (From 2007 on, the figures are first claims.) Removals went up from 16,500 in 2001 to 23,200 in 2003, then dropped to just under 9,000 in 2009. Orders to leave the territory rose from 31,700 in 2008 to over 43,300 in 2009.

9 According to the Prison and Probation Service in Sweden, the number of forced returns of asylum seekers has increased by 30 per cent since 2007. Sveriges Radio, 9 August 2010 as cited in UNHCR Baltic and Nordic Headlines.



**10** There were 1,500 first claims in Finland in 2007, rising to nearly 6,000 in 2009. There were 2,000 claims in the first six months of 2010. Norway saw 24,400 claims in 2002, dropping to 9,300 in 2005 and rising again to over 17,000 in 2009.

**11** There were 4,400 claims in the first six months of 2010.

**12** In Norway, removals increased from 2,300 in 2008 to 3,300 in 2009 and nearly 2,000 in the first six months of 2010. European Migration Network and Eurostat give different statistics for removals from Finland but both show removals nearly doubling from 2008 to 2009: from 900 to 1,700 (Eurostat), or from 1,700 to 3,100 (EMN).

**13** First asylum claims in Sweden hit 33,000 in 2002, dropped to 17,500 in 2005, rose to 36,200 in 2007 and dropped to 24,200 in 2009. 14,000 claims were made in the first six months of 2010. Removals were down to 3,000 in 2007 from 12,500 in 2004, but rose to nearly 12,000 again in 2009.

**14** UNHCR Baltic and Nordic Headlines, 29-30 June 2010.

**15** UNHCR Baltic and Nordic Headlines, 1-2 December 2009.

**16** Asylum arrivals in Cyprus were 6,700 in 2007, down to 2,600 in 2009 and 1,200 in the first six months of 2010, while removals increased from 3,500 to 4,600.

**17** There were 25,000 first asylum claims in 2007, reduced to 16,000 in 2009 and 4,700 in the first six months of 2010. The Greek Council for Refugees claims that many asylum seekers are denied access to the procedure. A recent survey found that only 40 of the 700 asylum seekers who registered claims each month were admitted to the asylum procedure. *Migration News Sheet*, July 2010. Grants of asylum are very rare: 53 in 2004, 88 in 2005, 128 in 2006 and 215 in 2007,

according to Greece's annual report of 2007 for EMN.

**18** There were 168,000 removals from Greece in 2001. They fell to 40,000 in 2004 but rose to 68,500 in 2008, falling slightly to 63,000 in 2009. Under an agreement signed by Greece and Turkey in May 2010 to achieve effective implementation of their ten-year-old readmission agreement, Turkey agreed to approve a thousand readmission requests a year. *Migration News Sheet*, June 2010.

**19** First asylum claims in Italy rose from 9,400 in 2005 to over 30,000 in 2008, then dropped to 17,500 in 2009. Human rights organisations reacted angrily to the European Commission's conclusion that the agreement with Libya, criticised for violating the Refugee Convention and the EU's own Asylum Directive of 2005, is 'perfectly in conformity with EU law'. *Migration News Sheet*, September 2010.

**20** Italy also has or has sought readmission agreements with Tunisia, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Gambia. *Migration News Sheet*, May, June, July 2010.

**21** Asylum claims rose from 155 in 2001 to 2,600 in 2008 and 2,400 in 2009. There were 300 removals in 2008, 530 in 2009.

**22** See FRONTEX annual report 2009, and the Frontex Risk Analysis Network (FRAN) report for the first quarter of 2010, indicating that the downward trend in arrivals from west Africa continues.

**23** First asylum claims were running at around 9,500 in 2001, and were down to 3,000 in 2009. In the first six months of 2010 there were only 1,200 claims. Around 26,800 removals took place in 2001, a figure which had gone up to 28,800 in 2009.

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**Research on the European Race Audit is carried out with the help of:**

Harmit Athwal, Jenny Bourne, Norberto Laguía Casaus, Rhona Desmond, Laja Destremau, Nora El Massioui, Mutlu Ergün, Imogen Forster, Chandra Frank, Margaret Goff, Sofia Hamaz, Kate Harre, Lotta Holmberg, Vincent Homolka, Terese Jonsson, Simon Katzenellenbogen, Filiz Keküllüoğlu, Graham Murray, Richard Oliver, Elliot Perkins, Nicole Schmiedefeld, Joanna Tegnerowicz, Frances Webber and Chris Woodall.

Institute of Race Relations  
2-6 Leake Street, London WC1X 9HS  
Tel: 020 7837 0041 / Fax: 020 7278 0623  
Email: [info@irr.org.uk](mailto:info@irr.org.uk) / Web: [www.irr.org.uk](http://www.irr.org.uk)

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