



# Resettlement Newsletter

Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe

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*For I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.*

Matthew  
25:35b



Resettlement to the UK the first moments in the new home in Brighton/Hove (photo: Nina Chohda, see article in the last edition of the newsletter )

## Resettlement and EU member states: one step forward, one step back ?

Welcome this year's second edition of CCME's Resettlement Newsletter!!!

...once again we will keep you updated on news regarding resettlement towards the member states of the European Union.

The overall picture at the moment is mixed: on the one hand there are increasing signs that more EU member states are positively considering the introduction of resettlement as an additional tool of refugee protection (see the report on Belgium in this newsletter).

On the other hand, EU member states at the moment seem to fail in view of putting words into practice by extending resettlement offers to solve one of the most dramatic refugee crisis in recent years - the one in Iraq (see report on UNHCR Conference).

Both positive and negative news underline the need to advocate for refugee resettlement as an additional tool of refugee protection and a sign of global solidarity towards those countries assuming the direct responsibility for refugee crisis situations in their neighbourhood.

CCME and partners will therefore also over the next months continue to advocate for refugee resettlement to the EU with events in Berlin, Madrid, Prague and Rome.

Enjoy the reading!  
Best regards,

Torsten Moritz  
CCME Project Secretary

### UNHCR Conference on Iraq: No additional resettlement places offered by European countries

On 17-18 April 2007 UNHCR held a conference in Geneva to address the humanitarian needs of refugees and internally displaced persons inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries. It was attended by 450 participants, including representatives of governments (including the Foreign Minister of Iraq), IGOs and NGOs from a wide range of countries from the Middle East, Europe and beyond. UNHCR said this initiative was intended as a starting point to increase support from the international community to the growing humanitarian crisis and announced that agreement had been reached the week before on a Strategic Framework for Humanitarian Action in Iraq.

In terms of durable solutions for the displaced, Mr. Guterres said that local integration was not the solution and emphasised voluntary return as the best solution once conditions allow for this to take place in safety and dignity. In follow up to the UNHCR March 2007 paper on the resettlement of Iraqi refugees, Mr. Guterres interestingly also emphasised that resettlement was only an answer for the most vulnerable. At the same time UNHCR is examining the feasibility of establishing secure locations for resettlement interviewing and RSD procedures for non-Iraqi refugees in Iraq. Governments mostly agreed with this approach, including... (Cont. on page 2)

## UNHCR Conference on Iraq: No additional resettlement places offered by European countries (cont.)

Iraq and countries in the region. They all recognised the seriousness of the humanitarian crisis and made general statements of support but fewer made concrete commitments in terms of additional aid and resettlement opportunities. The **USA, Canada and Australia** all stated that resettlement would be most appropriate form of protection for some Iraqis. The USA felt this was the case for those who are extremely vulnerable (female-headed households, the elderly, the disabled, unaccompanied minors, ethnic and religious minorities) and is therefore prepared to do more to expand its capacity in this area and will establish new offices in Amman and Damascus as well as place more staff in the region. Canada offered to consider 500 more resettlement referrals in addition to its existing 900 quota for Iraqis in 2007. Australia pointed to the fact that 30% of its 13,000 places are allocated to the Middle East and South West Asia and offered to assist UNHCR to provide protection in the region and manage its resettlement referrals to all countries as well as additional support to UNHCR's Beirut regional resettlement

hub.

The European governments present made no additional resettlement commitments. **Germany**, as the president of the EU, did not mention resettlement and in fact stated that residents of Iraq should no longer feel the need to flee, going on to describe the EU Global Approach to Migration agenda. **France** expressed itself in favour of some European coordination on resettlement as long as UNHCR were fully involved and files were assessed on individual basis and according to national criteria. **Switzerland** announced an increase of 4 million CHF (Swiss Francs) in its annual budget: 1,5 million CHF to persons displaced in Iraq and 2,5 million CHF to support UNHCR projects in Jordan and Syria including legal protection of Iraqi refugees. **Italy** referred to voluntary return as the only sustainable long-term solution. **Greece** offered \$200,000 in aid and **Estonia** offered \$25,000.

In terms of European countries who currently have a national resettlement programme, **Norway** made no specific commitments. **Denmark** broadened its financial support, urged that resettlement be considered by as many countries as possible and pointed to the fact that Iraqis were eligible for the resettlement places set aside for urgent cases within its national programme. **Sweden** referred to EU discussions on how to achieve greater inter-

national solidarity, including financial assistance, and stated that resettlement and local integration can be a solution for those most in need of protection (e.g the Palestinians) but that for the majority return must be allowed. **The Netherlands** said it would determine whether more humanitarian assistance was needed and how the most vulnerable can be reached on the basis of a needs assessment. It also emphasised that it intended to allocate a substantial part of its annual quota for resettlement to refugees from Iraq and said it would call on EU countries to consider resettlement of the most vulnerable and better align its asylum policies. The **UK** made no additional commitments to the £6 million in additional aid recently announced by the Department for International Development.

**NGOs** made two statements at the conference on the humanitarian situation in Iraq and on the regional consequences of the crisis. They called for a multi-faceted international strategy, including an immediate increase in resettlement as a responsibility-sharing and protection tool, referring to the strategic use of resettlement. They also criticised the small number of additional resettlement places for Iraqis (7000) offered by the USA prior to the conference.

P. Coelho, ECRE, 20 April 2007



Dadaab refugee camp/Kenya. June 2006  
Photo: CCME/Passarelli

## Belgium and refugee resettlement- a bright future ?!

Under the Belgian chapter of the CCME project "Refugee Resettlement - broadening the basis in Europe", Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (Flemish Refugee Council) hosted a conference on April 27 in Brussels. Some 60 participants attended, representing all target groups aimed for by the organizers: politicians and political party experts, decision makers and experts from asylum bodies and other government offices, UNHCR, NGO staff and lawyers. The bilingual seminar was entitled "België en de hervestiging van vluchtelingen. Toekomstmuziek? / La Belgique et la réinstallation des réfugiés. Un bel avenir ? » (Belgium and refugee resettlement. A bright future ?) The general aim of the conference was to raise awareness and to offer a general introduction, given the fact that resettlement doesn't exist in Belgium and a debate is almost as unexistent.

Christina Oelgemöller (Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex), opened the debates by launching a series of general thoughts on the foundations of resettlement policies. "Europe," she stated, "should do resettlement because we feasibly and easily can." She noted however that resettlement has become politically "unfashionable". In her view, this is not since 9/11, but was a tendency long before that. After WWII and during the Cold War, resettlement was fashionable due to economic and ideological arguments. "The Indochinese resettlement efforts, however, disenchanted the international community, and by the



The conference's opening panel

early 1980's we heard about resettlement fatigue and fraud." In Oelgemöller's opinion, resettlement is mandatory if we really mean to bring humanitarianism in balance with state sovereignty. Resettlement, just as death penalty abolition, is a matter of politicians taking the lead. As a citizen of the EU, she felt she has the right to be presented with this leadership. The theme became more tangible with the intervention of Judith Kumin (Head of the Regional Representation of UNHCR in Brussels for the Benelux and the European Institutions). Having closely experienced resettlement in different roles since 1979, Judith Kumin is an invaluable voice in the debate. She pointed out that 15 countries in the world offer each year between 70,000 and 90,000 resettlement places, which corresponds to less than 1% of the world's refugee population. However, over 90% of these places are offered by Australia, Canada and the US. Only 6 EU member states offer resettlement places. This has been very different in the past, when Europe resettled large numbers of refugees from Hungary, Uganda, Chile, Indochina, etcetera.

Judith Kumin pointed out 6 good reasons to engage in resettlement:

rescue individual refugees, offer a long term solution when no other solution possible, responsibility sharing, strategic tool that brings benefits also to non resettled refugees, it opens a window for citizens in receiving countries, and resettled refugees are an asset for these countries. She admitted that even inside UNHCR, resettlement has its opponents, who argument that resettlement benefits to too few people, is too resource intensive, promotes brain drain and encourages fraud. All these arguments, she estimated, can be countered if resettlement is managed well in practice.

This led to the role of UNHCR in the practical implementation, where she exposed the organisation's procedures and criteria. She stressed that UNHCR is opposed to the "integration potential" criterium, because this puts the lives of vulnerable refugees at risk. Finally, she expressed her disappointment that the idea of a EU Resettlement Scheme has not made more progress. The only positive step here is that the Commission has opened the European Refugee Fund to support national resettlement activities.

The representative of the European Commission, Ms Zita Georgiadou (DG Justice Liberty and Security, Asylum Team), could not contradict Judith Kumin on these critical remarks. She admitted that EU progress on resettlement, although it is an important element of the external dimension of asylum ...

*(continued on page 4)*

## Belgium and refugee resettlement—a bright future ?! (cont.)

policies for the EC, is limited at the moment. Besides from the opening of the ERF, resettlement is only addressed in the context of the Regional Protection Programmes in for example Tanzania. There is no similar programme for other emergencies such as Iraq. The EC also promotes cooperation between member states by twinning activities.

The global and European focus shifted towards a more national one with the interventions of Liesbeth Bos and Martin Dijkhuizen who presented the experience of the Netherlands (both are working at the Immigration and Naturalisation Department (IND)). The Dutch policy since 2005 consists of a resettlement quota of 1500 refugees per 3 years and has a well developed procedure. Refugees are selected through missions accomplished by an interdisciplinary team of IND officials, UNHCR, IOM, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, doctors and the asylum reception service. Four missions a year take place to countries such as Kenya, Thailand and Malta in the past and this year also to Syria or Jordan, Turkey and Morocco. Selection criteria are the 1951 Convention, the ECHR, the countries policy used in the asylum procedure, humanitarian cases recommended by UNHCR and a general balancing of selected cases. At the end of a mission, a "Framework of Arrangement" is signed amongst all partners involved, specifying all arrangements from selection to arrival.

To situate the debate in a Belgian context, historian Frank Caestecker (University of Gent) presented an excellent overview of past resettlement experiences in Belgium. He started in the 1930's, when great numbers of Jews fled from Germany to neighbouring countries, including

Belgium. In a first phase, many moved on to the US and Canada. From 1939 on however, these countries closed their borders for Jewish refugees. As a result, pressure on European countries rose even more and some of them decided to close their borders and to deport Jewish people back to Germany. After WWII, Belgium hosted some 35.000 IDP's in the 1940's, 4.000 Hungarians in the 1950's, resettled refugees from Uganda, Chili and Vietnam in the 1970's and hosted some 1,500 refugees from the Balkan in the 1990's. This overview shows clearly that figures dropped sharply between the 1940's and the 1990's. This is also linked to the fact that resettled refugees in the earlier phase were also used as labour supplies. The experience with the German Jews should however, concluded Frank Caestecker, prevent us from a too utilitarian vision on resettlement.

One of the more awaited interventions of the day came in the end, presented by Dirk Van den Bulck, the Belgian Commissioner general for Refugees, the central asylum body in the Belgian asylum procedure. The Minister in charge preferred not to express his views during the seminar, most probably due to the timing: elections are being held in Belgium on June 10<sup>th</sup> of this year. Accordingly, Van den Bulck was the highest Belgian official presenting his views during the conference. He cannot represent the views of the government however, as the Commissioner's independence is stipulated in the law.

Dirk Van den Bulck pleaded clearly in favour of a resettlement programme in Belgium. To his understanding, the national context is favourable to launch the debate: asylum figures have dropped and a procedure reform has been undertaken on the one hand, and the need for

immigration for demographic and labour market shortages on the other hand, open a window of opportunity. A structural policy should be installed, letting the ad hoc initiatives behind us. In the short term, some small scale projects can be launched as a "laboratorium" for the future. The Commissioner general is ready to play a role in a resettlement policy.

The concluding debate with panelists Dirk Van den Bulck, Martin Dijkhuizen, Gert Westerveen (UNHCR Brussels) and Torsten Moritz (CCME) went more into detail on some crucial issues. Amongst the interesting statements was Gert Westerveen's analysis that the risk of resettlement putting into danger spontaneous arrivals so far has been confirmed only in Australia. Torsten Moritz suggested that the involvement of NGO's in resettlement can be much broader than in asylum and that local authorities and private sponsors can also play an important role. Martin Dijkhuizen added that language doesn't play a role in Dutch resettlement selection and that resettled and recognised refugees get the same status. Dirk Van den Bulck suggested that a Belgian resettlement policy should consist of two tracks: 1° quick ad hoc initiatives in crisis situations and 2° longer term projects embedded in regional protection programmes. He also thought selected refugees should form a good mix between vulnerable cases and others.

Pieter De Gryse,  
Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen

*A more comprehensive report is in June available at:*

*[www.vluchtelingenwerk.be](http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.be) (in Dutch)*



*Supported by ERF 2005*

## Sudanese-born clergyman receives Finnish „Vision of the year“ award for work among resettled community

The Green Cultural Association in Finland awards its annual “Vision of the Year” award to Samuel Luak, a Sudanese clergyman, in recognition of his work among refugee immigrants in the Kainuu region (Kajaani and surroundings in northeastern Finland).

The association sees Rev. Luak’s methods as unique and innovative. He has brought intercultural dialogue to the heart of work done among immigrants.

Rev. Samuel Luak’s work among immigrants centers on helping about two hundred Sudanese refugees in the Kainuu region to integrate into Finnish society. His job description is two-sided: on one hand a support person for the newcomers, on the other hand a promoter for interchange and cross-cultural understanding among the majority population. Rev. Luak acts as a regional “cultural interpreter.” He has visited every congregation in the region and many schools to speak about multicultural society and tolerance. His unique plan of action has been important to increase interaction in the region.

Rev. Luak feels it is a great challenge that people are very different, so it is sometimes difficult to find solutions that satisfy everyone. One of the most important achievements of his ministry has been to enable the Sudanese to preserve their social and cultural identity through group activities. Continual interaction between this immigrant group and the cultural majority also supports mutual trust and has an effect on attitudes. Samuel Luak himself arrived in Finland in the summer of 2004 and immediately found work in the Lutheran congregation of Vuolijoki as an assistant of other

Sudanese immigrants. Samuel Luak is a Presbyterian pastor.

Rev. Luak’s activity among immigrants is a part of a project started by the regional Bible society (*Kainuun Piipilaseura*). At the moment, the project is funded for two years by Finland’s Slot Machine Association (RAY), the major funder for NGO-projects. This project is coordinated by Rev. Marko Miittinen, the chairperson of the regional Bible society and a pastor of the Lutheran congregation in Kajaani.

This recognition has been happy news for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. This is the first time the award has been given to church-related action.

**The Green Cultural Association has commented its choice thus:**

“1. Pastor Samuel Luak’s work as a cultural interpreter is an example of an innovative undertaking, where a model of action for multicultural work has been actively developed to specifically suit the needs of the area in which it is carried out.

2. His action brings together support for the immigrants’ original culture and cultural identity with a vision of the importance that cross-cultural dialogue has in their inte-

gration.

3. This project is a refreshing example of work that prevents problems as immigrants settle in new surroundings and supports the growth of interaction between immigrants and the majority population. This is especially important in areas where immigrants have arrived in significant numbers only in recent years.”

### Why should Europe resettle more refugees?

- 1) Resettlement can provide protection to those in greatest need: the most vulnerable and those in protracted refugee situations.
- 2) Resettlement is a way for Europe to demonstrate its solidarity and take its share of its responsibility in the provision of this durable solution to the world’s refugees.
- 3) Resettlement provides access to Europe for refugees.
- 4) Resettlement provides the opportunity for good, co-ordinated and quality reception and integration programmes to be developed.
- 5) Resettlement is an important means of facilitating public understanding of all refugees, their plight and the situations they flee.



Rev. Luak and his family



## Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

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CCME office (red building on the left) in front of European Commission Headquarters (Berlaymont)

### FAQ—frequently asked questions....

#### 1) What is CCME?

CCME is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. CCME members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches, diaconal agencies and Councils of Churches in presently 16 European countries. CCME cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

#### 2) What is

#### “Resettlement - broadening the basis in Europe”?

The CCME project "Resettlement - broadening the basis in Europe" enhances knowledge and political debate in EU member states to engage in refugee resettlement - as an additional instrument of refugee protection.

It includes activities to

- broaden policy debates on resettlement in EU member states
- broaden information on it and provide it in accessible format
- broaden public-NGO partnerships for resettlement

#### 3) What is Refugee Resettlement?

It's one of the 3 traditional durable solutions for refugees, along with the local integration in the country of asylum and repatriation. Basically, it's a transfer of refugees from their country of first asylum to a third country that has agreed to admit them with a long term or permanent resident status. Resettlement provides protection for refugees whose safety is immediately at risk and it is a tool of international protection in a context of burden sharing among states.

#### 4) What Resettlement is not...

Resettlement is not the same as seeking refugee status through the asylum system, nor is it a more legal process for accessing asylum rights and can never substitute a spontaneous request of asylum.

Resettlement is not synonymous with “Temporary protection” classifications.

Resettlement cannot become a system of profiling refugees in accordance to their nationality or religion in order to create more or less valuable categories of refugees. Resettlement is based exclusively on the protection needs of the refugees.

#### 5) Which are the Resettlement countries?

The countries that traditionally host resettlement programs are : Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and USA. Those countries are called the “traditional ones”, Countries such as Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Island, Ireland, and UK have in recent years started programmes. Others, among them several EU member states, are currently considering them...

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

##### General info on resettlement

<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/3bb2eadd6.html>

##### On the CCME project

<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/CCMERR2006The%20projectshortpublic.pdf>

##### On the ICMC project :

[http://www.icmc.net/e/programmes\\_operations/europ\\_network.htm](http://www.icmc.net/e/programmes_operations/europ_network.htm)

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