

International Asylum Seeker/Refugee Policy Issues

[Germany's Merkel changes tack on migrants](#)

AFP, *iafrica*, 11 January 2016

A spate of assaults during New Year's Eve celebrations forced German Chancellor Angela Merkel to change her open-arms policy. Hundreds of cases have already been lodged in Cologne and Hamburg mostly blaming asylum seekers and illegal migrants from North Africa for sexual assault and similar violence. The New Year's incidents have caused public anger and fear. Merkel had until now refused to set up an upper limit on the number of asylum seekers Germany could take in although she has already come under intense pressure because of the thousands of asylum seekers streaming into Germany every day. But since resistance and nervousness is growing in the country Merkel modified her liberal stance toward refugees. She has now backed changes to the law to make it easier to expel those convicted of crime. Any refugee handed a jail time - even if it was a suspended sentence - should be kicked out of the country. Furthermore the government has begun to tighten up checks, including reinstating individual interviews in asylum applications for Syrians, which had earlier been waved.

[Slovakia's PM vows never to settle Muslim refugees](#)

NEWEUROPE, 14 January 2016

According to Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico Muslim migrants and refugees are not welcome in Slovakia. Fearing incidents like the Paris' terrorist attacks or the New Year's Eve assaults that took place in Cologne Fico vowed that he will not allow refugees from the Middle East to establish a united Muslim community in the country, thereby rejecting a plan of the European Union to resettle 120,000 refugees among 26 of the EU's 28 member states. Fico has also called for a summit of EU members to address immigration and refugee issues. In December, his left-nationalist government filed a lawsuit challenging the EU decree that it must accept 802 migrants irrespective of their religious background.

[4 people, including 3 children drown as refugee sinks off Turkey's Aegean coast](#)

Daily Sabah Turkey, 15 January 2016

On 15 January at least four people, three children and a woman, drowned when a vessel carrying 13 refugees sank off Turkey's western coast while trying to reach the Greek island of Lesbos. Rescue boats were sent by the Turkish Coast Guard after a fisherman reported the incident. They managed to rescue nine refugees with the help of some fishermen. The survivors received medical treatment. Another accident took place earlier in the day. A boat capsized off the Greek island of Agathonisi near to Turkey's Didim coast. Twenty people were rescued while three refugee children died. Turkey's five Aegean provinces, Çanakkale, Balıkesir, Izmir, Muğla and Aydın, are prime spots for refugees leaving Turkey for the EU, with Greek islands lying within sight of the Turkish coast. According to an estimation made by the International Organization for Migration 805 people died at sea in the Aegean in 2015.

[Turkey 'acting illegally' over Syria refugees deportations](#)

Mark Lowen, BBC News, 15 January 2016

According to allegations made by Syrian refugees, Turkey forces refugees who are waiting to enter Europe to go back to their home country. These allegations match up with researches made by Amnesty International saying that possibly hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees have been sent back to Syria and Iraq. If this turns out to be true Turkey acts absolutely illegal, both under Turkish and international law since the 'non-refoulement' principle of international humanitarian law prohibits states from deporting individuals to a war zone. The Turkish government denies these accusations saying the UNHCR interviews all returnees at the border to make sure they are going to Syria voluntarily.

[Denmark says plan to seize refugees' valuables misunderstood](#)

Mick Krever, CNN, 15 January 2016

On Wednesday, 13 January, the Danish parliament debated about a controversial proposed law requiring newly arrived refugees to hand over their valuables in order to pay for their accommodation while applying for asylum. Under the proposal, asylum seekers who enter the country with more than 10,000 kroner, or about \$1,450, in assets would have to help finance their stay. The proposal, which has outraged humanitarian activists and raised the ire of United Nations officials, is the latest in a series of migrant-detering steps taken recently by Denmark. On Thursday the Danish government clarified that the law does not include seizing items of special sentimental value. Local refugee advocates warn that there are worse aspects to the new law than the articles concerning refugees' belongings. If passed, the law will prevent most Syrian refugees from being granted more than one year's sanctuary, unless they can prove that they are individually under threat in Syria. Parents who arrive without their children will have to wait at least three years before they can apply to be reunited with their family. Denmark also recently introduced more stringent border controls, forcing more potential asylum seekers back to Germany, which took in about 1.1 million last year.

Regional Displacement Issues

[Mozambique unrest drives refugees into Malawi](#)

News 24, 14 January 2016

Hundreds of refugees from Mozambique, especially from the Tete Province, are flooding into Malawi because government forces are burning down their homes and barns in the hunt for supporter of the Renamo opposition leader Afonso Dhlakama, who aims to seize power in six of Mozambique's eleven provinces, all of them located in the centre and north of the country. Dhlakama, who led Renamo in a 16-year civil war which ended in 1992, has refused to accept the results of 2014 elections which saw him beaten once again by his old enemy, the Frelimo party led by President Filipe Nyusi. Sporadic clashes between Renamo and government forces have taken place in recent months, but tensions rose further when Dhlakama vowed on 16 December 2015 to take power by March in six provinces. Dhlakama said he would gain ground thanks to public support, but warned he would retaliate with force if the government tried to prevent his takeover. The Tete provincial police denied the refugees' claims saying that an armed conflict does not exist.

[UN criticizes DRC refugee camp dismantling](#)

AFP, News 24, 14 January 2016

On 13 January 2016 the United Nations criticized the closing of a refugee camp, around 70 kilometres northwest of Goma, capital of North Kivu province, DRC, accusing local authorities of dislodging thousands of vulnerable people. A week ago a firearm had been discovered in the camp. Dismantling the camp seems to be a collective punishment therefor. Attempts by humanitarian organisations to keep the camp open had been ignored. In December 2014, authorities closed nearby camp Kiwanja, holding around 2300 people, with barely any warning after discovering six firearms as well as a number of other camps. The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) seeks to make recommendations to authorities to avoid such abrupt closures in future. UN officials urge the government to respect international humanitarian law in a war-ravaged country which last September counted some 1.6 million displaced people.

[Al-Shabaab kill 10 in Attack on Somali Government Base](#)

Mohamed Sheikh Nor, *Bloomberg*, 14 January 2016

According to Radio Andalus, a broadcaster that supports militants linked to al-Qaeda, at least 10 people were killed in Somalia when al-Shabaab Islamist fighters attacked a government base with rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns. Nur Hussein Gutale, the local governor, said that government forces killed nine al-Shabaab fighters during the attack in Elshil near the central Somali town of Elbur. Only one government soldier was killed in the battle and six others were injured. Al-Shabaab has waged an insurgency in the East African nation since 2006 in a bid to impose a strict form of Islamic law. While the group has lost ground since being driven out of the capital, Mogadishu in 2011 by government and African Union forces, it continues to stage deadly gun and bomb attacks. Ethiopian and Somali troops captured Elbur and surrounding areas from al-Shabaab in March 2014 after about eight years of Islamist control.

[Al-Shabaab hits African Union base in Somalia](#)

Michael Pearson/Robyn Kriel, *CNN*, 15 January 2016

Al-Shabaab fighters attacked an African Union base in El Adde in south-western Somalia on Friday, 15 January 2016. An unknown number of Kenyan troops serving with the African Union force fighting the militant group were killed. The raid began with explosions from two car bombs driven by suicide bombers. Troops of the AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) turned the attack back but some of its forces had been killed and others wounded. While al-Shabaab claims large-scale casualties among AMISOM troops, Gedo's regional Governor said that Kenyan and Somali forces were still in control of the town. Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta vowed retribution.

[U.N. rights chief calls for investigation of rapes, mass graves in Burundi](#)

Radina Gigova and Ralph Ellis, *CNN*, 15 January 2016

The U.N. human rights chief on Friday called for an investigation into new reports of mass graves and soldiers raping women during home searches in the central African nation of Burundi. Nine mass graves holding 100 bodies total have been found, including one on a Burundi army base. Furthermore thirteen cases of sexual violence against women have been reported. According to witnesses the army carried out retaliatory attacks after street violence in mid-December triggering new and extremely disturbing patterns of violations. In Bujumbura, the Burundian capital, 87 people were killed in the violence last month. Kidnapping, secret detention centres, mass graves and an increasing number of cases of torture were reported since then. Burundi has experienced months of violence since President Pierre Nkurunziza announced in April that he would run for a third term. That seemed to be

a clear violation of the agreement that ended the country's civil war and Burundi's Constitution. He won re-election in July. The subsequent unrest has left scores dead and caused more than 170,000 people to flee the country.

[Sudan: '1,000 People Fled Violence in West Darfur Village' – OCHA](#)

allAfrica, 15 January 2016

The OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) reported that an estimated number of 1,000 people from Mouli, south of West Darfur's capital El Geneina, have left the village since the attacks by armed men last weekend, and fled to a camp for displaced people. Tensions had developed after an unidentified group attacked the village of Mouli on 9 January, displacing large numbers of residents to El Geneina, where they protested the next day at the governor's office, leading to the closure of local businesses and schools. A security force opened fire. According to authorities a total of 12 people were killed, including three of the attackers. The approximately 1,000 newly displaced people from Mouli left the premises of the Governor's office and moved to Abu Zar on Monday. The Darfur conflict began in 2003 when mainly non-Arab tribes took up arms against the Arab-led government in Khartoum, accusing it of discrimination.

South Africa

[SAPS Mozambique border operation a success](#)

SABC, 12 January 2016

After numerous car hijackings had escalated with some vehicles ending up in Mozambique, a police operation has been started in Mkhanyakude district in northern KwaZulu-Natal in December 2015 in order to tackle cross-border crime. Since then at least twenty people have been arrested for various offences related to border crime. Stolen vehicles and other goods such as an unlicensed firearm and ammunition have been recovered and 18 undocumented foreigners have been found. Community members have applauded police for their commitment to fighting crime in the area. However, the community wants the replacement of a 14 kilometre border fence with a high concrete wall to prevent stolen cars from crossing the border using other routes.

[Hundreds arrested for violent riots outside Home Affairs in Pretoria](#)

Mpho Raborife, *News24*, 13 January 2016

On Wednesday, 13 January, a group of protesters had gathered outside the Marabastad Home Affairs department. When Home Affairs officials began assisting nationals from the SADC region disruptions began. Usually Home Affairs processes different regions on different days of the week. When the Home Affairs management decided to take in some SADC nationals who had not been dealt with on the previous day, foreign nationals from other African regions were demanding to be helped as well. They showed their displeasure by throwing stones and damaging property. This violence eventually led to the arrestment of 287 people by the police, some of them might be charged as well.

South Africa: Minister Derek Hanekom Acts on Alleged Racism at Resort

allAfrica, 13 January 2016

Minister of Tourism Derek Hanekom says strong action must be taken to root out all remnants of racism in South Africa. The majority of South Africans who respect each other's rights should not allow the actions of the small minority to undermine the strides that the nation has made towards equality. This statement follows allegations that the owner of the Klipspringer Guesthouse and Caravan Park in Modimolle, Limpopo Province, ordered a 14-year-old black teenager out of the resort's swimming pool on New Year's Eve as other guests refused to swim in the pool while he was in it. Hanekom instructed the Department of Tourism's legal team to refer the incident to the Human Rights Commission. People who feel they have been victims of racist behaviour at any tourism establishment or attraction should report their experience to the Department's Tourism Complaints Officer, who has a mandate to ensure that their rights are protected.