**STATEMENT**

**UPR47
Review of Norway**

**4 November 2024**

 **Statement delivered by State Secretary Even ERIKSEN, Ministry of Justice and Public Security**

*Check against delivery*

During the last review, Norway received a number of recommendations concerning the human rights situation for foreign citizens and the migrant population in Norway.

As a country receiving a high number of immigrants from all over the world, we are striving to make sure that all arrivals are met in ways that fully respect their human rights.

Let me give an update on developments in some relevant areas:

The Norwegian Government is striving for a predictable and responsible immigration policy that ensures due process within the framework of Norway’s international obligations. Norway’s asylum practice aims to provide protection for persons in need and is based on the principle of fair and humane treatment of all applicants.

We are continuously strengthening measures to ensure the protection of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors who choose to live in reception centers. They are a particular vulnerable group and are therefore given high priority in all stages of the immigration administration.

 All unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors need a level of care and accommodation designed to meet their particular needs. Norway has an age-adjusted reception system. The reception facilities offered to unaccompanied minors *over* 15 are specially designed to meet the needs of this age group. In recent years, various measures have been implemented to ensure adequate care for this group. Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers under this age are offered accommodation in designated care centers by the Child Welfare Service.

In 2022, a new oversight mechanism was introduced for the management of centers for those over 15 years. This mechanism has already had an impact, since inspections have pointed to a need for several improvements. The authorities are considering increased funding to enhance the quality of staff in the reception centers to strengthen the childcare competence.

Certain countries have expressed concern about the high number of minors who disappear from reception centers. Although police reports indicate that minors who disappear mainly leave of their own free will, without any force from traffickers or others, there has been a lack of clarity on which procedures to follow when a child goes missing. New guidelines were introduced last year for the police, staff at the centers and the child welfare authorities, to enhance the procedures for the search for minor asylum seekers who disappear.

The number of missing children has declined. 13 cases of missing unaccompanied minors were reported in the one-year period from April 2023 to April 2024.

Norway is continuously implementing measures for the effective application of the principle of non-refoulement of asylum seekers, which is an important principle to us. All Asylum applications are carefully and individually assessed. Asylum seekers in need of international protection will be granted asylum, in accordance with this principle.

Applicants deemed not to be in need of protection are expected to leave on their own or assisted. Otherwise, they may face deportation. Deportation might include a stay at our Police Immigration Detention Centre. Conditions at this center has been criticized, and we have made improvements by easing several of the restrictions at the institution.

\*\*\*

Our police force is well trained, with all staff having completed the three-year bachelor degree at the police university college. However, engaging with a very diverse immigrant population demands a high level of awareness.

Several countries have recommended better protection of youth from ethnical or racist profiling from the police.

A national Action Plan for the police on diversity, dialogue and trust for the period from 2022 to the end of 2025 is now under implementation.

The plan aims to ensure equal services to all groups in society, increase the proportion of employees from underrepresented groups, and create an open and inclusive police force that builds good relationships with all segments of the population.

Attention is given to the practice of *personal checks* and to how these are experienced by citizens. We understand that young men from the immigrant community can feel that they are being checked only because of the color of their skin, and not for any valid reason. To prevent checks being perceived as unjustified, the police are obliged to carefully explain the basis for the check.

In 2023, Oslo Police District carried out a pilot *receipt scheme* project. Over 5000 receipts were handed out after personal checks. An evaluation of the pilot project published last December pointed to several challenges with the methodology, and receipts did not seem to improve trust in the police. The evaluators pointed to the need for further training for the police and for considering a broader receipt scheme. Work continues on this important issue.

Many countries recommended us to take further measures to combat hate crime, pointing out that immigrant communities can be vulnerable to prejudices and aggression.

We established a *National Competence Centre on Hate Crime* within the police in 2021. It is within the Centre’s remit to help increase competence in all areas related to hate crime, including investigation, prosecution and victim assistance. Work on the identification, registration, and prosecution of hate crime in the police districts is an important part of the competence-boosting measures that are being implemented by the Centre. The prosecuting authorities are responsible for ensuring that cases of this type are prioritised and prosecuted.

The competence centre has strengthened police efforts. In practice, it can be difficult for the police to distinguish between lawful and illegal statements, so guidance from a specialist agency is needed.

We experience that advice and support from the police to victims of hate crime has given victims a sense of security and belonging.

\*\*\*

Norway is a destination country for *trafficking in human beings*. Nearly all victims are foreign citizens, often being exploited by countrymen. Some of these traffickers are based in Norway, and recruit victims from their home country.

As other countries, we struggle to identify and protect victims engaged in prostitution, as well as those exploited in forced labour. The purchase of sexual services is criminalized in Norway, and has contributed to a reduced level of prostitution. The police have specialized staff to investigate trafficking, and there is broad ongoing cooperation between police, labour inspectors and other authorities in tackling exploitative practices in workplaces.

\*\*\*

Our police must protect all children from violence and threats within families. There is concern about children from certain immigrant families, who live in a violent and controlling environment.

We do not tolerate physical punishments or violence of any kind within families, directed against children or other household members.

To meet the challenges involved in communicating with families from different backgrounds, cultures and practices, the police in Oslo have developed a special model for threat assessments and preventive efforts.

The model helps to uncover and stop ongoing violence, and to prevent new acts of violence. Both those who are exposed to and those who perpetrate violence are offered talks, safety advice and guidance. This means that risk analysts with police training work in teams with social and healthcare personnel with different professional backgrounds, as well as psychological specialists.

The model has proved effectful, and will be introduced in several other police districts.

Thank you.