
PSI and EPSU condemn passage of “refugee-stripping regulations” in Europe

Public Services International (PSI) and the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) condemn the recent passage of ever more stringent policies in European countries receiving refugees.

Last week, the Danish parliament passed a law allowing authorities to seize cash and belongings from refugees, in return for living in asylum centres. The policy is part of the move to discourage refugees from coming. Switzerland followed suit by issuing regulations requiring refugees arriving in the country to turn over to the state any assets worth more than 1,000 Swiss francs, according to recent news reports.

“This tragically reminds us of the Nazi’s racial laws against the Jewish. It is downright shocking and must be stopped immediately,” says Rosa Pavanelli, Public Services International General Secretary.

Asylum seekers and refugees risk their lives fleeing their homes in the most adverse conditions. Thousands have already lost their lives, many among them children, fleeing for their lives and safety in haste under the most difficult circumstances. They have barely brought any belongings with them. Yet, what little savings they have, the few belongings that they are able to carry, are confiscated by the state that receives them.

“What kind of civilization have we become, to tolerate this practice?” asks Pavanelli.

Refugees have the right to seek protection from the receiving State, as enshrined in the UN 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. They have the right to have access to public services such as shelter, health, education and to seek social protection.

“Not in our history should we be remembered making refugees pay for accessing these basic human rights,” says Jan Willem Goudriaan, General Secretary of the European Federation of Public Service Unions. “We have approached the European Parliament demanding condemnation of this Danish law. We expect the European institutions to take immediate action,” he adds.