

Danish Lawmakers Approve Controversial Refugee Assets Bill



Copenhagen, January 27 (RHC)-- Denmark's parliament approved Tuesday a controversial proposal to confiscate refugees' valuables to help cover their accommodation costs in the country.

The bill, which is the latest attempt by the center-right government of Denmark to curb the influx of asylum seekers into the country, was passed by a majority of 81 of the 109 lawmakers present at the legislature.

The contentious proposal was revised amid widespread criticism at home and abroad when it was announced earlier this month. The bill allows police to seize valuables worth more than DKK 10,000 (about USD 1,450) from asylum seekers to help cover their housing and food costs while their cases were being processed. It also includes measures such as delaying family reunification to at least three years.

The issue was discussed on Monday at the European Parliament, where Denmark's Integration Minister Inger Stojberg said no items deemed sentimental would be taken.

The United Nations Refugee Agency, also known as the UNHCR, has warned that the proposal violates the UN Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Denmark, which took in 20,000 refugees last year, is not the first European country to demand the assets of asylum seekers. Earlier this month, Switzerland faced criticism for seizing assets from about 100 people in 2015. Under Swiss regulations, asylum seekers have to hand over assets above USD 1,000.

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