

## **UNRESOLVED CASES WITH CHILDREN MISSING**

According to my experience, there are two situations that lead to children disappearing:

Rejection of asylum application or limited residence permit up to the age of 18.

Some also disappears when they are to be transferred to a new camp.

I have chosen to present two of my cases.

### **BOY FROM ALBANIA -16 YEARS OLD**

His parents were divorced and he has never lived with his father. His mother left for Greece when the boy was 11-12 years of age and he was left in his grandmother's care.

In Albania, the boy was forced to work for the local mafia transporting drugs for them.

When he tried to quit, he was beaten up to ensure that he did not tell anybody and continued to work for them.

He arrived in Norway June 2013 and after some time he asked for asylum. In Norway it was suspected that he had been trafficked to Norway as soon after arriving he met a Norwegian man he knew from Albania and stayed at his house for some time before asking for asylum. The boy refused to give any information about this man in Norway.

The boy was denied asylum and permit of residence, but after appeal he got a limited permit valid till his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and then with the obligation to leave the country.

He was moved to a camp in the south of Norway. Two months before the expiry of his permit, he disappeared. He was reported missing 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2014. The lawyer was informed and received missing persons notification. It has until recently, not been a part of this procedure to inform the lawyer.

### **What could have been done?**

First of all, the boy should never have had a limited residence permit which in general impacts children negatively. This kind of permit is definitely not in the best interest of the child. His

life was essentially put on hold, whilst to waiting to be returned to Albania on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Considering that he was to be deported, what could have been done to avoid his disappearance and facilitated the return for him?

1. The boy was 10 months earlier reported to be in a dubious environment with criminal elements and this was to be reported to the National Child Protection Services. If such a report was made, the lawyer was never informed of it. Regardless of these, nothing was done to help him.
2. He also had a waiting period as he was to be assigned a new legal guardian, as he was to be transferred to a new centre. Children should ideally remain at one centre, especially as every time they are moved they are also assigned a new guardian. A child should have one guardian until their case is completed.
3. An investigation should have been opened according to the law of child protection. This in turn have made a investigation case for the child protection agency, who would have looked into his situation with the obligation to do something for him, get him alternative activities , school etc.
4. The responsible in the centre for the children over 15 years of age, are the staff of the centre. They are doing their best but without skills and resources. This must be changed. The National Child Protection Services must be equally responsible for all children in Norway.
5. The staff at the camp and the boy's legal guardian had for some time, before his disappearance, reported that the boy was severely depressed, sad (often crying) and anxious. Nothing was done. He should have had professional psychological help and an adult to support and help him to deal with the fact that he had to return to Albania... This should have been a practical focus on options, applying for financial help to assist him reestablish himself in Albania as well as personal guidance. This should have been done in considerable time before the date of his return.
6. Establishing contact with his grandmother should also have been done as in considerable time before the expiry of his residency permit.
7. The boy stayed more than a year in Norway after he got the limited residence permit and with more or less no meaningful activity. With a short term course or education in some kind of skill he could have educated himself on preparing for his return next year. He would then not have returned completely empty handed.

## **BOY FROM ALGERIE 15 YEARS OLD**

The next case is a boy from Algeria who came to Norway 15 years old asking for asylum.

The boy was used by the mafia in Algeria to smuggle drugs and he was sent to Europe to work for them .He was sent to several European countries, but managed to escape in the Netherlands, fled to France and ended up in Norway.

He disappeared from the centre short time after coming to Norway, was found in Oslo and was sent to a centre for minors, private institution close to a small village in the south of Norway. The centre is supposed to be a specially designed facility for children who been exposed to trafficking. Cocoon, a shielded institution. That it is shielded means there are strict security measures in regards to residents and visitor. One of these measures is also that a child is not allowed to leave the centre...

The permit to stay was rejected by Oslo municipality and the boy eventually came under the municipality of Eidsvoll. Eventually the boy ran away after his friend was detained and deported, but he was later found and once again sent to Cocoon.

He disappeared a third time and for an extended period lived on the streets of Oslo whilst waiting for the result of his asylum case.

UDI denied then to handle the case till the boy had appeared with an address.

One year later, at the age of 16 there were no more information about him.

Short time before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was caught by the police in Denmark and returned to Norway. He stayed a short time in Norway and disappeared again in December 2013.

He was returned from Denmark 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2014 and now expelled for 6 years for theft.

His asylum case is still not finished and he is reported missing again.

He kept in touch with his lawyer for a long time when he was missing in 2011 asking for a reply, but gave up when he learned that his case would be stopped by the UDI if he did not stay at the centre.

If the boy had received residence permit shortly after arriving in Norway, he would most likely have remained in the country, and avoided most of the afore-mentioned problems. He ran away because he had no faith in the authorities and feared that he would be deported, which was re-enforced when his friend was deported.