



## Economic and Social Council

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

**Sixty-seventh session**

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the  
twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled  
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the  
twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by MiRA Resource Center for Black Immigrant and Refugee Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### The Loss of Rights for Immigrant and Refugee Women

MiRA Resource Center for Black immigrant and refugee women would like to shed light on the conditions that usually are unknown to the public. Immigrants and refugees constantly meet stricter requirements to obtain fundamental rights and social security benefits. The systematic tightening of requirements for the last 15 years in Norway had made it hard to obtain fundamental rights and social security benefits, rights that go without saying for the rest of the population. It has become difficult for the immigrant population to get the permission to live with spouse and children, to get permanent residence permits and to meet the requirements for Norwegian citizenship. MiRA Center has also documented how changes in the National Insurance schemes have meant that several groups have lost the right to minimum benefits in the event of disability and while receiving an old-age pension.

Immigrant and refugee women victim of violence face several serious issues of security. In case of separation or divorce, migrant women face the threat of being deported. Their insecure legal status forces many women to stay in violent relationships. The MiRA Resource Center has actively been fighting against the three-year rule but unfortunately the rules have been made even stricter over the past several years. It's not just the three-year rule alone, but the migrant spouse must have a job and a certain amount of income before they can apply for an independent residence permit. There is a provision that women who are victims of violence can be exempted from the three-year rule. However, the practice shows that the burden of proof is often on the victim and many women are afraid to apply while still in a relationship due to the fear that their applications might be rejected by the authorities.

MiRA Center has reviewed the opinions of various consultative bodies on the proposals.

It has been thought-provoking that as many as 107 of the 121 consultative bodies were opposed to the Government's proposal to raise the requirement for Norwegian language skills in order to obtain Norwegian citizenship during the round of consultation, the ministry concerned – most often, the Ministry of Justice – the proposition was forwarded to the Storting/ Parliament for consideration more or less unchanged.

Within the family immigration regulations, the income requirement means that the right to family life is conditioned by how resourceful and privileged one is. We are worried that Norwegian authorities are more concerned that Norway should not appear to be a particularly attractive country to settle in for refugees. Various governments have argued that one of the measures to avoid this is to weaken the rights of refugees and immigrants. This is done, as we have seen, by setting stricter requirements for receiving public benefits through the National Insurance Scheme, by lowering the level of benefits for asylum seekers, and by tightening the right to family immigration/reunification.

MiRA center has documented that various governments have proposed numerous new restrictions and regulations, and the Storting/Parliament has passed new immigration rules with only a handful of no votes, which clearly signals that there is a group of foreigners who are unwanted in this country: namely refugees and immigrants from countries outside Europe. This is the implicit subtext of an immigration legislation that has several times a year since 2005 made it harder to renew temporary residence permits, harder to obtain permanent residence permits and harder to be granted family immigration, but easier to be deported. Such an implicit message: That we need rules in order to limit the number of refugees who are able to

obtain the right to permanent residency in this country, – such an implicit message contributes to create hostility towards immigrants in general and refugees in particular. It seems irresponsible that the Government and the Storting/parliament argue for a policy that may have such negative effects, while at the same time regretting that negative attitudes and racism towards the minority population and extremism gain increased approval.

These restrictions have a negative effect on immigrant and refugee Women, particularly single mothers and elderly women. The war in Ukraine showed the difference between the reception of refugees from a European country and from the rest of the world. We urge CSW to highlight the conditions hundreds of thousands of immigrants and refugees are facing within the western democracies. The loss of rights for immigrant and refugee women must be a serious concern to all and not only for immigrant and refugees to fight alone for their rights.

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