



Press release

**Country:** Sweden

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015

## **Sweden: Harsh Border Controls Signal Dramatic Change in Sweden's Reception of Refugees**

**Since 11th November 2015**, Sweden has introduced discriminatory border controls targeting potential asylum seekers. These measures include identification checks on trains and ferries from Denmark and Germany, as well as mandatory transfer to camps outside the Migration Board offices in Malmö. The measures have been largely uncontested by Swedish society due to the rise of the Sweden Democrats and the subsequent increase in racist rhetoric.

The Migration Board argued that border controls would facilitate a more “well-organized and managed arrival” of refugees. However, the border controls have led to people being detained in camps around the Migration Board, which are under police co-ordination. This has led to people being forced to sleep in tents, with little protection from the cold weather conditions. The Migration Board argued that the new controls would prevent people from sleeping on the street, however this new arrangement is hardly preferable, as people are sleeping outside whilst being detained against their will.

As the Center for Refugee Solidarity is an independent Swedish organization committed to monitor the situation of refugees in the Middle East and North Africa and to advocate on their behalf, we are concerned that refugees are now being discriminated against in Sweden. Many refugees come to Europe due to the human rights violations and the deteriorating conditions in the camps in MENA states. Harsh border controls will therefore not be an effective deterrent, but will further worsen the situation for refugees in Europe.

**Nader G. Attar, the Executive Director of the Center for Refugee Solidarity** stresses that *“By closing the borders, rather than focusing on large-scale resettlement programs in the MENA region, Sweden is forcing more refugees to enter the country through illegal, and more dangerous, routes.”*

Additionally, it is worrying that these measures have been largely uncontested by Swedish society, with the notable absence of a strong and visible opposition. This reflects the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment among the population, nourished by the media and the increase in popularity of far-right parties such as the Sweden Democrats. The Sweden Democrats have opportunistically used the crisis to increase racist sentiment, using methods such as sending ‘misinformation’ leaflets to private residences across Sweden.

The Center is concerned that these tactics will affect not only newly-arrived refugees, but also the integration of migrant communities within Swedish society. This will also have an impact on the structure of society, threatening to create a more polarized society, with an increased probability of violence against migrant communities.

The current border controls will not improve the security of either refugees or Swedish society. Though Europe needs to take more responsibility for refugees, Sweden's closure of the borders only harms those that it claims to help.