

PRESS RELEASE FROM NOAS FEBRUARY 16th 2016:

Norwegian celebrities turn Danish “jewellery law” on its head

Last week NOAS (Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers) started the campaign #etsmykkeforenflyktning #ajewelforarefugee) in order to draw attention to the Norwegian legislative proposals that were distributed for comments at the end of December. As a response to the Danish jewellery law, they have created a campaign, accompanied by a video that has gone viral.

Nearly 400.000 people have seen the video where actress Ane Dahl Torp, author Gert Nygårdshaug and comedian Sigrid Bonde Tusvik each give away a piece of jewellery to show their support for refugees, as well as distance themselves from a political rhetoric that deprives people of their dignity, and treats refugees as masses and not as individuals.

Using jewellery as a strong symbol

- We are using jewellery as a symbol for something very personal that you would give someone you respect and value, says Austenå.

The heavily discussed Danish jewellery law has become an international symbol for a type of politics that would deprive refugees of their dignity and their rights. Several of the retrenchments that have been proposed by the Norwegian government goes further towards robbing refugees of basic rights than the Danish law, and will harm both women and children to a great extent.

- The new legislative proposals would make it possible to expel minor refugees from the country as soon as they become 18, making it difficult for families to reunite. This is a cold and frightening development for Norway, says general secretary Ann-Margit Austenå.

The mayor of the capital supports the campaign

A large part of the public are getting involved, and on Tuesday this week the mayor gave away one of her dearest pieces of jewellery.

- I want to show people that Oslo is a city with a big heart. One that values dignity and compassion for all. Many of the refugees are children. They need to see that we care, says Marianne Borgen.

Another person who has become involved is Liv Tørres, executive director of the Nobel Peace Center.

- We are in a situation where we must contemplate which values we want to have as a nation. As the politicians' rhetoric becomes steadily more extreme, it's time to take a step back and take a look at what is happening to our society.

A cold wind over Norway

The general secretary of NOAS reacts against the strong wording used by politicians, and a development where the suggestions are becoming more extreme.

- As the politicians are starting to use harsher wording, something also happens in online comment sections regarding how we, as citizens, allow ourselves to discuss refugees. It seems like many forget what these people are fleeing from, and they are more and more being regarded as a mass, rather than as actual people, who could just as well have been either you or me, says Austenå.

Those who chose to give away their jewellery could really feel what it is like to give away something that is important to them. Now, we are hoping that as many people as possible will get involved.

Spreading fear

There are many who are concerned about the demanding situations that might arise from a large influx of refugees. However, the general secretary underlines that the people who are facing the largest trials are the refugees themselves. She warns Norwegian politicians against rash decisions that can have dramatic consequences for individuals.

- Several politicians have expressed concerns that we might be tearing down our own welfare state. However, it is not a politician's job to spread and amplify fear. Their job is to urge people to stay calm, finding unifying solutions and to make the best possible decisions for us all.

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