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## ***Denmark to Refugees: Be My Guest, Just Not in My House***

Political culture in Europe has sunk below the Plimsoll Line. Denmark's parliament, the Folketinget, was the very first to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. On June 3 this year, it passed another piece of legislation aimed at offshoring asylum seekers. Even Social Democratic politicians are checking their morality at the door.

The Danish ministers for 'integration' and international development, Mattias Tesfaye and Flemming Møller Mortensen, popped to Rwanda in April and signed a 'memorandum of understanding' with secret protocols just like in colonial days. Having already stripped Syrian refugees of their permissions to stay, their abdication of responsibility is clearly settled policy.

Liberal, humane Denmark is planning to sweep its asylum seekers under Africa's dusty carpet. Danish politicians see themselves as bravely blazing the trail the European Union should follow if it wants to prevent future FUBARs like the 2015/16 migration surge.

A fog of historical amnesia shrouds Europe. Perhaps it's because surviving World War II veterans are now almost as rare as principled U.S. senators. The fact that Africa was a haven for Europeans fleeing the continental devastation of that war is a forgotten irony despite the enduring popularity of the movie *Casablanca*.

In Europe, leaders hubristically assume there will never be another European war; that the long-term issue is inflow, rather than outflow, of refugees. They can't even recall the 1990s.

Like Kamala Harris's 'do not come' mantra (one her speech writer should have saved for the bedroom), today's rhetoric on asylum can be summed up in a simple imperative: 'Piss off'. The goal of Denmark's new policy, says Social Democrat MP Rasmus Stoklund, is to engineer a scenario in which 'they will stop going to Denmark'. He later rephrased this in fluent doublespeak as changing 'the incentive structure'.

For asylum seekers, 'offshoring' is hell. Lack of oversight and differential juridical environments open myriad vectors of abuse and corruption, not to mention depredation and disease. UNHCR 'firmly opposes' any 'plans to 'forcibly transfer asylum-seekers to other countries and undermine the principles of international refugee protection'.

Politicians don't want to apprehend the reality that future migrant flows are unpredictable and states should show as much solidarity as they can in a world as shrunken as ours. In their pusillanimity they think they can't sell empathy to voters (spoiler alert: they could if they were smart).

They should know this: the old way of doing things is no longer okay. The West can't simply 'offshore' all its problems for ever. It already sends half its trash and all its wars to states unable to pay the entry fee required for basic respect in the international community. In the end, what is lost along with the personal memories of war is politicians' immanent compassion for the poor, huddled masses commemorated on the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, back when European war was a fact of life. In the case of Tesfaye, the hubris sits oddly. His father was an Ethiopian refugee.

*John Clamp writes for [Maqshosh](#).*

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