



M i R A

STATEMENT

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Delivered by: MiRA-Resource Centre for Black Immigrant and Refugee Women

The MiRA Centre in Norway is a non-governmental organization established in 1989 and since 2001 has a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. MiRA-Centre works with issues related to gender equality of minority women in Norway. Through legal assistance, information and networking work, course activities, political participation and cultural and social activities, we seek to improve the living conditions of minority women and their children in Norway.

An important part of the MiRA Centre's work is to provide advice and guidance to women and young girls with minority backgrounds about their rights, opportunities and obligations in Norwegian society.

In this statement, I will focus on two topics

Womens rights:

Violence against women

In December last year, the Government presented its escalation plan of action against violence and abuse against children and violence in close relationships. Unfortunately, this plan is not sufficient in the work against violence. And we still see how the Norway are unable to prevent, and combat violence in close relationships.

Norwegian Centre for violence and traumatic stress study's scoping survey from 2023 shows that violence and abuse are still a serious problem in Norway. The extent is high in the population, and women are particularly vulnerable to serious violence in close relationships and sexual violence.¹

Women with minority backgrounds are a particularly vulnerable group, this applies especially to women who have arrived as refugees or asylum seekers. In 2023, 62 per cent of the residents of crisis centres in Norway had an immigrant background. Factors such as poor language skills, low digital skills and low attachment to the labourmarket increases the vulnerability of this group.²

But also their rights are linked to their residence status, which makes them extra vulnerable to being exposed to violence.

In 2022 The MiRA Center published an essential book, "The shadow side of the Welfare State: Loss of rights for minorities,», which documents the restriction of rights that has taken place over the past fifteen years. The book documents, among other things, that it has become more difficult for women who have come to Norway through family reunification to apply for

¹ <https://www.nkvts.no/rapport/omfang-av-vold-og-overgrep-i-den-norske-befolkningen/>

² <https://www.buudir.no/statistikk-og-analyse/krisesentrene/om-beboere#section-250>

divorce. This is because the requirements for permanent residence are constantly being tightened. From 2017, for example, there is a requirement for a higher amount of income or full-time studies and a requirement for passing a language test to obtain a permanent residence permit. From 2020, the need for residence increased from 3 to 5 years for those who family reunited with refugees. For others it still remain 3 years. Without a permanent residence permit, women who have come to Norway through family reunification may risk deportation if they divorce. Thus, the stricter requirements for permanent residence can lead victims of violence to remain in violent relationships for a long time for fear of deportation.

Minority/Immigrants rights

In Norway, we have an welfare state and many of the most important human rights are incorporated into the constitution. Nevertheless, one may ask whether the benefits of the welfare state are as universal as we like to believe, and whether the constitutional human rights in reality apply to all citizens of Norway. Because even though many political measures and reforms are being taken to promote compliance with human rights in Norway, developments in the area of immigration policy mean that access to many fundamental rights is becoming more difficult to achieve for the part of the population that has an immigrant background, and especially minority women.

Loss of rights for minorities in Norway in recent years

The right to e.g. family immigration, permanent residence permits and Norwegian citizenship still exists on paper, the requirements for achieving this have become so strict in recent years that it is highly uncertain for some groups whether they will ever be able to meet them. This development has taken place gradually over several years through regular legislative and regulatory changes. Many of these changes have significant consequences for the welfare of the immigrant and minority populations:

The fear of high numbers of arrivals ensured broad support for a number of tightening of the social security regulations and immigration legislation. The result of these tightening measures is that refugees and immigrants living in Norway have far poorer rights than people who were born and raised here.

Single mothers with an immigrant background who have lived in Norway for less than 5 years will for. example, no longer be entitled to transitional benefits if they are divorced and disability pensioner and old age pensioner who came to Norway as adult immigrants may risk after e.g. 20 years in Norway and many years of work they are still not entitled to the minimum benefits from the National Insurance Scheme.³

Children of these groups are therefore at far greater risk of growing up in poverty than other groups.

We recommend:

³ Bente Puntervold Bø og Asla Maria Bø Fuglestad *Velferdsstatens skyggeside Rettighetstap for minoriteter*, MIRA-Senteret (2022)

- A comprehensive review of the immigration legislation to ensure the legal security of women and children exposed to violence.
- Strengthened information about the rights of women with minority backgrounds, both new arrivals and those who have lived in Norway for a long time, so that they gain more knowledge about their legal rights.
- Raise knowledge in the support system about vulnerability factors and about the legal conditions under which immigrants live.
 - Enhance measures to safeguard the rights and welfare of all migrants