

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Denmark, Former Owner Of USVI, Plans To Send Unwanted Migrants To Isolated Island

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Staff **December 04, 2018**



Denmark is making its stance on unwanted migrants clear by relegating them to a small, hard-to-reach island the country owns named Lindholm Island. The island houses stables, laboratories and a crematory of a center for researching contagious animal diseases.

One of two ferries that serve the island is called "the Virus".

Denmark, which owned the U.S. Virgin Islands, then known as the Danish West Indies, [until March 31, 1917](#), the day it sold the territory to the United States for \$25 million (\$478 million in current prices), has been decidedly hostile to immigrants as of late. The

country's immigration minister, Inger Stojberg, recently wrote on Facebook, "They are unwanted in Denmark, and they will feel that."

Denmark's center-right government and the right-wing Danish People's Party announced an agreement on Friday to house as many as 100 people on Lindholm Island — foreigners who have been convicted of crimes and rejected asylum seekers who cannot be returned to their home countries, according to The New York Times.

The 17-acre island, in an inlet of the Baltic Sea, lies about two miles from the nearest shore, and ferry service is infrequent. Foreigners will be required to report at the island center daily, and face imprisonment if they do not, The Times reported.

"We're going to minimize the number of ferry departures as much as at all possible," said Martin Henriksen, [a spokesman](#) for the Danish People's Party on immigration. "We're going to make it as cumbersome and expensive as possible."

As part of its annual budget negotiations, Denmark allocated \$115 million over four years to build immigrant facilities on the island, which are scheduled to open in 2021. Kristian Jensen, Denmark's finance minister and lead person in the negotiations, said the island was not a prison, however those who were sent there would have to sleep there. The hard-line stance is taken by the country's Danish People's Party, which demands strict immigration laws in return for its votes on a budget.

Denmark is facing a similar situation as its Europe counterparts, which saw a flood of Middle Eastern and African immigrants in 2015 and 2016. The surge of immigrants has led to a populist and nativist backlash, leading to the rise in power of the country's right-wing Danish People's Party.

The Danish government has said it intends to push immigration law to the limits of international conventions and human rights.

According to The Times, legal experts said it was too early to tell whether the Lindholm Island project would cross those boundaries, constituting illegal confinement. They said it resembled an Italian government project that was struck down in 1980 by the European Court of Human Rights.

The Times said Asylum seekers with criminal records are not allowed to work in Denmark. Rejected asylum seekers who cannot be deported are given accommodations, where they cannot prepare their own meals, food and an allowance of about \$1.20 per day, which is withheld if they fail to cooperate with the authorities.

According to the paper, many foreigners who have been denied asylum in Denmark cannot be deported to their home countries for fear of abuse or persecution, or simply because those countries refuse to take them back.

Hundreds lingering in two deportation centers refuse to leave — a challenge for a government that has promised to get rid of those who have no legal right to remain in Denmark.

Some have held out for more than a decade despite a steady deterioration in living conditions. An independent study by a former prison director now working for the rights

group Helsinki Citizens' Assembly found conditions in one of the deportation centers to be comparable to those in some prisons, or worse.

Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, who visited the territory and spoke during its [Centennial Ceremony from Denmark to U.S. rule](#), said last month that the government's aim in receiving refugees would no longer be to integrate them, but to host them until they can return to their countries of origin.

"It's not easy to ask families to go home, if they've actually settled," [he told a meeting of his party](#). "But it is the morally right thing. We should not make refugees immigrants."

Feature Image: Inger Stojberg, Denmark's immigration minister who said of asylum seekers, "They are unwanted in Denmark, and they will feel that."