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False identification

Written question No 520 to the Committee of Ministers

Reply from the Committee of Ministers
adopted at the 1004th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (12 September 2007)

I. Written Question No. 520 by Mr Lindblad (Doc. 11185)

Due to the current situation in Iraq and the great number of Swedish citizens of Iraqi descent, Sweden is an attractive destination for Iraqis who wish to leave their own country. The number of arrivals of Iraqis who seek asylum in Sweden has increased considerably in 2006.

Another piece of news, revealed by Swedish immigration officials, alarmed that a number of passports issued by the Iraqi embassy in Stockholm have been based on false information. Many applications for official documents presented to the Iraqi embassy in Stockholm are based on false identification papers.

This is a very serious development. A passport's authenticity is a precondition for internationally accepted verification of a person's identity. The authenticity of documentation for applying a passport must be checked before a passport is issued. A false passport can be misused. It may be used as the basis for an asylum application and may also lead to granted citizenship. False passports can become objects of trading which can have serious consequences for our common security.

By sharing this information with the Committee of Ministers I wish to urge the Committee of Ministers to vigilance concerning passports issued on false identification and to plan for joint action to stop this development.

II. Reply by the Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Written Question No. 520 by the Honourable Parliamentarian concerning "False identification". It recalls that the problem of fraud in relation to the identity of a person has been discussed in connection with the Council of Europe's work regarding nationality, data protection and the fight against terrorism.

2. The Committee of Ministers recalls that the Recommendation Rec(2005)7 concerning identity and travel documents and the fight against terrorism, provides guidance to member states on how to secure the use of identity and travel documents and how to develop systems to ensure reliable identity checks.

3. In this context, the Committee of Ministers wishes to draw the attention of the Honourable Parliamentarian to the work carried out by the Council of Europe in the nationality field on the basis of three expert reports prepared in 2006 on the following subjects:

- nationality of the child including the avoidance of statelessness of children;
- promoting acquisition of citizenship as a means to reduce statelessness;
- nationality issues and the denial of residence in the context of the fight against terrorism.

These reports may lead to further activities within the Organisation.

Moreover, the Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER) is carrying out an activity, in co-operation with the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), on the issue of false identity information as a challenge to immigration authorities.

4. The Committee of Ministers is well aware that Iraq is not a member of the Council of Europe and thus not affected by recommendations to the member states of the Organisation. However, according to the European Convention on Nationality (ETS No. 166), a State Party is allowed in its internal law to provide for the loss of nationality in cases where the nationality was acquired by means of fraudulent conduct, false information or concealment of any relevant fact attributable to the applicant (Article 7.1b).

5. The issue raised by the Honourable Parliamentarian will be taken into consideration in the Council of Europe's activities aimed at reducing fraud when establishing the identity of a person.