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Norway 'paying' asylum seekers to return home as refugee crisis continues

A government scheme gives a set financial reward of thousands of kroner, on top of paying for flights

Lizzie Dearden | [@lizziedearden](#) | Monday 7 December 2015 | [142 comments](#)



Refugees enter the arrival centre for refugees near the town on Kirkenes, northern Norway, close to the Russian - Norwegian border on November 12, 2015. AFP/Getty Images

Thousands of kroner are being offered to each person who voluntarily leaves the country and they also have their flights paid for.

Katinka Hartmann, head of the immigration department's return unit (UDI), said that many of the people arriving from Syria, Iraq, the Middle East and Africa expect to receive protection quickly and cannot wait the months or even years the process can take.

“They thought they would have the opportunity to work or take an education – and maybe even to get their family to Norway,” she **told NRK television.**



Norway has committed to housing thousands of Syrian refugees

“Many cannot wait (for the asylum process to run its course). They have family at home who expect them to be able to help.

“For a long time, Norway has not been able to forcibly return



“It’s important to have more initiatives of this kind in the future.”

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The UDI’s figures show that more than 900 people have applied to take financial support to leave Norway so far.

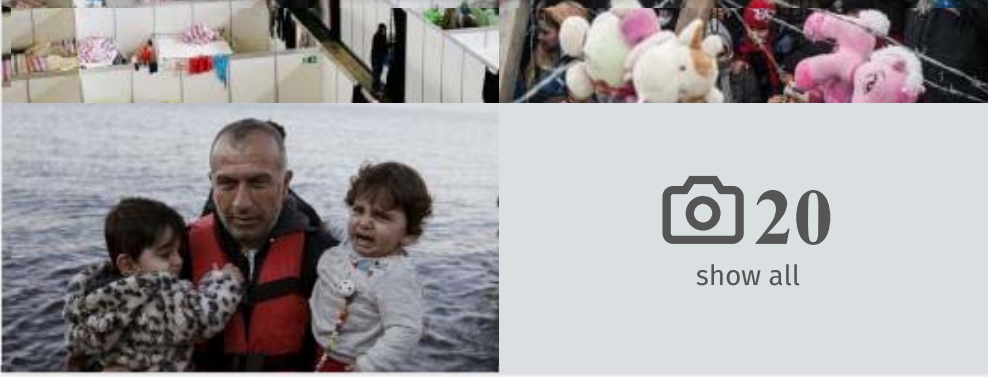
A couple with two children can receive upwards of 80,000 kroner (£6,200) in addition to having their flights paid for.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which processes the **Voluntary Assisted Return Programme** requests and offers advice and counselling, described it as “safe and dignified”.

Spokesperson Joost van der Aalst said the number of asylum seekers taking up the offer was rocketing, particularly among people attempting to bring their families to Norway.

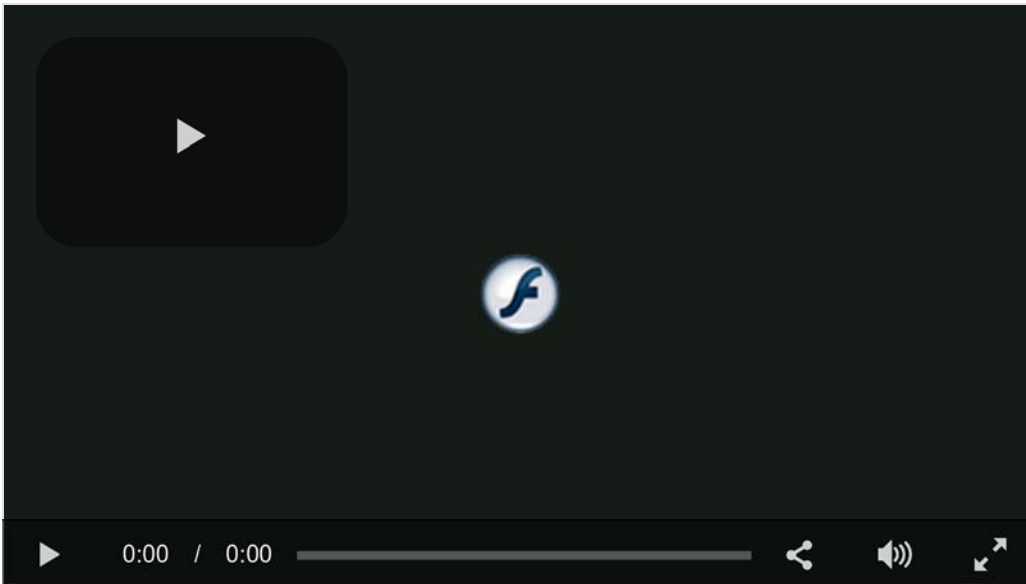
Refugee crisis - in pictures





“Earlier this year, the number was an average of 100 per month,” he told NRK. “In October, there were 150 and in November there were 230 applications.”

People whose asylum applications have been denied can also apply for economic assistance to return home.



The Syrian refugee crisis in numbers

The number of asylum seekers making first-time applications in Norway has been steadily rising throughout this year, Eurostat figures show.



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