

NETHERLANDS: Government Announces 'Strictest Asylum Policy Ever' and Requests Opt-Out from EU Migration Pact — Government Announces End to State-funded Housing for Rejected Asylum Applicants — Demonstration Against Self-declared 'Asylum Crisis' — Emergency Shelter Required After Asylum Centre Exceeds Capacity

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- The government has announced its intention to introduce the strictest asylum policy in the Netherlands' history and has requested an opt-out from the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.
- The government has announced that it will end housing payments for people whose asylum applications have been rejected by 1 January 2025.
- A demonstration has taken place in protest against the government's stated intention to declare an "asylum crisis" for up to two years.

- **An ongoing capacity issue in the Ter Apel asylum reception centre has resulted in the opening of emergency accommodation and a number of people being forced to sleep in the open air.**

On 13 September, the government [announced](#) its intention to introduce the strictest asylum policy in the Netherlands' history. Announcing the plan, Minister of Asylum and Migration Marjolein Faber said: "I'm aiming for the strictest asylum policy ever," adding: "We need to change course (...) We are taking measures to make the Netherlands as unattractive as possible for asylum seekers". At the same time, the government also announced its intention to opt-out of the recently adopted EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. "I just informed the European Commission that I want a migration opt-out for the Netherlands within Europe. We must regain control of our own asylum policy!" Faber [X posted](#). In her letter to the European Commission (EC), Faber wrote that, as part of its efforts to "drastically reduce the volume of migration to the Netherlands" the Dutch government would "call for an opt-out from the European asylum and migration acquis in case of Treaty amendment". In response, EC Spokesperson Eric Mamer [said](#): "You don't opt out of adopted legislation in the EU". EU member states are expected to submit their migration plans to the EC by December.

The government has announced that it will end housing payments for people whose asylum applications have been rejected. At the start of September, Minister of Asylum and Migration Marjolein Faber announced that state-funding housing for "people who should have left long ago" would be stopped by 1 January 2025. "I am advocating for deportation, not subsidised housing," she [said](#). Since 2019, people seeking asylum whose applications had been rejected have received support from the authorities in five major cities: Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Groningen, Rotterdam and Utrecht. The five cities have been informed that they can continue to provide emergency housing to the people in question but that they must do it at their own expense. ECRE member organisation the Dutch Council for Refugees has described the move as "painful" and [stated](#): "This decision creates more chaos and does not solve the problem. People who are already vulnerable are affected even more by this. If the government wants to ensure that these people return, then decent shelter and guidance are needed". The organisation also commended the efforts of Amsterdam and Utrecht municipalities for their continued commitment to people seeking protection in the Netherlands.

The government has announced that it wants to declare an "asylum crisis" for a period of "one or two years". On 12 September, Minister of Asylum and Migration Marjolein Faber [said](#): "People are experiencing an asylum crisis, the systems are stuck in the areas of healthcare, education and housing". Responding to Faber's statement, the Dutch Council for Refugees [X posted](#): "The problems in asylum reception are self-created and the result of political choices. There is no question of an unexpectedly large number of asylum seekers in the Netherlands. So no force majeure, but political unwillingness". "The arbitrary declaration of a crisis that is not based on facts, and without a careful legislative process, should never give the government the space to apply emergency

measures,” it concluded. Faber’s announcement came less than a month after she **admitted** that she had “no legal basis” to declare a crisis situation. On 22 September, a demonstration against the government’s plan to declare an asylum crisis was organised by the Stop Racism and Fascism platform in Amsterdam. A spokesperson from the platform **said**: “This cabinet is calling for an asylum crisis, while the past VVD (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy) cabinets actually demolished the reception of asylum seekers,” adding: “Now the PVV (Party for Freedom) and the VVD are cynically exploiting this to make the lives of migrants even worse”. “The Netherlands does not have an asylum crisis; it has a racism problem,” they concluded.

An ongoing capacity issue in the Ter Apel asylum reception centre has resulted in the opening of emergency accommodation and a number of people being forced to sleep in the **open air**. Commenting on the situation, Paula Lambeck from the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) **said**: “We only keep a spot in reserve for vulnerable people,” adding: “I hope that these people do not end up here on the grass, but that someone stands up and offers a spot, for example a municipality”. The mayor of the Westerwolde municipality, which includes Ter Apel, Jaap Velema, blamed the minister of asylum and migration for the ongoing situation. “The minister is running away from her responsibility. She is responsible for people who come to the Netherlands for asylum. She has had enough time and sufficient opportunity to accommodate people in a decent way. She is deliberately not doing this,” he said. To support the people affected by the capacity issue in the Ter Apel centre, sport halls in Zutphen and the neighbouring municipality of Valthermond and have been converted into temporary shelters. The acting mayor of the city of Zutphen, Wimar Jaeger, **said**: “We do not find it acceptable that people sleep on the grass in all weathers. That is why we take our responsibility”. He added that the sports hall would only be available for one week because it was unsuitable for long-term accommodation. “The facilities are good, but it’s 100 people sleeping in one room,” he said.

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