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# Losing the Right to Stay

Revocation of immigrant residence permits and citizenship in Norway—  
Experiences and effects

Jan-Paul Brekke, Simon Roland Birkvad, and Marta Bivand Erdal

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# Foreword

This report considers the question of what happens when refugees and other migrants initially gain permission to stay in Norway but subsequently are made aware that they may lose their permits, and in some cases lose their right to stay altogether. Over the past few years, Norwegian immigration authorities have intensified their practice of revoking permits mainly due to immigrants having provided faulty information or because conditions are said to have improved in the immigrants' countries of origin.

This report is based on interviews with individuals with Somali and Afghan backgrounds living in Norway. Since this is a sensitive topic, we were wholly dependent on the assistance of representatives within the two communities to reach interviewees with relevant experience. We are very grateful to the individuals who were willing to help us and are impressed with the trust that these actions reflect—trust both in the research we are undertaking and, by extension, in the Norwegian institutions that have commissioned this research and want to learn about the effects of revocation policies in practice.

Talking about personal experiences with revocation and the fear of losing one's residence permit—or citizenship—is challenging. We therefore extend deeply felt gratitude to our interviewees for sharing their thoughts and explaining how living with the possibility of losing a permit while cases were being processed, or in other cases, actually losing the right to stay in Norway, affected their lives.

Finally, we would like to thank the civil servants within the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and the police for contributing to this study. Their openness about the challenges posed by the revocation and cessation of residence permits was essential toward fully assessing these practices.

Oslo, June 2019,

The authors



# Norwegian summary

<b>Forfatter</b>	Jan-Paul Brekke, Simon Roland Birkvad, and Marta Bivand Erdal
<b>Tittel</b>	Losing the right to stay Revocation of immigrant residence permits and citizenship in Norway— Experiences and consequences
<b>Sammendrag</b>	<p>De siste årene har Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI) økt innsatsen knyttet til såkalte tilbakekallssaker. Dette er saker der myndighetene først gir opphold til blant andre asylsøkere og deres familier, men senere vurderer å trekke tilbake oppholdstillatelsene og i en del tilfeller også statsborgerskap.</p> <p>Det er flere forhold som kan lede til at personer med utenlandsk bakgrunn, inkludert de som har oppnådd norsk statsborgerskap, kan miste retten til opphold i Norge. De kan blant annet miste tillatelsen hvis de har gitt uriktige opplysninger da de fikk den første tillatelsen. Utlendinger som har fått beskyttelse kan i tillegg miste tillatelsen dersom forholdene i hjemlandet endres slik at norske myndigheter mener at det ikke lenger er behov for beskyttelse i Norge.</p> <p>Rapporten beskriver opplevelsene og tilpasningene til de som blir berørt av ordningen og personer i deres omgivelser. Hvordan oppleves det å bli varslet om at man står i fare for å miste tillatelsen, eller å faktisk miste den? Hvordan takler disse menneskene at framtidsutsiktene med ett blir usikre? Hvilke konsekvenser har tilbakekall når det gjelder integrering?</p> <p>Innledningsvis gir vi en tallmessig oversikt over behandlingen av tilbakekallssaker basert på UDIs dataregister. Hovedinnholdet er basert på intervjuer med personer med somalisk og afghansk bakgrunn som er direkte eller indirekte berørt av tilbakekall. I tillegg har vi intervjuet ansatte i UDI og politiet for å sikre at deres perspektiver er inkludert.</p> <p>Gjennomgangen av tallmaterialet fra UDI viser at mange av sakene som gjaldt personer med somalisk og afghansk bakgrunn hadde blitt liggende lenge. Rapporten viser også at den trege saksbehandlingen medførte ekstra belastninger for de som ble berørt og deres omgivelser.</p> <p>Det var flere grunner til at sakene hadde lang behandlingstid, inkludert sakenes kompleksitet og begrensede ressurser. For de som var berørt var den lange ventetiden vanskelig blant annet fordi de ikke visste hva som skulle skje videre i prosessen. De hadde ikke oversikt. I mens ble både deres liv og livene til deres familie satt på vent. Disse hadde ofte selv saker til behandling som ble hengende i påvente av at tilbakekallssakene ble avgjort.</p>

Sakene som gjaldt tilbakekall av statsborgerskap var satt på pause i påvente av en politisk beslutning om disse sakene i fremtiden skal behandles av domstoler eller ikke.

Det var et fåtall av tilbakekallssakene som gjaldt opphold som ble behandlet. Av de de som ble behandlet, endte de fleste med henleggelse (tre av fire).

Informantene opplevde en rekke utfordringer i forbindelse med tilbakekallsprosessen.

Informantene ble klar over at oppholdstillatelsen kunne være i fare på ulike måter. Noen fikk et forhåndsvarsel i posten, andre ble kontaktet direkte av politiet, mens atter andre ante at noe var «feil» fordi søknader om andre typer tillatelser var satt på vent.

Informantene var i mange tilfeller usikre på hva som var grunnlaget for at de risikerte å miste oppholdstillatelsene. De hadde heller ikke oversikt over hvordan sakene ble behandlet, hva de kunne forvente underveis og hva som var det sannsynlige utfallet av sakene. Usikkerheten ga seg blant annet utslag i mentale og fysiske plager.

Intervjuene viser at tilbakekall hadde smitteeffekter på familie, venner og andre fra samme miljø. Deres liv ble også satt på vent.

Tilbakekall hadde direkte konsekvenser for integreringsinnsatsen, i følge våre informanter. De fortalte om bortfall av motivasjon for å fullføre kurs, skolegang og mindre innsats for å komme i arbeid. I det somaliske miljøet ble det rapportert om at tilbakekall førte til stigmatisering. Folk ville unngå de som risikerte å miste tillatelsen, noe som igjen førte til sosial tilbaketreking og svakere tilknytning til det norske samfunnet.

Informantene taklet tilbakekallsprosessen på ulike måter: Én strategi var å fortsette hverdagslivet og å tåle en overhengende frykt for tilbakekall og retur (*coping*). En annen var å velge bort langtidsplaner til fordel for kortsiktige investeringer (*preparing*). En tredje var å gjøre valg som ville være fornuftige både hvis de endte med å bli værende i Norge og dersom de ble sendt ut (*dual orientation*). Noen opplevde også at tilbakekall førte dem ut i en retningsløs stillstand som hemmet all aktivitet (*directionless stasis*). Til sist nevnte noen informanter også *exit* som strategi, det vil si å reise ut fra Norge i frykt for å bli returnert til opprinnelseslandet.

Rapporten konkluderer med at det er sider ved dagens tilbakekallspraksis som ligger utenfor selve det politiske grunnlaget for ordningen, men som likevel har negative konsekvenser for de som blir berørt. Eksempler på slike er lang behandlingstid (inkludert berostillelse av statsborgerskaps saker) og uklar kommunikasjon av hvordan prosessen vil forløpe.

Kommunikasjonen vil være utfordrende blant annet fordi det er krevende å sikre forutsigbarhet i saksbehandlingen og å sikre at de berørte forstår de ulike grunnlagene for tilbakekall. Her kreves det rutiner som kan holde de berørte oppdatert på utviklingen i egne saker.



Med en klarere kommunikasjon vil myndighetene kunne sikre at de berørte i større grad slutter opp om praksisen. De vil i større grad vite hva de kan forvente og når de kan forvente oppdateringer og en endelig avgjørelse. Dette vil kreve begrenset ressursinnsats.

Det vil kreve mer ressurser å korte ned behandlingstiden. Denne innsatsen vil måtte vurderes opp mot kostnadene ved for eksempel forsinkede integreringsløp.

Rapporten avslutter med en rekke anbefalinger. Sentralt her står behovet for å strømlinjeforme den første kontakten med de berørte, å utvikle en helhetlig kommunikasjonsstrategi gjennom de ulike stegene i tilbakekallsprosessen vis-a-vis de berørte og å vurdere tiltak for å redusere saksbehandlingstiden.

**Emneord**

Innvandring, politikk, asyl, flyktninger, tilbakekall, integrering

# English summary

<b>Author</b>	Jan-Paul Brekke, Simon Roland Birkvad, and Marta Bivand Erdal
<b>Title</b>	Losing the Right to Stay Revocation of immigrant residence permits and citizenship in Norway— Experiences and consequences
<b>Summary</b>	<p>In recent years, the Directorate of Immigration’s (UDI’s) handling of so-called revocation cases has received increased attention. These are cases where the authorities first grant residence permits and citizenship to migrants but later consider revoking these.</p> <p>Immigrants can have their right to stay in Norway revoked for a range of reasons, including because they provided incorrect information when they were granted permits and in the case of refugees, because conditions improve in their home country.</p> <p>This report describes how the process of revocation was experienced by those affected experience the process of revocation.</p> <p>The report is based on multiple data sources: statistics from the UDI’s data system; interviews with affected individuals from Afghanistan and Somalia, including representatives of their communities in Norway; and interviews with employees of the UDI and the Oslo police. After presenting descriptive statistics, we describe how the informants experienced the revocation process, including the effects of the process on their integration. Furthermore, we also include an analysis of how revocation affects the outlook and life strategies of those interviewed.</p> <p>Statistics show that persons with both Somali and Afghan backgrounds who were affected by revocation experienced excessive processing time. Many cases that were opened in March 2017 or earlier remained undecided at the end of 2018. For those affected, the duration of the waiting period was important. The long wait meant prolonged periods of stress and uncertainty. The case processing time also often affected family members, whose applications for other permits were put on hold, pending the outcome of the revocation cases.</p> <p>Of the cases that were processed, approximately three out of four cases were dismissed.</p> <p>According to the interviews with both civil servants and persons of Afghan and Somali backgrounds, there were several ways that those affected could become aware of the revocation process. Some were notified directly by mail, and others were contacted by the police. Others sensed that something was “wrong” when other applications were left hanging.</p>

Overall, the informants were uncertain about why a revocation process had been initiated, what the different steps in the process were, and when they could expect a decision. Combined with the long wait, the process was increasingly burdensome. The strain caused by the uncertainty had spill-over effects on family, friends, and others from the same communities.

The informants described a list of disintegrating effects of the revocation practice, including social exclusion, stigmatization, social withdrawal, reduced use of Facebook as a result of (experienced) monitoring, and a weakened sense of belonging.

When the informants realized that they might have a revocation case, their outlook changed. As a consequence, they developed different life strategies. One strategy was to carry on with everyday life while living with a fear of revocation and possible return (coping). Another was to drop long-term plans in favor of short-term investments (preparing). A third was to pursue opportunities they could capitalize on, both in Norway and abroad (dual orientation). A fourth group had experiences where revocation led to directionless waiting, which hampered all activity (directionless stasis). Finally, there were informants who had fled from Norway in fear being deported to their country of origin (exit) and even moving permanently from Norway out of fear of future revocation (reorientation).

In the concluding chapter, we mention that processing times are too long, partly due to a heavy and complex caseload and limited resources. In addition, the number of revocation decisions and returns is small. Furthermore, we mention that the number of Somali people affected by revocation constitutes a substantial share of the total Somali community in Norway. The revocation practice therefore risks affecting the total group's relation to the Norwegian majority society.

The report gives a number of recommendations for further practice, including the need to streamline the first contact with those affected, to develop a coherent communication strategy through different stages of the revocation process, and to review measures in order to reduce the case processing time. For those affected, improved government communication and shorter processing time may help secure the legitimacy of the practice.

**Index terms**

Migration policy, asylum, revocation, refugees, experience



# Chapter 1: The effects of revocation

In recent years, Norwegian authorities have intensified their practice of reviewing cases that may lead to the revocation of immigrants' residence permits or citizenship. Despite longer historical roots, these efforts were among several restrictive measures following the 2015 record number of asylum arrivals to Norway (Ministry of Justice, 2016, p. 15). The main groups affected by this practice are individuals with permits related to protection (asylum seekers, refugees) and their families.

While earlier research has discussed how the Norwegian immigration authorities have practiced the revocation regulations, this report focuses on those who risk losing their permits and others that are indirectly affected by the revocation practice, that is, on their families and friends and their wider social communities. We describe and discuss their immediate experiences, their changes in aspirations and outlook, and their changes in behavior. In particular, we focus on the effects of revocation on their integration into and continued attachment to Norwegian society.

These individuals mainly lose their permits either because their original permits were based on faulty premises, such as wrong identity (*revocation*), or because conditions in their country of origin have improved sufficiently to allow for return (*cessation*).<sup>1</sup> Persons who have achieved permanent residency or citizenship can have their permits revoked, while cessation normally only affects persons with temporary permits.

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has commissioned this report in order to better understand the effects of revocation.<sup>2</sup> The knowledge gained from the current study can help to improve case processing. Simultaneously it is important that politicians and the general public are made aware of the human and potential societal costs involved in the intensified revocation practice. It will

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1 The practice involves both related phenomena of the revocation (In Norwegian: tilbakekall) (Immigration Act §63) and §26 (second subsection) of the Nationality Act), and cessation (In Norwegian: opphør) (Immigration Act §37) of permits. When otherwise not specified, the concept of revocation is used to cover both revocation and the narrower cessation. While the Directorate of Immigration emphasizes this distinction, the Ministry of Justice with few exceptions uses the concept of revocation to cover both grounds for withdrawal of permits (Brekke et al., 2018).

2 An earlier study of the Norwegian revocation practice recommended a follow-up study of the effects of this practice (Brekke et al., 2018).

surprise no one reading this report that revocation has negative effects for the individuals that are directly affected. The focus of this report, however, is what type of effects the revocation process has on, and how this circles out to, those indirectly affected. The next question then is how this knowledge should be factored into the (re)formulation and practice of the revocation policy. In political discussions, these negative effects will have to be held up against potential positive outcomes of the practice, including protecting the legitimacy of the asylum instrument.<sup>3</sup>

## A lot is at stake

The practice of revoking temporary and permanent permits, as well as citizenship, has attracted broad attention in the Norwegian media over the past few years.<sup>4</sup> The reason is that a lot is at stake for everyone involved.

For immigrants who are directly affected, revocation can be life-altering. In many cases, their families and friends also have their lives changed.

The immigration authorities, led by the Directorate of Immigration (UDI), see revocation as important because it defends the legitimacy of the asylum instrument. If permits are given on faulty grounds and this is not reacted upon, this may undermine the instrument's long-term legitimacy.

At the political level, the novel practicing of cessation has attracted the most attention. For the government, ceasing protection when conditions in the home country improve points toward an asylum regime based on "temporary protection".<sup>5</sup>

For society at large, revocation may affect individual integration, but also group integration, and thereby have implications for wider social cohesion. The reason is that certain nationalities are disproportionately affected by the practice, creating ripple effects within communities that may lead to reduced integration efforts and lower loyalty to the majority society. In this report we focus on persons of Somali and Afghan backgrounds. The Somali group has been par-

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3 We return to these briefly below.

4 E.g., <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/J1yXJP/Ny-UDI-enhet-vurderer-a-trekke-tilbake-oppholdstillatelsen-fra-flere-tusen>; <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/J1A854/41-somaliere-har-mistet-flyktningstatus>; <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/zo7Qw/Familie-pa-12-mister-statsborgerskapet-etter-27-ar-i-Norge>

5 Such a shift, from a system based on permanent residency and integration to one based on temporary protection and return, has recently been put forward in Denmark (<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/paradigmeskiftet-vedtaget-i-folketinget-her-er-stramningerne-paa-udlaendingeomraadet>). A similar temporary regime was considered in Norway in the early 1990s (see Brekke, 2001).

ticularly affected by revocation and is the only group who has experienced cessation in any substantial number.

Also international stakeholders will be interested in Norwegian authorities' increased attention to revocation and cessation. A report from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) shows that Norway is at the forefront in Europe when it comes to implementing revocation and cessation.<sup>6</sup> In particular, Norway's activation of the Immigration Act, paragraph 37 (cessation) should be of interest to other European countries. This states that positive changes in the home country that allow for return (or re-connecting with the home country) shall result in cessation of permits.

The Norwegian practice of cessation was conceived independently but still resonates with a proposal that the EU Commission forwarded that was based on the same premise.<sup>7</sup> The proposal included an obligation for member states to routinely review protection permits in light of possible improvements in home countries, opening for an increased use of cessation. The Norwegian experiences with revocation and cessation may therefore play into the wider discussion on reforming the common European asylum system.

In sum, the intensified use of revocation and cessation is expected to have effects on the individual, on their friends and family, and on immigrant communities. But it may also have an effect on a national policy level, and studying it may even provide valuable insights for the development of European immigration policies.

In the following, we will specify and discuss the effects of the revocation practice on the immigrants themselves as well as on immigrant groups. We also point to possible wider societal effects.

The report is based on interviews with informants who have been directly or indirectly affected by the revocation practice. We have also interviewed expert civil servants who work with revocation within the UDI and the Oslo police. Finally, statistics provided by the Directorate of Immigration are used to describe the volume, types, and outcomes of revocation cases.

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6 Referred to in Brekke et al. (2018). Confirmed by the Ministry of Justice 2018 (St. Prop. 1 S (2018-2019):246).

7 [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160406/towards\\_a\\_reform\\_of\\_the\\_common\\_european\\_asylum\\_system\\_and\\_enhancing\\_legal\\_avenues\\_to\\_europe\\_-\\_20160406\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160406/towards_a_reform_of_the_common_european_asylum_system_and_enhancing_legal_avenues_to_europe_-_20160406_en.pdf)

## Research questions

The overarching research question in this study is: *What are the effects of the practice of the revocation and cessation of residence permits and citizenship in Norway?* To explore these effects, we divide the research questions into two sets: The nature and extent of revocation and cessation, on one hand, and the experiences of and adaptations to this practice, on the other.

### The Nature and extent of revocation

Referring to the statistical data on revocation provided by the Directorate of Immigration, we ask:

- What is the volume of cases of revocation and cessation?
- What are the formal outcomes of these cases?<sup>8</sup>
- What do the statistics tell us about the processing time?
- To what extent do those whose permits (or citizenship) are revoked leave Norway, return to their country of origin, or stay on in Norway (with or without permits)?

Until March 2017, revocation and cessation were not registered as separate categories in the official database.<sup>9</sup> Our analysis of the statistical data will therefore focus on the period from March 2017 to December 2018.

### The effects of revocation

In the second part of the report, we present and analyze the experiences and adaptations of immigrants who are directly or indirectly affected by the practice of revocation. We ask:

- To what extent are individuals with immigrant backgrounds and affected communities aware of the regulations on revocation and cessation?
- How do affected immigrants experience the process of the (possible) revocation/cessation of permits or citizenship?

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8 Do these cases end with dismissal (henleggelse), a waiver (frafalles), notification and then dismissal, revocation/cessation, expulsion (utvisning), new permits, or do they remain in-process?

9 The UDI did register revocation cases before this date, but these registrations did not allow for the statistical analysis of case processing apart from the number of revocation decisions.



- What are the effects of revocation/cessation on individuals and their family/friends/networks with regard to mental and physical wellbeing, integration, stigma, motivation, aspirations, and strategies? How are children affected?
- How are the selected immigrant groups (Somali and Afghan) affected by revocation?

To answer these questions we draw on interviews with individuals of Somali and Afghan backgrounds, either directly or indirectly affected by revocation, and persons who act as representatives for these communities in Norway. In addition, the interviews we conducted with civil servants within the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the Oslo police provided valuable background information when answering the research questions.

## Background

In this section, we note the scope of the revocation provision, provide a brief account of the policy context for the revocation practice and its legal basis, and give a short description of the case processing. We then introduce a few key concepts that are used throughout the report.

Persons holding a range of different permits can be affected by revocation. These include citizens, permanent residence holders, and holders of various temporary permits, including temporary permits as refugees.

### The policy context

During the fall of 2015, a record number of asylum seekers were registered in Norway.<sup>10</sup> In the media, the government was accused of having lost control over immigration. A list of measures was quickly compiled and supported by a broad alliance of political parties.<sup>11</sup> In the draft document that was submitted for public consultation in the following month, the aim of the set of measures was spelled out. The list was presented as “suggested restrictive policy changes that will make Norway less attractive to asylum seekers.”<sup>12</sup> One of these measures

10 A total of 31,500 asylum seekers were registered in 2015. The average in the previous five years was around 10,000. In 2016, the numbers dropped to record low levels (3,460) and stayed low through 2017 (3,560) and 2018 (2,655). <https://www.udi.no/statistikk-og-analyse/>

11 Innstramninger II (see link below). All parties supported the list of changes with the exception of the Socialist Left party (SV) and the Green Party (MDG).

12 “Høring med forslag til en rekke tiltak for å stramme inn og gjøre det mindre attraktivt å søke asyl i Norge.” <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/horing--endringer-i-utlendingslovgivningen-innstramninger-ii/id2469054/>

was to “secure that that the immigration authorities could start the cessation of residence permits if the grounds for temporary protection were no longer there due to changes in the political, social or humanitarian conditions in the home country.”<sup>13</sup>

The stated rationales behind the intensified revocation practice include protecting the legitimacy of the asylum instrument, that is, protection should not be given on faulty grounds; security reasons; and upholding the principle that all persons in Norway should operate under the correct identity. The stated political rationale behind invoking the cessation clause was that protection should, in principle, be for as long as it is needed. The practicing of revocation and cessation should also be seen in the context of the post-2015 restrictive measures.

As the number of asylum seekers dropped to record low levels in 2016 (3,460) and 2017 (3,560), the Directorate of Immigration was instructed to prioritize revocation cases (Brekke et. al. 2018). A separate section was established, and revocation was registered as a separate category in the internal case-processing system starting from March 2017.

The increased political attention to revocation coincided with the surplus institutional capacity, paving the way for a strengthened effort. We find an illustration of the increased focus of the government on revocation and cessation in the White Papers from the Ministry of Justice (state budgets: Prop 1). While the word revocation was mentioned once in the state budget for 2016 (Ministry of Justice, 2015), it was mentioned 16 times in the budget the following year (Ministry of Justice, 2016b). The focus on this area continued despite changes in the composition of the government, and the word was mentioned 20 times in the budget for 2019.

In the same budget, the Ministry pointed to the tightening that had already been done in the area of revocation and suggested that further tightening of the regulation should wait until the current changes had been evaluated:

Norway has used the room to maneuver present in international law to substantially tighten the practice with regard to revocation of refugee status and residence permits (instructions GI-14/2016). It is suggested that experiences of this practice be gathered before considering further tightening.<sup>14</sup>

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13 <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-90-l-20152016/id2481758/sec2>

14 Ministry of Justice 2018: Prop 1. S (2018-2019):246. In Norwegian: “Norge har benyttet det folkerettslige handlingsrommet til å stramme vesentlig inn praksis vedrørende tilbakekall av flyktningstatus og oppholdstillatelse (instruks GI-14/2016). Det kan være god grunn til å samle erfaring med dette før man eventuelt utreder muligheten for ytterligere innstramninger.”

The current report, as well as the report on revocation from 2018 (Brekke et al., 2018) should be seen as parts of this review of the current and stricter practice.

## The legal basis of revocation

Under Norwegian law, a residence permit may be revoked in accordance with the provisions of Sections 31, 37, 63, and 126 of the Immigration Act.<sup>15</sup> In practice, Sections 63 and 37 are the most important of these.<sup>16</sup> Citizenship can be revoked based on Section 26 (subsection 2) of the Nationality Act.

Section 63 of the Immigration Act provides the general main rule for the revocation of residence permits, while Section 37 sets out additional possibilities for revoking the residence permits of refugees.

The main rule in Section 63 is that both temporary and permanent residence permits can be revoked “if the foreigner has given incorrect evidence” (stating faulty identity, faulty country of origin, and others). The provision targets both foreigners who have given information in a fraudulent manner (in bad faith) and cases where the “decisions are invalid due to an objectively incorrect factual basis.”<sup>17</sup> Evaluating and (re-)establishing correct ID constitutes a substantial portion of the revocation caseload. Section 63 applies to all permits, including for refugees, while Section 37 solely targets refugees.

Section 37 includes a list of grounds for the revocation of refugee permits. One common denominator for the individual provisions is that conditions have changed since the permit was granted, meaning that the foreigner can no longer invoke protection. The first four grounds (Immigration Act §37 letters a–d) that are listed apply to the foreigner’s own behavior,<sup>18</sup> while the two last grounds (letters e and f) point to changed conditions in the country of origin.

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15 This section of the report is based on the review of the legal aspects of revocation in Brekke et al. (2018, pp. 27–31).

16 Section 31 of the Immigration Act applies to exclusion from the right to recognition as a refugee pursuant to Section 28 of the Act, primarily for persons who have committed serious international crimes. Section 126 of the Immigration Act refers to the possibility of calling back permits “Consideration of basic national interests” (second paragraph).

17 See High Court ruling HR-2016-2017-A Section 52 regarding cases where the foreigner has been in good faith about incorrect information.

18 a. Pertains when the foreigner “voluntarily again has sought protection from the country the foreigner is citizen of,” b. “when the foreign national has voluntarily retrieved his nationality after losing it,” c. “when the foreign national has acquired new citizenship and enjoying the protection of the country the foreigner has become citizen of,” and d. “resigns voluntarily in the country the foreigner left or stayed outside due to fear of persecution” (ref. Immigration Act §37). The letters e. and f. cover cases where conditions have improved in the home country such that that the foreigner no longer fulfills the conditions to be regarded as a refugee and where foreigners without citizenship can return safely to their former country of residency.

It is important to note that revocation according to Section 37 (cessation) only applies to persons with temporary protection, that is, persons with temporary permits before permanent residence is granted. After three years of temporary permits, the foreigner with such permits can apply for permanent residency. The three years start running from the day the first asylum application is registered. However, over the last two years, additional criteria have been introduced. Currently, a holder of a temporary permit due to protection needs to be self-sufficient economically (documented income of approximately 260,000 NOK over the previous 12 months) and pass language and knowledge tests.<sup>19</sup>

The section does not normally apply to UN quota refugees but applies to refugees who have come to Norway on their own as asylum seekers.<sup>20</sup>

According to the Norwegian Nationality Act (Section 26, subsection 2) citizenship can be revoked in cases of fraudulent acquisition. The provision states further that revocation based on incorrect or incomplete information may only be executed if the applicant has furnished incorrect information against his or her better judgment or has suppressed information that was relevant for the decision. All cases where the revocation of citizenship was considered were suspended in 2017 (GI-11/2017). According to instructions from the Ministry of Justice, the UDI could not review any cases involving the revocation of citizenship, even when these were relevant for other cases. In March 2019 this strict suspension was eased somewhat when the Ministry of Education and Research, which is responsible for integration policies, instructed the UDI and the Immigrants' Appeals Court (UNE) to process citizenship cases where the expected outcome was that they would be dismissed (henlagt). Other citizenship cases were still to be suspended pending a political clarification of how these cases were to be processed (UDI, F-02-19).<sup>21</sup>

Revocation under Section 63 of the Immigration Act and Section 26 (second subsection) of the Norwegian Nationality Act can be applied regardless of time spent in the country or type of permit. The much-reported Mahad case was an extreme case in this regard. Here a well-established immigrant lost his citizenship after 17 years in the country.<sup>22</sup>

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19 <https://www.udi.no/ord-og-begreper/krav-til-a-forsorge-seg-selv-for-a-fa-permanent-oppholdstillatelse/>  
<https://www.udi.no/viktige-meldinger/nye-krav-for-de-som-skal-soke-om-permanent-oppholdstillatelse/>

20 Ministry of Justice 2016: Prop. L. (2015–2016). However, in expulsion cases, the provision has been applied to refugees with permanent residence permits and quota refugees as well.

21 F-02-19 Rundskriv Instruks om berostilling av saker om tilbakekall etter statsborgerloven §26 annet ledd. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/rundskriv-f--02--19-instruks-om-berostilling-av-saker-om-tilbakekall-etter-statsborgerloven--26-annet-ledd/id2631767/>

22 <https://www.utrop.no/Nyheter/Innenriks/31628>

A revocation decision does not necessarily mean that the person in question has to leave the country, although this is the main rule. The revocation of one permit may lead to residence permits being granted on new grounds. For example, in cases where the first decision is revoked due to incorrect information, the foreign national can then acquire a residence permit on the basis of correct information. In addition, any foreigner in Norway would be covered by the principle of non-refoulement, prohibiting a return to persecution, regardless of legal status.<sup>23</sup>

The interpretation of the law and political instructions regarding practice are included in infrequent “instructions” from the Ministry of Justice to the Directorate of Immigration. Key instructions include one on cessation (GI-14/2016), on the revocation of citizenship (F-02-19), and on the role of the police in cases of revocation (RS 2017-01).<sup>24</sup> Following these instructions, *letters* are sent from the Directorate to the Ministries (of Justice and of Education and Research) asking for further details. These, as well as the answers from the Ministry, are published.

For people that do not engage with this area of the law on a daily basis, this multitude of legal sources makes it challenging to understand how revocation is regulated. The concepts alone can be confusing (revocation, cessation, dismissal, and cancellation). Further, the different bases of the legal documents (Immigration Act, Nationality Act, regulations, instructions, verdicts, and letters) can be difficult to locate, and some are only available in Norwegian. For those affected by revocation, there is the additional challenge of understanding how cases are processed and the division of roles between the UDI, UNE, and the police at different stages of the process.

Why is the complexity of this *revocation complex* important to the current study? It is important because it is in the interest of everyone involved, including the immigration authorities, that the affected immigrants understand the system, its actors, and what is expected of them. When a process of revocation is initiated, the legitimacy of the process and its outcome depends on there being predictability and informed communication.

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23 These fall under the UN Convention on refugees and the Norwegian Immigration Act §73.

24 <https://www.udiregelverk.no/>  
<https://www.udiregelverk.no/en/documents/circulars-and-instructions-from-the-ministries/gi-142016/>

## Case processing

There are three main operative government institutions involved in the processing of cases of revocation: the UDI, the police, and the UNE. The role of UNE is to review appeals of UDI's decisions.

The UDI and the police are the two main government actors in cases of revocation. Within the UDI, two separate departments handle these cases (Asylum Department and Managed Migration Department), organized by a coordinating section. Within the police, revocation cases are handled primarily by the police districts. The districts are supported by a specialized section within the National Police Immigration Service.<sup>25</sup>

Both the UDI and the police can *identify* revocation cases (see Figure 1). Such identification is considered as part of the standard procedure in the renewal of permits, applications for family reunification, and a list of other stages in the case processing (see the list for the police in Appendix 1). Cases can also be identified as a result of information provided by persons outside the institutions, such as persons within immigrant communities.

**Figure 1. Stages of the revocation process**



After a case has been identified as a possible candidate for revocation, both UDI and the police are active in *clarifying* whether the case should be pursued further. During the clarification stage, the immigration authorities review different types of information, often including travel activities, networks, currency exchange registers, dialect/language tests, and social media profiles. The police often contact the person in question and conduct interviews on behalf of the UDI to gather more information.

In some cases, the police will decide to prosecute those affected by revocation parallel to the civil revocation process. The legal basis for this process is that providing incorrect information, such as about identity, can be a punishable act. In these cases, the police interrogate rather than interview the person in question.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> «Politiets utlendingsenhet, avsnittet for tilbakekall» (operative from August 2018).

<sup>26</sup> If the case goes from an administrative to a criminal case, the individual is informed and has the right to remain silent (interview with the Oslo police). We will not discuss this parallel track of prosecution further in this report.

During the clarification stage, the police can dismiss clear-cut cases or send the case to the UDI for a decision.<sup>27</sup> If so, the UDI compares the updated information with the original statements and information from the asylum interview. The UDI may also conduct interviews with those affected. Based on the totality of evidence, the UDI decides whether to *open* or to *dismiss* (henlegge) the case. If the UDI decides to open the case, they or the police *notify* the foreigner (or citizen with a foreign background) that a revocation case has been opened (varsel om tilbakekall).

In cases that are substantiated through the clarification phase, the UDI or the police will *notify* the immigrant either in person or in a letter. The notification shall include the grounds for a possible revocation of the residence permit. It also states a deadline (usually three weeks) for the person to submit a written *response* through an attorney, providing additional information and/or to clarifying certain aspects of their case. The police shall notify the immigrant directly unless she/he or her/his lawyer has been contacted by the UDI. As we will describe in detail in Chapter 4, this is a key point of communication between the authorities and the person in question.

Based on the immigrant's response to the letter of notification, the UDI then *decides* either to withdraw (frafalle) the case or to go through with it.

The person in question can *appeal* the UDI's decision of revocation if her/his permit is revoked. In these cases, the UDI can reconsider their decision and dismiss the revocation, or they can uphold and forward the case to the UNE. The person is then notified by the police of the final outcome of the revocation case. If the permit is revoked, the person can apply for a *new residence permit*, or she can be *returned* to her country of origin (either voluntarily or by force), or *stay irregularly* in Norway, risking being returned.

## Key concepts

Throughout this report, we use concepts from the migration research literature. Some of these are explained as we go, while three will be given a short initial presentation. These are temporality, integration, and loss (aversion).

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<sup>27</sup> The police can only withdraw (henlegge) revocation cases and do not have the authority to revoke permits. In citizenship cases, the police neither withdraw nor revoke (interview with the Oslo police).

## Temporality

Temporality is a key aspect of the migrants' adaptation, learning, and integration (Erdal & Ezzati, 2015; Griffiths, 2014; Mavroudi, Page, & Christou, 2017). The experience of revocation is expected to vary depending on how long they have been in the country. Although there is not necessarily a causal link between time and integration, they are correlated (Brekke, 2001). The more time spent in Norway will on average present a migrants with increasing opportunities to integrate.

The disruption in the individuals' lives caused by notifications of revocation and revocation decisions (re)introduces the phenomenon of temporary existence (O'Reilly, 2018). This type of temporality may severely influence and potentially limit the outlook, activities, life-choices, and experience of identity of those affected.

Time is also a key dimension of the authorities' case processing. While civil servants strive for short processing time, a range of factors contributes to prolonging the handling of revocation cases. The duration of each stage in the process may be expected to have an effect on those directly and indirectly affected.

The possibility of the cessation of permits during the first three years of residency (Section 37) explicitly establishes this temporary character at the core of Norwegian asylum regulations. We will describe the various consequences of the temporary character that the revocation cases produce and consider whether these cases contribute to a general disturbance in the default linear perception of time (i.e., time passed will increase integration) within the wider immigrant communities.

Time must be expected to play a central part in the experience of revocation, from the time when those affected are notified that a process has been started, or that they notice that "something is wrong," and throughout the processing of their case (Brekke, 2004).<sup>28</sup>

## Integration

The literature on integration covers a range of different phenomena and variations of what can be described as a two-way adaptation between immigrants and

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28 As of today, the UDI notifies applicants via mail if their applications are not being processed because of ongoing revocation evaluations.



the host society.<sup>29</sup> For our purposes in this report, two initial comments will be made.

First, we would like to remind the reader that the concept of integration covers both the integration process (motivation, participation, qualification, increasing language skills, social networks, etc.) and integration outcomes (attained levels of qualification, labor market participation rates, income assimilation, etc.). This is important for our discussions on the effects of revocation on individual and group integration.

Second, we divide the process of integration into three different dimensions, distinguishing between systemic integration (labor market participation, legal status, education, housing, political participation); social integration (networks, civil society participation, sense of community); and value integration (sharing of values, loyalty to national interests, cultural adaptation, sense of belonging).

Often, studies of integration focus on the gradual inclusion of an individual into a majority society. In this report, we will include the effects of revocation on the integration of the individual within the immigrant community. We will also comment on the potential for the disintegration of this community itself from the majority society. In other words, we will highlight the multi-dimensionality of integration, as experienced by the migrants themselves (Erdal, 2013; Mavrommatis, 2018; McPherson, 2010).

Finally, integration and citizenship are closely connected through processes of naturalization (Aptekar, 2016; Bauböck, 2006; Brubaker, 2010; Goodman, 2014; Joppke, 2010).<sup>30</sup> Varyingly, policy aims may center on citizenship being the end-point of integration or, by contrast, a motivation at some stage of the process (Brochmann & Seland, 2010). Links between citizenship and security are often pointed to in the research literature, notably as one among several reasons why migrants choose to naturalize in countries of settlement (Nunn, McMichael, Gifford, & Correa-Velez, 2016; Pettersen, 2012). In recent years, with increasing policy attention on the loss of citizenship, or the revocation of citizenship, this theme has also started to receive renewed interest—from normative, legal, and theoretical, as well as empirical angles (De Groot & Vink, 2010; Gibney, 2013; Joppke, 2016; Macklin & Bauböck, 2014; Macklin, 2018). The loss, or revocation, of citizenship may be understood as one extreme on a continuum, where the loss of a permanent residency permit is another point, the loss of a temporary long-term permit another, and the lack of the renewal of a

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29 See for example Brubaker (2001) and Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016).

30 Naturalization refers to the act of granting citizenship to a foreign resident.

short-term permit yet another. Research among migrants, including refugees, finds that uncertainty and experiences of precariousness are common, depending on legal statuses and future prospects (Ilcan, Rygiel, & Baban, 2018; Kingston, 2017; Yotebieng, Syvertsen, & Kum Awah, 2018; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, & Cassidy, 2018; Zieck, 2008).

## Loss (aversion)

The concept of loss plays a pivotal role in the discussion of revocation. Those affected experience the prospect of loss or actual loss of a key component of their lives—the right to remain in Norway.

The power of loss has been studied in a number of academic fields, including psychology (Harvey & Miller, 1998) and microeconomics (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

In psychology, loss has been studied related to different life events and processes of bereavement. In our context, the distinction in psychology between minor and major loss is important, where a major loss can be defined as a “reduction in resources, whether tangible or intangible, in which the person has a significant emotional investment” (Harvey, 1996). Further, a distinction can be drawn between the *subjective* experience of loss and *objective* concurrence by knowledgeable others (Harvey & Miller, 1998, p. 430). These views may or may not be in line, of course. One person may give an indication of loss, while outside persons that are well informed may not agree.<sup>31</sup>

In this report, the concept of *secondary bereavements* will be used to discuss the secondary effects of revocation. These include loss of concrete objects (housing, financial support, access), loss of progress in integration processes (work, education), and loss of psychological stabilizing factors (hope, outlook, identity).

In economics, loss is seen as a powerful element in human cognition, often limiting the rationality of action. *Loss aversion* points to the fear of loss as an important driver of human behavior (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). In behavioral economic experiments, researchers have found the psychological pain of losing to be twice as powerful as the pleasure of gaining.<sup>32</sup> We will use the

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31 In our analysis, we will discuss the psychology of loss in instances of both revocation and cessation. Are they different? And how is the distinction between subjective and objective loss to be understood in this analysis? We argue that cases where permits are lost due to having given incorrect information give rise to a concept of *(il)legitimate (feeling of) loss*.

32 <https://www.behavioraleconomics.com/resources/mini-encyclopedia-of-be/loss-aversion/>

concept of loss aversion as a backdrop for our discussions on the migrants' efforts to *avoid losing* their permits and prospects of a future in Norway.

## Guide for the reader

In the next chapter, we will present the data used in the report and briefly discuss the methodological and ethical challenges involved in doing fieldwork with informants in potentially vulnerable situations. In Chapter 3, we present statistics on revocation, related permits, case processing, and outcomes. In the three following chapters, we present data from the interviews with persons affected by revocation and representatives from their communities. In Chapter 4, we focus on their experiences of the revocation process. Chapter 5 describes the effects of (possible) revocation on integration. In Chapter 6, we discuss different strategies that those affected applied when faced with (possible) revocation. In the final chapter (7), we revisit the research questions and the three key concepts and present a list of conclusions and recommendations.

## Chapter 2: Data and methodology

This chapter will describe the data that provide the basis for this report and the methods applied to gather and analyze the statistics and interviews. The report is based on statistics on revocation provided by the UDI, interviews with civil servants in the UDI, and representatives from the Oslo Police District. The main body of information consists of interviews with persons who were directly or indirectly affected by revocation. These were individuals with Somali and Afghan backgrounds and representatives of their two communities.

### Statistics

The statistical analysis in Chapter 3 is based on the central database administered by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (Utlendingsdatabasen, DUF). This database is used for both managing case processing and for statistical purposes.

UDI provided us with a file containing anonymized data on all cases where UDI had opened a revocation case (opprettet sak) from March 2017 through December 2018. During this period a total of 8,195 cases (all nationalities) were registered.

Before March 2017, revocation (Immigration Act §63 and the Norwegian Nationality Act §26, subsection 2) and cessation (Immigration Act §37) cases were not marked as separate categories in the UDI-database. As a result, the data made available to the study by the UDI do not allow for an analysis of the situation before March 2017. This limits the scope of the study. Although we do know that there were a number of revocation cases processed before this date, the lack of statistics does not allow us to study this period in detail. Further, this lack of statistical information means that we cannot know the history of cases that were registered after March 2017. In other words, we do not know when these cases were initiated or the exact duration of the case processing.

A further caveat in the data is that the UDI does not register in the database whether the individual is notified that a revocation case has been opened. This is a further challenge to establishing the duration of case processing.

The data included anonymous data on case processing and outcomes at the individual level. In addition to the individual data, the Directorate provided aggregated data on other applications that were suspended while the revocation cases were being processed. These were applications for permanent residency, family immigration, travel documents, citizenship, and more.

## Interviews with civil servants and the Oslo Police District

We interviewed four key civil servants from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI). They all had substantial knowledge and experience with revocation cases. We met with three of the civil servants in person, and one interview was conducted by phone. These interviews centered on the challenges that the immigration authorities encounter during the different stages of the revocation process (see Figure 1, Chapter 1) as well as how they experienced the communication with those affected.

We also interviewed three representatives from the Oslo Police District who had extensive experience with revocation cases. Like the interviews with the civil servants in the UDI, this interview focused on the different stages of revocation and particularly those stages where the police were involved.

## Interviews with affected individuals

In total, we conducted 18 interviews with 27 individuals originating from Afghanistan and Somalia. In the following, we describe briefly the criteria we used in the recruitment process, where the interviews were conducted, and the characteristics of the informants. We then present a list of methodological and ethical considerations.

### Sampling criteria

We used the following two criteria when deciding upon which nationalities we should select for the study: First, we wanted to target groups with a high number of opened revocation cases. We selected Somalia and Afghanistan as they were two of the three largest groups affected by revocation (as shown in Figure 2, Chapter 3). The second largest group was Filipinos. Those affected within this group were often au-pairs changing host families and thus being given new permits as part of the process.

Second, while we were primarily interested in persons who were *directly* affected by revocation, that is, persons who were notified or had received a decision of revocation, or persons who suspected that they somehow were targeted by the practice, we were also interested in interviewing persons who were *indirectly* impacted by revocation. These were relatives, friends, and other members of the Afghan and Somali communities in Norway.

During our fieldwork, we understood that the distinction between those directly and indirectly impacted is unclear. The reason is that several of the individuals we talked to did not know whether they were directly impacted or not. Family members may, for example, both be directly affected by the revocation case (if they have applications that are dependent on the permit of the reference person in the family) and indirectly affected, afraid of losing a family member. Still, the distinction between directly and indirectly affected is useful: we are interested in studying revocation effects at both the *individual*, *family* and at the *group* level (immigrant communities).

When we recruited interviewees we did not limit our sample to persons with specific legal situations. Instead, we used a broad definition of *persons affected by the revocation practice*. This opened up for an analysis of the degree to which people understand the different legal provisions and the difference between them.

The sample includes two persons who were not directly or indirectly affected by revocation nor did they represent either of the two immigrant groups. These individuals heard of the study and had adjacent cases (rejected application for citizenship and rejected application for travel documents). To the study, they represented an outside–inside view of the revocation complex, being able to comment on the practice affecting many from their own communities while not being affected themselves.

## Recruitment

Several recruitment strategies were used in this study. To reach out to informants within the Somali group, we contacted two key representatives within the Somali community in Oslo. This strategy had a dual purpose: to interview the representatives about the effects of the revocation practice on the community and to get their guidance when we recruited relevant persons from this group. The two representatives served as gate-keepers for our study and helped us spread the invitation to potential informants through social media.

The gate keepers believed that the larger Somali community could benefit from a study on the revocation practice. We quickly reached the target number of informants from the Somali group.

It proved much more difficult to recruit Afghan informants, despite using the same strategy. We reached out repeatedly to various community leaders, spokespersons, and organizations. These attempts were not successful. We then posted an open invitation on a Facebook page for persons of Afghan background living in Norway. Through this group, we got in contact with the administrator of the page. This person also served as a (non-elected) community representative and had experience in helping people with revocation cases within the Afghan community. Through the open invitation on the Afghan community's Facebook page, we then managed to recruit persons who were directly impacted by revocation.

There may be several reasons for why it was more difficult to recruit Afghans than Somalis. The most obvious one is that there are far fewer Afghans than Somalis with opened revocation cases (as shown in Figure 3, Chapter 3). Another reason is that Afghans generally appeared to be more socially and geographically scattered than Somalis in Norway. In addition, Afghans *as a group* may be less conscious about the revocation practice. Tellingly, the reply from one of organization leaders we contacted in order to recruit Afghan informants put it this way:

Those I have asked do not know about people affected by revocation. It looks like either very few are impacted by the practice or that people do not want to talk about it. (Interview, representative of Afghan community)

It would have been easier to compare the interviews from the two groups had we been able to recruit more Afghan informants. For the overall analysis, however, this may not be a problem. It did not seem like the experiences and effects of revocation on the Afghan immigrants were substantially different from those on the Somali immigrants. Due to the imbalance in recruitment, we do not systematically compare the two groups in the report.

In this study, as often in qualitative social research, one has to be aware of possible self-selection bias. Interviewees who choose to participate in the study may, for example, believe that they have a stronger case than the 'average' revocation case, motivating them to participate. Obviously, they have an interest in presenting a "polished" story, presenting their case in the best possible light. At the same time, several interviewees also pointed out critical points in their own

stories that did not favor them in the case. Some also admitted outright that there *were* legitimate reasons for revoking their permits and citizenship. Therefore, other motivations to participate may also be present, for instance, to shed light on the practice in general and the challenges it poses for those affected.

## Interview setting

The interviews took place between September 2018 and January 2019. Seven interviews were conducted by phone or in person at the Institute for Social Research, 10 in public cafés in the greater Oslo region, and one in the home of a family.

Fifteen interviews were conducted with individuals directly affected by revocation and the remaining three interviews with community representatives. Two researchers were present at all interviews except two. As a main rule, the interviews were recorded and the researchers took notes. The recordings were used to supplement the notes and were subsequently deleted. All three researchers read the notes and participated in the analysis of the written material.

The number of interviewees present in each interview varied from one to four. For most of the interviews with Somali immigrants, a translator was present.

## Sample characteristics

The final sample (see Table 1) displays a wide variation in terms of gender (15 men and 12 women), age (from 18 to early 60s), and years of residency in Norway (from three to 24 years). Most of the interviewees came to Norway as asylum seekers or refugees, while a few arrived as family migrants.

Eighteen of the interviewees were *directly* affected by either revocation (n=15) or cessation (n=3). In one case the main interviewee (interview 14) was not aware of the difference between revocation and cessation, which makes it difficult to classify this case. Four persons were *indirectly* affected, meaning that they somehow had issues with the UDI that led them to believe that their residence permits might be at stake. Examples of such issues were rejection of citizenship applications due to unclear identity, withdrawal of travel documents, and unprocessed applications in the system (e.g., applications for family reunification).

With regard to the informants' formal status, we do not have reliable data on each interviewee. From what the informants told us, approximately 40% of them (excluding community representatives and relatives) held temporary



permits, and 60% held permanent residence permits. Only one informant had been notified that his citizenship was in jeopardy.

Eleven of our informants had children in Norway. This highlights the point that revocation reaches beyond the individual.

The majority of the interviewees lived in the greater region of Oslo, but we also had phone interviews with persons living in southern, western, and northern parts of Norway.

**Table 1. Sample characteristics. Pseudonym, gender, age, country of origin, legal status, years of residency, case type, and children.**<sup>33</sup>

Int. no.	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Legal status	Years of residency	Case type	Children
1	Bashir	Male	40s	Somali	n/a	n/a	Com. rep.	n/a
2	Omar	Male	30s	Somali	n/a	n/a	Com. rep.	n/a
3	Maryam	Female	20s	Somali	Temporary	5	Revocation	Yes
4	Halima	Female	30s	Somali	Permanent	5	Revocation	Yes
5	Ibrahim	Male	20s	Somali	Permanent	6	Revocation	No
6	Nasreen Samira Aisha	Female Female Female	60s Teens Teens	Somali Somali Somali	Temporary Temporary Temporary	3 3 3	Revocation Revocation Revocation	Yes No No
7	Yusuf	Male	30s	Somali	Temporary	5	Revocation	Yes
8	Abdirahim	Male	30s	Somali	Temporary	9	Cessation	n/a
9	Amal Faduma	Female Female	30s 30s	Somali Somali	Temporary n/a	6 15	Revocation Indirectly	Yes n/a
10	Mohamed Mona	Male Female	30s 30s	Somali Somali	Temporary n/a	6 n/a	Cessation Cessation	Yes Yes
11	Abshir	Male	40s	Somali	Citizenship	24	Revocation	Yes
12	Ilhan Ayaan	Female Female	30s 30s	Somali Somali	Permanent	4 7	Revocation Indirectly	Yes n/a
13	Hassan	Male	50s	Somali	Permanent	16	Indirectly	n/a
14	Abdi Samira Barre	Male Female Male	20s 60s 20s	Somali Somali Somali	Permanent n/a Permanent	6 6 n/a	Revocation Revocation Relative	No Yes n/a
15	Parwais Bilal Osman Gulzar	Male Male Male Male	20s 20s 40s 50s	Afghan Afghan Afghan Afghan	Permanent n/a n/a	6 6 n/a n/a	Revocation Revocation Com. rep. Relative	No No n/a n/a
16	Mahmood	Male	30s	Afghan	n/a	n/a	Com. rep.	n/a
17	Amina	Female	20s	Afghan	Permanent	8	Revocation	No
18	Fariba	Female	20s	Afghan	Permanent	7	Indirectly	Yes

Table 1 gives an overview of the informants with Somali and Afghan backgrounds. We use the substitute pseudonym as identification tags throughout the report.

<sup>33</sup> All names are changed for the purpose of anonymity.

## Methodological and ethical reflections

During our fieldwork, we were faced with several ethical dilemmas. Most of the informants were facing possible revocation, loss of rights, and deportation. They were in vulnerable situations. This highlighted the relevance of the guiding norm that those participating in social research shall not be harmed because they take part.

To create a space where informants felt they could talk freely about their experiences, we first needed to gain their confidence. This was done by providing information about the project and its background. An important piece of this was to distinguish between the roles of the UDI (commissioner) and the research team (independent). We also had to detail how their information would be processed, stored, and used in the final publication. This was done in invitation letters and invitation posts on Facebook and was repeated at the start of the interviews.

The gatekeepers, particularly within the Somali community, played a pivotal role here by informing the interview subjects beforehand about the research project. To secure that they had the correct information, we had several conversations with these representatives.

At the beginning of the interviews we made sure the informants consented in participating. We informed them of the purpose of the project, its voluntary character, and of the consequences of participating. We also underscored that while participating would not have a negative impact on their ongoing cases, we could not help their individual cases.

We were also faced with the ethical question of how much information we should share with our interviewees. In several of the interviews with persons who believed they were only indirectly affected, information given during our conversation indicated that they may have been directly affected, that is, that their cases had been identified by the authorities as possible revocation cases. In these cases, we chose to not mention our suspicions in order to avoid causing unnecessary uncertainty and worry.

Another ethical issue raised during our fieldwork was the question of whom we are “helping” by conducting this type of study—the authorities or the interview subjects? The informants asked us questions that indicated this worry, such as: How can you help us? Do the policy makers listen to you? Will this study change the revocation practice? The questions point to the asymmetrical power relation between researchers and interviewees, an asymmetry that may be exac-

erbated if there are structural inequalities in terms of social class and majority/minority background (Carling, Erdal, & Ezzati, 2014).

A last ethical point is that the knowledge we gather in this report may be used to create a more liberal or a stricter revocation practice. On one hand, documenting the human and societal costs of the revocation practice may lead authorities to adjust the policies in a direction that is beneficial to those affected. On the other hand, policy makers may also use the findings to enforce a stricter and more effective practice, which may be to the detriment of those we interviewed.

Our aim, as we explained to the informants, was solely to document their experiences with (possible) revocation. Some interviewees were clearly disappointed by the fact that we could not help them with their case, while quite a few had no such expectations and were simply grateful for our interest and willingness to document their experiences and make these available to a broader public.

# Chapter 3: Revocation in numbers

In this chapter, we use register data to analyze different aspects of revocation and cessation. The data cover the number of persons affected by revocation, characteristics of the case processing, other related permits, and the outcomes of the case processing.

As mentioned above, revocation cases were not registered as a separate category in the UDI database (DUF) until March 2017. As a result of this, there are limitations to what type of analysis we can do. Revocation cases that were opened before this date are included in our data material but are registered as if the case processing started in March 2017. Because there is no statistically available information about the start date of these cases, our analysis of the duration of cases is limited. In the following, we use information registered between March 2017 and the end of December 2018.

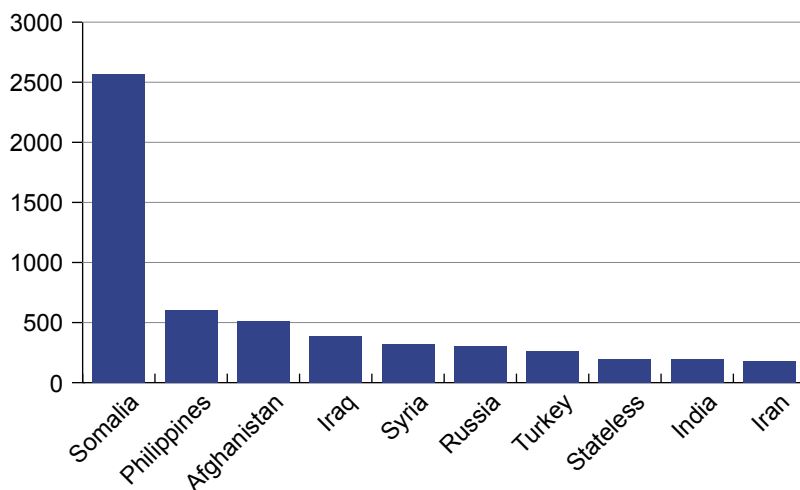
There is one more severe limitation to the data presented below—the lack of registered information about when individuals were formally notified of their revocation case. This is not the only way that individuals can discover that the UDI is considering to revoke their permit. During the clarification phase (see Figure 1, Chapter 1) they may be contacted by the UDI or the police, as we have seen in our material. However, this information is not available in the data.

## The volume and nature of revocation cases

In 2017, UDI established two sub-departments dedicated to revocation, one under the department for asylum and the other as part of the department for residence cases. Existing revocation cases were transferred to these sub-departments, which then registered and continued the processing of the portfolios. The result was an immediate overload on these two dedicated revocation units.

Looking at the total caseload during the period between March 2017 and December 2018, we see that cases involving persons of Somali background were by far the most numerous (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Total number of revocation cases (§26.2, §37, and §63) registered/opened during the March 2017–December 2018 period**



In Figure 2 we see that the two nationalities selected for the current study, Somalia and Afghanistan were among the top three groups affected by revocation. We will not go into detail on the situation and caseload of other nationalities but only repeat that cases involving Philippine nationals often pertained to au-pairs getting new temporary permits when changing host families. The number of cases affecting persons of Somali background was more than four times higher than the next top nationality.

Out of the 2,567 registered Somali cases, 1,379 were cessation (§37.1), 748 were revocation (§63), and 440 were revocation of citizenship (§26.2).

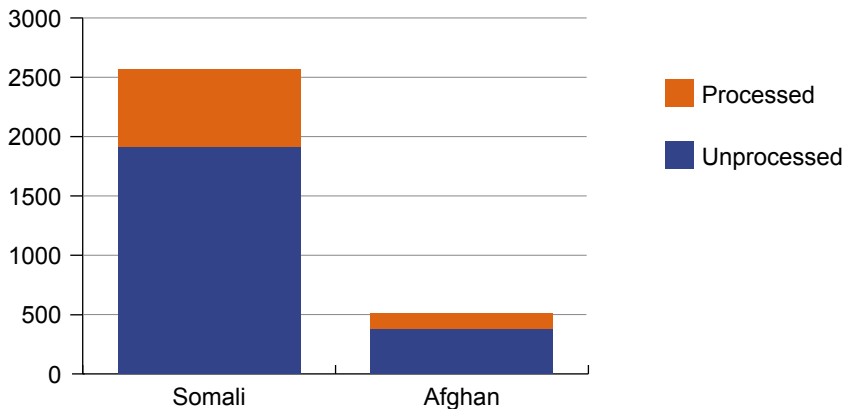
Out of the 512 registered Afghan cases, none were regarded as cessation (according to §37.1). The clear majority of cases were revocation (§63), often due to faulty ID, and 30 cases were citizenship (§26.2).

With a steady inflow of newly registered cases, and limited processing capacity, the pending revocation caseload involving Somali and Afghan nationals increased during the period between March 2017 and December 2018 and then stabilized. From a build-up starting with the registrations during the spring of 2017, the number of unprocessed cases for the two nationalities passed 2,000 in November 2017. It remained at that high level throughout the period. At the end of December 2018, there were 2,282 pending revocation cases involving persons with Somali and Afghan backgrounds. These waited to be processed.

The numbers indicate a low processing rate and long waiting periods for those affected.

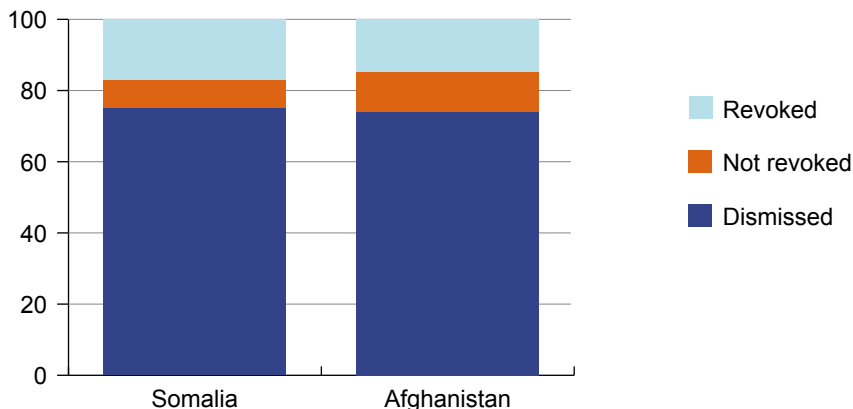
Again, looking at the 22-month period and the two nationalities, we see in Figure 3 that around one in four cases had been processed (Somalis 26%) (Afghans 27%).

**Figure 3. Number of revocation cases, processed and unprocessed, of persons with Somali and Afghan backgrounds (March 2017–December 2018). Source: UDI/DUF**



Among processed cases, a clear majority ended with dismissal (henleggelse). In Figure 4, we see that out of the 660 revocation cases involving persons of Somali background that had been processed during the period, 75% were dismissals (506 persons).

**Figure 4. Persons with Somali and Afghan backgrounds: outcome of revocation cases decided by the UDI. March 2017–December 2018.**  
**Source: UDI/DUF. Percent of total output (660 Somali cases and 139 Afghan cases)**



Of the remaining cases of Somalis that were processed, 8% were not revoked and 17% were revoked by the UDI. Similar numbers are found for cases involving Afghans (see Figure 4).

For both nationalities, we see a similar pattern: few cases were processed during the 22-month period (approximately 25%) and, out of those that were processed, only a fraction resulted in permits being revoked (116 Somali permits and 25 Afghans permits were revoked).

The proportion of cases that were revoked is of course even smaller if we look at the number of revocations in relation to the overall number of cases (including those not yet processed). Here we find a 5% revocation rate for both Somalis and Afghans.

There are several possible explanations for why we find such low ratios of revocations for these two nationalities. One is that the Directorate of Immigration has sought to prioritize clear-cut dismissal cases. This is supported in our interviews with civil servants. Another explanation can be cases where UDI sees that the subject is likely to be granted another permit or where revocation has to be considered before reaching decisions in related cases.

To fully assess the outcome of the process for those affected by (potential) revocation, we also have to consider whether those that had their permits revoked



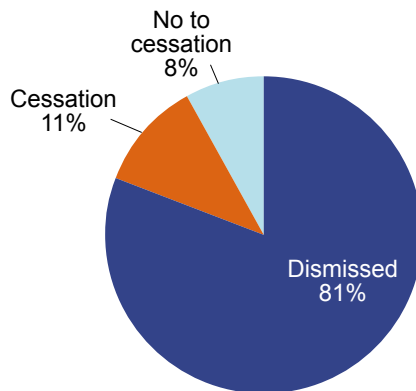
were given new permits. Out of the 116 Somalis whose permits were revoked during the period, 17 were given new permits, mostly new permits as refugees.

Out of the 25 Afghan nationals whose permits were revoked, one was registered with a new permit. In six of the same 25 cases, the decision was expulsion (utvisning). However, only one person out of these six was returned by the police during the March 2017–December 2018 period.

## Cessation (Immigration Act §37)

With a few exceptions (four cases), the cessation paragraph (Immigration Act §37, and in particular §37 Section 1, letter e) was used in cases involving persons of Somali background. A total of 1,379 Somali cessation cases were registered during the 22 month period (March 2017–December 2018).<sup>34</sup> Of these, 321 had been processed by the end of January 2019.

**Figure 5. Persons of Somali background: outcome of cessation cases processed by the UDI. Cases registered March 2017–December 2018, outcome registered per January 2019. Source: UDI/DUF**



In Figure 5, we see that a clear majority of the cessation cases that had been opened and then processed ended with a dismissal (henleggelse) (81%). One in 10 cases that had been processed ended with a cessation of permits (11%).

Again, we should look for reasons why the number of cessation decisions was so low compared to the decisions to dismiss the case. And yet again, we assume

<sup>34</sup> These are included in the overall number of revocation cases presented in the previous sections.

that a series of clear-cut dismissal cases were selected first to reduce the stack of cases. The ratio is still low.

According to our interviews, all the persons affected in cases that have been decided have received notice of the outcome of the process. This includes dismissal decisions.

The portfolio of cessation cases was built gradually over the 22-month period. The number of unprocessed cases grew rapidly after the start of registration in March 2017 and passed 600 in November of that year. The number was doubled by March 2018 and remained at the 1,200 level, until a stint of processing toward the end of the year brought the number back down below 1,100. The processing was slow during the whole period, with a few exceptions when special efforts were made to bring down the number of pending cessation cases.<sup>35</sup>

## Time and duration

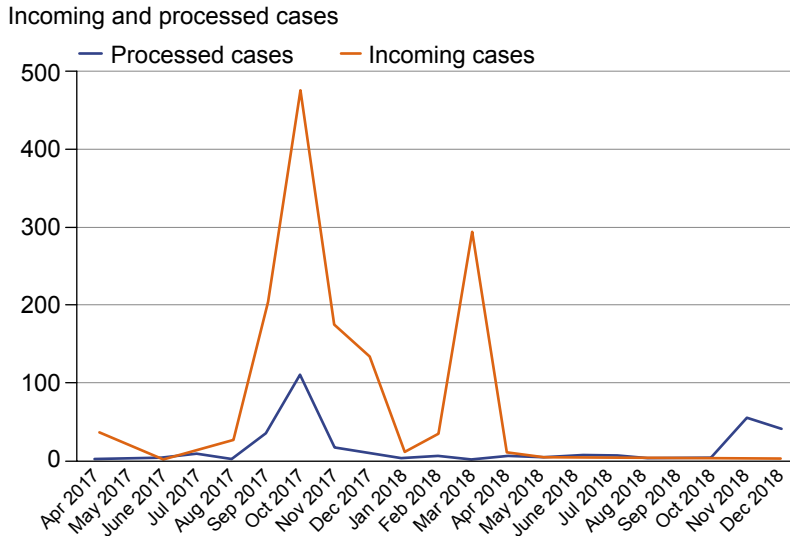
These numbers show that a clear majority of those directly affected by revocation (and cessation) experienced long waiting periods. Many migrants (and naturalized Norwegian citizens) had already been waiting for their cases to be processed when the proper registration began in March 2017. As we saw in Chapter 1, the migrants became aware, or were made aware that something was not right, often before the actual notice came in a letter from the UDI or the notice was announced to them by the police. One civil servant told us that a substantial part of the cases that were registered in 2017 dated back several years.

In lack of solid data on the duration of case processing for the two nationalities, we have to revert to simple math to get an impression. Focusing on Somali cessation alone, we see in Figure 5 that in order to estimate a minimum duration, we have to compare the difference between cases opened and cases closed (behandlet).

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<sup>35</sup> One peak in processing of cessation cases came in October 2017 (almost reaching 100 cases before falling to 10 cases the following month (DUF database). The next came during November 2018, when almost 60 cessation cases were processed.

**Figure 6. Trend in cessation cases of persons with Somali background.**  
**Source: UDI/DUF. Incoming and processed cases per month (March 2017–**  
**December 2018). Total cases during the period: 1,378; of these 307 were**  
**processed**



As we see in Figure 6, the registration of Somali cessation cases were concentrated around two peaks, during fall the fall of 2017 and in March 2018. In October 2017, 480 cases were opened. Around 100 of these were immediately dismissed (henlagt). The month after, 180 cases were registered, and 10 were processed. In March 2018, 300 cases were registered and fewer than 10 cases were processed. Then, in November 2018, 50 cases were processed, followed by 40 in December that year. These numbers tell us that 380 net cases have sat 15 months or more; 80 persons have waited 14 months or more, while 300 have waited nine months or more.

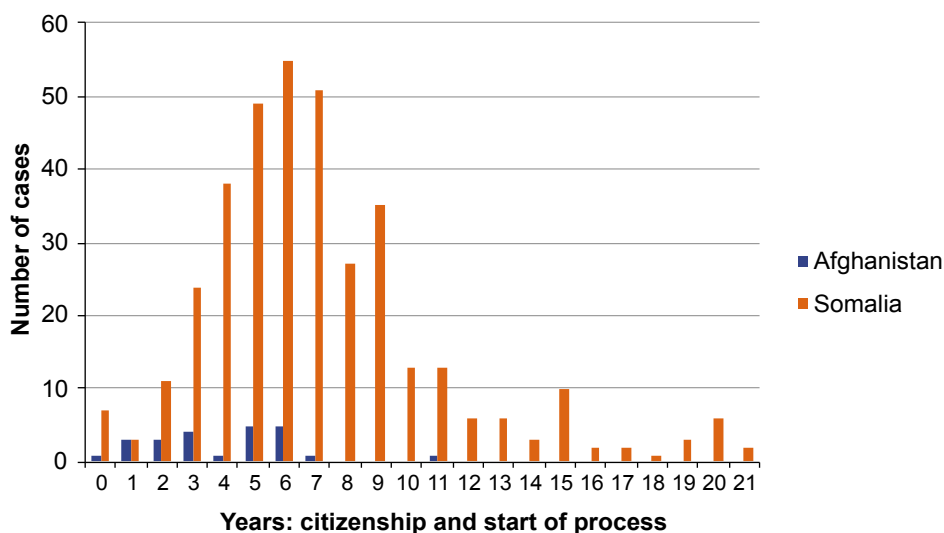
These estimated waiting times are the absolute minimum for these individuals.

Many of those directly affected by other forms of revocation had even longer waiting times as the registration of their cases started earlier in the March 2018–December 2019 period. But more people were affected by the slow processing tempo.

## Citizenship

The revocation of citizenship (Nationality Act §26, section 2) is the most dramatic form of withdrawal of permits. As noted earlier, these cases were suspended pending further political processing. Those affected had often obtained citizenship long before they were notified of the possible revocation. In Figure 7, we see the number of years that passed from when the immigrants had obtained citizenship to the time revocation cases were formally opened.

**Figure 7. Norwegian citizens of Somali and Afghan backgrounds: the number of years between obtained citizenship and the opening of revocation cases (as of December 31, 2019)**



In Figure 7, we see that most Somalis affected of revocation had been citizens for five to 10 years. Some had been naturalized even longer, several having passed the 20-year mark. In addition to this period, all citizens have had to wait for seven years or longer before they were able to apply for citizenship.

## Other affected permit holders

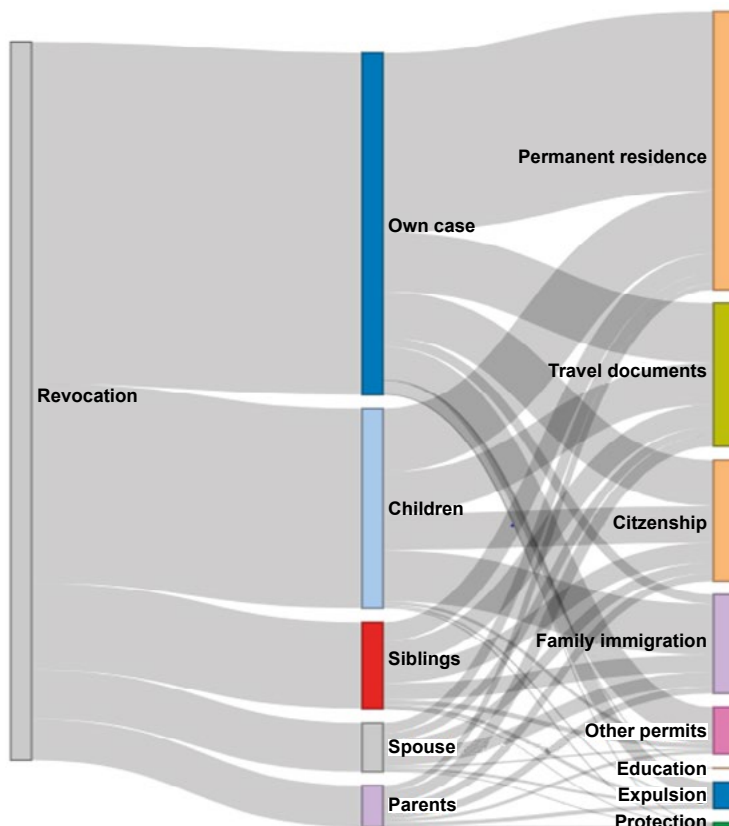
Most persons that were directly affected by revocation (and cessation) had other applications waiting to be processed by the UDI. Often family members also had registered applications with the UDI. Applications for family immigration, permanent residency, citizenship, travel documents, and more were put on hold,

waiting for the outcome of the revocation case. The case handlers at the UDI were instructed not start the processing of these related cases until the revocation cases had been decided.

More than 2,000 out of the 2,300 persons of Somali or Afghan background who waited for the outcome of their revocation cases at the end of 2018, had related applications cases that were put on hold. These could be applications they had filed themselves or belong to other related persons. In total more than 3,400 other cases were put on hold due to the processing of revocation cases of persons of Somali or Afghan background.

In Figure 8 we present the types of related applications pending on revocation cases as well as the relationship between revocation cases and the other cases.

**Figure 8. Relationship between revocation cases and other pending applications/cases for persons of Somali and Afghan backgrounds (as of December 31, 2018)<sup>36</sup>**



In Figure 8, we see that the groups most often indirectly affected by the revocation practice were children, followed by siblings, spouses, and parents. The largest category of pending related cases were applications for permanent residence permits, followed by travel documents, citizenship, and family immigration.

In the following chapters, we will document the migrants' experience with the prolonged processing time but also with the issue of related cases. They are important parts of the experience of revocation, including as triggers of worry. When, for example, those that apply for permanent residence do not receive an answer within normal processing time, or when the approval of family migration never comes, the indirect effect of revocation becomes apparent. The migrants start to worry—something is wrong.

<sup>36</sup> The figure is depicting the original revocation case on the left, the owner of the related case in the middle, and, on the right, what type of case that is related.

# Chapter 4: The revocation process from the immigrants' perspective

This chapter addresses how the informants experienced the revocation process. First, we describe how the interviewees became aware that they were affected by (possible) revocation. What were their immediate reactions to possibly losing their permits? Next, we describe how they experienced the interviews and the case processing. We then describe the later stages of the immigrants' revocation process, including waiting for an outcome and receiving the decision of revocation. We conclude the chapter by describing the secondary effects of the revocation process on family, friends, and immigrant communities.

## The first contact

The informants discovered that they were involved in a revocation process in different ways and at different stages of the revocation process. To those affected, the time of discovery constituted a potentially life-altering moment. It marked the start of a process that they were not prepared for.

From the immigrants' perspective, the process of revocation often started with a first contact with the UDI or the police. In some cases they were contacted by either authority during the clarification phase, but more often, there were formal notifications. According to our informants, there was substantial variation in how they were notified. Some received a letter in the mail from the UDI, while others were contacted by the police in person, by phone, or in a formal letter.

As noted earlier, however, some informants had not received a formal notification of revocation but still sensed that "something was wrong." They did so because their applications to the UDI, such as for family reunification or citizenship, were not processed according to the normal processing time. They then contacted the immigration authorities and were told that UDI had opened a revocation case.

In the following, we will describe how the informants became aware that their permits were in jeopardy.

## The letter

For most of our informants who were directly affected by revocation, the process started with a letter in the mail. The letter could be from the UDI or from the local police office and would either be an invitation to an interview for clarification purposes or a direct notification that the immigration authorities were considering revocation. The two types of letters meant that the cases were at different stages in the revocation process (clarification or notification).<sup>37</sup> Most of our informants were not able to distinguish between the letters or the stages in the process. This meant that even in cases where a revocation process had not yet started, the affected immigrant could experience a collapse in certainty and outlook.

The confusion was, according to informants, due to the limited information provided in the letters. In addition, they knew little or nothing about revocation in general, the process of revocation, or of its legal basis. It was particularly challenging to understand the information in the letters for the interviewees who had lived in Norway for only a short period. They often had insufficient language skills and little knowledge of the Norwegian judicial system. Bashir, a Somali community representative, told us that he had been contacted by several immigrants from his community because they did not understand the revocation letters they had received. As an authorized interpreter, he characterized the language in the letters from the immigration authorities as *very bureaucratic*. The immigrants often had a hard time grasping both the content in the letters and the potential consequences of the message.

### Example: Parwais and Bilal

Parwais and Bilal, two brothers in their early 20s (Afghan, 6 years of residency in Norway), had trouble making sense of the summons letter they received from the police in the spring of 2018. At that time, Bilal had been waiting 14 months for the outcome of his application for Norwegian citizenship. He was already sensing that something was wrong when the letter arrived. This suspicion was reinforced by the letter from the police. According to the brothers, the head of the letter read: *We need further information in your asylum case*. They were asked to provide travel documents and documentation substantiating their account of their migration route to Norway six years earlier.

Gulzar (Afghan male, 50s) was a close relative of the two brothers and present at our interview with them. He described the boys' reception of the letter from the police in the following way:

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<sup>37</sup> See Figure 1, Chapter 1.



It was so difficult, very complicated, particularly for [these] youths. It was very stressful for the brothers (...) it was a frightening letter.

It was so stressful that, according to Gulzar, Bilal had been admitted twice to a psychiatric hospital as a direct consequence of the uncertainty, stress, and anxiety created by the message in the letter. He said the message of revocation stirred up traumatic experiences from the boy's past.

### **Example: Abshir and his wife**

Even persons who had been in Norway for a long time and had excellent language skills had trouble comprehending the content of the letters and the consequences of (possible) revocation. Abshir (Somali, 40s, 24 years of residency) and his wife were both citizens and received a summons letter from the police in the fall of 2016. Despite comprehensive Norwegian skills and knowledge about the immigration system, Abshir struggled to make sense of the letter. He said:

My wife and I both got a letter—the same letter. I opened the mailbox; I read it [the letter] and did not understand any of it. It seemed like a standardized letter from the police. At least, it was not personal. (...) we were addressed as foreigners even though we had already been Norwegian [citizens] for a while then. I suppose it was written for [the purpose of] revocation of residence permits (...), so it was weird to read that letter.

Right away, the letter generated confusion because Abshir and his wife were addressed as “foreigners” even though they had become Norwegian citizens several years earlier and had lived in Norway for more than 20 years, making the content of the letter seem irrelevant. Abshir told us that he had to calm his wife down, who was shocked to learn that the immigration authorities could revoke their citizenship:

It was a good thing it was me who opened the mailbox, I do not think my wife could have handled the message. I had to explain it [the content] to her calmly, so that she would not get the same shock I got. I said we had received a letter from the police. She [said]: “Oh, really, what is going on?” I said: “Calm down, it is an interview.” She asked why. I said: “They have received some information that may be of interest to ... it may lead to the revocation of our citizenship.” She said: “Oh is that even possible?” I replied: “Yes, it says so right here.”

The letter that Abshir received contained little information about what the authorities wanted to know. As a result, Abshir and his wife had difficulties understanding what they were facing. They had four weeks until the interview was scheduled to take place. During this period they were both “completely

broken up” and “unable to comfort each other,” according to Abshir. The couple has two young children.

### **Example: Amina**

Amina shared the same experience of shock and confusion when she received her letter informing her that the authorities were considering revoking her permit (Afghan, 20s, 8 years of residency). Amina was surprised by the fact that revocation was even legally possible:

The topic of the letter was revocation. I thought—are they just going to take my permit away without even asking me? Can they just do that? It was very scary and gave me a sickening feeling.

Initially, Amina was uncertain of the implications of the letter, whether her permit was *already* revoked, or if it was going to be revoked without due process. She missed an exam because she was not able to focus on school after receiving the message of possible revocation. Later on in the interview, she told us that she was somewhat reassured when she later went to the police station. Here the police formally notified her of revocation, and informed her that she (and her family) had the right to engage a lawyer and prepare a response.

Like many of our informants, she did not feel that the initial communication from the authorities contained sufficient information about the process of revocation or what to expect.

### **The police visit**

Some of the informants were first contacted by the local police, either by letter summoning them to interviews or in person. Some informants told stories of how they had been picked up by the police, sometimes even in uniform, without prior notice and had been escorted directly to the police station.<sup>38</sup>

### **Example: Ibrahim**

Ibrahim (Somali, 20s, 6 years in Norway) told us that armed police (wearing bulletproof vests) came to get him at his school in a small town in the southern part of Norway. According to him, they took him out of an exam before he was finished and escorted him to his apartment and searched it. The police seized,

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<sup>38</sup> Although the interviewees did not mention it, some of these cases may have been regarded as criminal cases by the local police (Norwegian: *straffesporet*). As mentioned, it can be regarded as illegal to operate with a faulty identity (interview with the Oslo police). The police can also treat similar cases as civil cases (*sivilsporet*). Following the civil track, uniformed pick-ups would not be the typical way of handling this type of cases.

among other things, his computer and phone before they brought him to the police station. There the police notified him, through a translator, about revocation and interviewed him for three hours, during which he was “tired, dizzy and scared,” as he put it. Ibrahim was aware of other Somali immigrants in the same situation as him (facing revocation) but underscored that the police treated him differently than others he had heard of:

The police approached me very differently than they did with the others [facing revocation] (...) the police came to my school ... the arrest, the search [at his apartment]—I believe this is unique to my case (...) the others got a revocation letter in the mail. This was different.

Ibrahim contrasts his own experience—an unexpected and harsh run-in with the police at his school—with the milder experience of receiving a letter in the mail. The teachers at his school were also displeased with how the police had handled the situation. According to Ibrahim, one of his teachers told the police that it would have been better if the school had been notified in advance. If so, he could have finished his exam and gone to the police station afterward for the interview.

When we presented Ibrahim's story to our police informants, they said that local practices may vary, but that it sounded to them like there was more to this story than revocation. Ibrahim did mention that there were people in his circles that had sold drugs. If he had been involved in any way, that would support the police's interpretation. However, Ibrahim insisted that he was only asked questions relating to the issue of revocation.

### **Example: Yusuf**

Yusuf (Somali, 30s, 5 years in Norway) was also picked up by the police. The police came to see him at his place of work in a city in the northern part of Norway. He described the event like this:

It was a nice day. I was at work. Six police officers [first] went to my home, to my wife, as she was home. They were not civilian police but uniformed police. They asked my wife “where is your husband?” She asked what the problem was (...) but since she did not want to tell [them where he was], they did not answer. So then, they came to my place of work. They asked for me; then I came down, and I did not understand anything. [Yusuf said] “What is the problem?” then they said “we would like to have a conversation, an interview with you.” [Yusuf said] “Can't we do it here and then be done with it?” Then they said “No, you have to come with us to the police station, and we'll talk there.”

Both Ibrahim and Yusuf suggested that the immigration authorities, the local police officers in these instances, used disproportionately harsh methods of notifying them about (possible) revocation. They underscored the fact that the police were armed and that the police first showed up at their homes and then in their places of school and work. Of course, the harsh police methods may be justified if these cases were, in fact, criminal rather than administrative ones. Nevertheless, these apprehension-like experiences can be very stressful, both for the individual affected and for their family members who witness these episodes (cf. Golash-Boza, 2019).

### Sensing that “something is wrong”

A few of the informants were not contacted directly by the UDI or the police. They simply sensed that “something was wrong” when their applications for other types of permits (e.g., family reunification or citizenship) were not being processed by the UDI. In these cases, the UDI may consider opening a revocation case, and often they cannot inform the applicant about the situation, even when contacted. Instead, these individuals are *indirectly* affected by the revocation practice because their applications are left “hanging in the system” (see Figure 6, Chapter 3) and may worry for this reason.

#### **Example: Ayaan**

Ayaan (Somali, 30s, 7 years of residency) was one of these indirectly affected. We interviewed her together with Ilhan (Somali, 30s, 4 years of residency), who faced revocation at the time. Although Ayaan had not received a formal notification of revocation, she feared that her permit was at stake because UDI had taken almost four years to process her application for permanent residency:

I have not gotten an answer yet. I am waiting, too. I applied for permanent residency, but I have yet to receive an answer ... So I have the same pain and suffering as [Ilhan] (...) I applied for permanent residency in January 2015, almost four years ago, and I have not heard anything since ... I have not received any message other than a decision stating I can stay here legally for six months at the time while the case is being processed. That is the only response I get from them, nothing else.

In this quote, Ayaan emphasizes that she carries the same kind of “pain and suffering” as Ilhan. She feels the same effects of prolonged waiting and uncertainty. Not knowing why she had not yet gotten a decision may have added to the unease.

### **Example: Faduma**

The uncertainty caused by the long processing time appeared to be amplified by the attention on revocation in the media and the talk about this practice within the Somali immigrant community (see also Birkvad, 2017). Faduma (Somali, 30s, 15 years of residency), who was not directly affected by revocation, also felt anxious due to circulating stories about Somalis who risked losing their permits:

We know many people who have been affected. Most of those I know originate from Mogadishu (...) but there are also people from other places in Somalia who have received [decisions of] revocation or who have been notified.

In this quote, she refers to both cessation (refugees from Mogadishu) and revocation cases. It was well known among our Somali informants that Somalis were targeted particularly by the revocation practice. As a result, the effect of revocation reached beyond the individuals that were directly affected. It produced uncertainty at the group level as well.

## **Case processing and interviews**

Our informants did not know what to expect from the process of revocation. This uncertainty was based on a lack of information and transparency. They also felt that they did not get enough information about why their permits were being revoked.

### **Lack of information and transparency**

Many of our informants described the communication with the immigration authorities as one-sided. While the immigration authorities pulled information from them during case interviews, they themselves did not in return get the information they wanted regarding their case and the next stages of the process.

As mentioned above, Amina (Afghan, 20s, 8 years of residency) was uncertain about the process of revocation until the police informed her. She sought information on the UDI's webpages but found little that seemed relevant for her situation. She said she wished there was a "step-by-step" overview over the entire process on these pages. According to Amina, that would increase the transparency and thereby reduce confusion and stress.

Ilhan (Somali, 30s, 4 years of residency) also emphasized the lack of information and described the communication with the immigration authorities as one-sided:

It has been very difficult since the first interview. They had some questions ... and they got what they wanted (...), but I have not heard anything from them since. No email with an explanation, no phone calls asking me how I am or telling me how long it is going to take. It has been one-sided (...). It has not been a mutual exchange of information ...  
“How’s life; what are your plans?” That is hard, the hardest thing for me. It would have been easier if someone from the UDI gave us information and reasons [for opening the revocation case].

In this quote, Ilhan notes the lack of information about the process itself, not knowing the next stages of the process. She also points to a lack of information about the reasons for the revocation. When we talked to her, six months had passed since her interview with the UDI. She had still not heard back from them and had no information about the status of her case or when a decision would be made.

She also pointed out the stress caused by not being able to predict the outcome of her case. She did not know what information the immigration authorities were in possession of. It is a basic principle in law that one should be able to predict one’s legal situation (Brekke et al., 2018). In order to do so, transparency and a predictable legal process is required.

Uncertainty and one-way-communication was also emphasized by Abshir (Somali, 40s, 24 years of residency). He put it this way, referring to his contact with the police:

To this day I don’t know why [...], whether someone called them who didn’t like us? (...) I asked them: “did you receive any tips?” No, they could not answer that; only the UDI could answer that. I feel that ... the thing I want to say about this, about the process, is that you are dealing with human beings. They could come forward and say “hey, you, we got this and that tip”—they would not have to say who it came from.

Two years after the police interviewed him and his wife, he was still uncertain about the status of their case and why they had been interviewed in the first place.<sup>39</sup> Again, he would rather that the police confronted him directly with the information that had caused their suspicion. From an outsider’s perspective, one could point out that in cases where the police are involved neither of the two parties present in the interviews will be fully informed. The police play the role

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39 One could say they were lost in the process.

of the messenger in these interviews. They may be unaware of how the case was identified. Abshir sensed this and was frustrated: “It is impossible to confront the interviewer because she is just the messenger (...) they who sent her are not there to answer [my questions].” Again the one-way communication was stressful for the informant. It was a general trait in our interviews that they found this type of “silent” meeting with the authorities difficult to handle. One reason for their unease was that they did not know what the authorities knew but would not reveal. Further it was unclear to them whether the information they gave during these interviews could hurt their case down the line.

### “People write a lot of rubbish on Facebook”<sup>40</sup>

Social media and Facebook are routinely used by the UDI in revocation cases when they suspect that the person in question has provided incorrect information or withheld information from the authorities. According to the interviews with the UDI employees, Facebook can be used to confirm or discredit information in a case. According to these sources, the UDI uses information from Facebook and other social media only as *supporting* evidence. UDI’s internal guidelines confirm that information from social media shall not alone be sufficient to decide a revocation case.<sup>41</sup>

Our informants were skeptical of the immigration authorities’ use of social media in their case processing. They felt that the UDI used social media as if it was a reliable source of information, which they assured us it is not. They often referred to two sources of misunderstanding: references to family and friends using cultural lingo (brother, uncle, etc.) and seeing likes and lists of friends as indications of true countries of origin.

### Cultural lingo and names

The UDI often uses information from Facebook (and similar) to check relations to family members in revocation cases. Informants reported being confronted with printouts of Facebook pages during interviews with the UDI and the police. Often they were asked why they had labeled persons as “brother” or “sister” when they had not informed the UDI of these relatives. Had they provided false information? Our informants in the UDI were aware of different cul-

40 The complete quote from the interview with Abshir (Somali, 40s, 24 years of residency) is: “People write a lot of rubbish on Facebook, but the UDI sees the information as valid.” Our informants in the UDI disagreed with the last part and noted that they did not take all information on social media at face value.

41 <https://www.udiregelverk.no/no/rettskilder/udi-interne-meldinger/bruk-av-sosial-medier-for-undersokelser-i-asa/>. Brekke et al. (2018) discuss individual instances where information from Facebook appears to have played a major role in UDI processing of revocation cases.

tural norms of using such labels on friends and acquaintances, also on Facebook. Still, the informants did not feel that these norms were fully understood.

Amal (Somali, 30s, 6 years of residency) told us that calling friends “brother” and “sister” was a sign of friendliness and illustrated this point by distinguishing between a wide and a narrow definition of kinship in Somalia and Norway:

About kinship ... I can say that a friend is my sister on Facebook. Then the UDI says I have a sister that I have not told them about. There is a massive focus on Facebook information (...) there may be a cultural collision, regarding the kinship term. We use a wide definition of kinship; we say everyone are uncles and aunts. We say uncle, aunt, brother, and sister. The use of these terms ... It leads to a cultural collision in Norway, where there is a narrow definition of kinship.

In Amal’s point of view, this cultural collision had negative effects on the processing of her case. This view was echoed by Amina (Afghan, 20s, 8 years of residency) and her explanation of the use of “brother” and “sister” among Afghans:

In Afghanistan (...) girls and boys cannot be friends, but they can become like brother and sister. That is why we call people those things, not to signalize other stuff. Then they [the UDI] asked why we said brother and sister to these persons (...) [but] they did not take into account the cultural [meanings] (...) I think their interpretations were very wrong. Without looking at the culture they just came in and translated pictures from Facebook, it was scary.

Several interviewees said that similar names on Facebook were used by the UDI to question family relations. Gulzar, the relative of Parwais and Bilal affected by revocation, was very critical of using names on Facebook as indicators of family relations:

Take the name Khan ... There are maybe 35 million Khans. It is like Jan or Svein in Norway, and there are lots of Sveins. They show pictures and say, “he looks like you and you have the same name, Khan. Maybe this is your brother?” That is wrong.

During the interview with the police, Yusuf (Somali, 30s, 5 years of residency) was subject to such suspicion. The police questioned Yusuf about his deceased brother because the UDI had found a person on Facebook with an almost identical name. This information made the UDI doubt the reliability of Yusuf’s testimonies in the original asylum interview. Yusuf did not take these allegations lightly:



I am going to tell you the worst thing that happened during the interview: I had a brother, and he was killed in Somalia. I buried him there. It was painful. The UDI then finds a person with the same first and middle name [as him] on Facebook, and claim he is my brother, and that he lives in [Somali town]. This evoked painful memories because my brother is dead. I buried him. I don't know this man. We have the same middle name, but we do not have the same last name, so it is incomprehensible.

To Yusuf, the UDI's claim seemed like a long shot and wholly unreasonable: he only shared first and middle names with this person. At the same time, UDI's query revived disturbing memories of his brother's death and burial.

### Likes, pictures, and lists of friends

According to the informants, the UDI also confronted them with pictures and lists of friends from Facebook during the interviews. They also referred to what they had "liked" on the platform, asking why. The goal was often to check information already given by the immigrant about family relations and country (region) of origin. In one case an older women was confronted with printouts of her (now grown) children's Facebook pages. She was asked to comment on pictures, profiles, and their online activity.

#### **Example: Nasreen**

Nasreen (Somali, 60s, 3 years of residency) came to Norway along with her seven children in 2015. Two years later, when Nasreen's husband applied for family reunification, she was summoned for an interview at the police station. During the interview, the police showed her printouts from the Facebook pages of her two teenage daughters. According to the UDI, their activities on Facebook suggested that Nasreen and her children were from Somaliland (the northern part) and not Somalia (the southern part), as they had claimed when they arrived in Norway. The daughters had "liked" and befriended persons from the Northern part of Somalia, and were also "tagged" in pictures taken by these persons. Nasreen, an illiterate with no Facebook account herself, was unaware of her daughters' Facebook activities and therefore found it difficult to respond to these claims during the interviews. She found it frustrating that she had not been told beforehand that she would be presented with this type of information.

Samira, one of Nasreen's teenage daughters, was on one hand fraught with guilt knowing that her Facebook activities may have contributed to the opening of the revocation case. On the other hand, she rejected that such information was valid grounds for revoking their permits:

I have friends from both Somalia and Somaliland [southern and northern part of Somalia] (...) they are the same to me. I did not know there would be consequences of being a good person.

She felt that by using her Facebook activities against her in the revocation case, the UDI limited her freedom of speech. She went on to tell us:

They talk a lot about rights, like freedom of speech. But the freedom of speech is limited. To like pictures on Facebook should be ok; I don't know why they are taking it so seriously.

Samira points out that UDI should put less weight on Facebook as a source of information. It should be noted that in this case, the UDI did also present other types of information backing their claim regarding where the family was from originally. The informants may have an interest in presenting their case in the best possible light. However, this does not take anything away from, for example, Samira's experience of how the UDI uses Facebook as source. There is good reason to believe that one effect of this practice is that those affected feel less free to express themselves online.

## Waiting for an outcome

Legal processes, like revocation cases, often involve a very long period of waiting before the outcome is announced (Griffiths, 2014). Revocation cases are often complex and can be time-consuming for the immigration authorities. Those affected may have to wait during several stages of the case processing. However, several informants found waiting after they had responded to the formal notification to be particularly frustrating. During this phase the case would often dominate and disrupt the daily lives of those affected and their families.

Nasreen and her children had waited for one year for a decision. Aisha, one of the teenage daughters in the family (Somali, 3 years of residency) said she worried every day about the outcome of her family's case:

Those who process our cases, they have a life and everything is good for them. But we, every day we think about what will happen tomorrow. We check the mailbox every day to see if the outcome will be a yes or a no. I would advise the UDI to work faster. They do not know how we experience this. You could go mad if this extends over several years (...); the longer we wait, the more stressful it gets.

Aisha here contrasts the caseworker's life, who is presumably able to separate the case from her private life, to her family's life, which wholly depended on the outcome of the case. Put bluntly, their life *was* the case; thus, if the case was put on hold, their lives were temporally suspended as well.

### **Example: Abshir and his wife**

The most extreme case of prolonged waiting and uncertainty in our material was the case of Abshir and his wife. As mentioned above, Abshir and his wife were interviewed in the fall of 2016 by the police. Two years later, at the time we interviewed him, he had yet to receive any message from UDI regarding the status of his case:

What will the outcome be? Will it go this way or the other way? Now it has been two years [since the interview, still] I do not know what will happen with my case. The last thing I heard from the police was that "the UDI will be in touch."

Abshir knew that their revocation case remained undecided because of the political limbo blocking the revocation of citizenships. He followed the discussion on whether this category of revocation cases should be handled by the immigration authorities or the court system. Still he was frustrated that he heard nothing from the authorities:

Not even a letter. Within two, three months [after the police interview] they could have written a letter that said: Fair enough, now we have your interviews. However, because (...) the parliament has decided [that the courts shall have the power to revoke citizenship] we will have to get back to you, but we are not there yet.

If the immigration authorities had sent this type of update, that would have made the process easier to cope with, according to Abshir. Without information about the process and what to expect, the waiting remained *open-ended*. This open-ended waiting (Brekke, 2001) meant that they did not know when a decision would be made. This again aggravated the already stressful situation for Abshir and his wife.

## **After the decision is made**

Most of our informants were still waiting for an outcome at the time of the interviews. However, a few of them had received decisions of revocation, either from the UDI or the UNE. These people found the period after receiving the

decision challenging in several ways. They reported physical and mental strain, material cutbacks, and social withdrawal.

Halima (Somali, 30s, 5 years of residency) was one of the informants who experienced such stress after having her permanent residence permit revoked. When we spoke to her, she told us that despite having engaged two different lawyers, drafted detailed responses, and endured months of waiting, she had received the depressing message that her permit had been revoked. When she got the message, she had just been released from the hospital, suffering from an ulcer, which she felt had been aggravated by her fears of revocation and deportation. She described the period after release from the hospital as the hardest in the entire revocation process:

I had surgery in the hospital. I was released with no residence permit and nowhere to go. That was the hardest period, the most painful period. I talked to my lawyer (...) he said, "You have received a final rejection; now there's nothing more we can do" [cries].

She isolated herself and stayed in her apartment, constantly worrying about whether the police would come to take her away. One night, three civilian police officers did come to question her. They searched her apartment and seized her travel documents. She experienced this incident as particularly traumatizing because it resembled past experiences she had had with the police in Somalia:

One of them [the police officers] asked me many questions: "What are you doing here, why are you here? You have gotten an expulsion order; you should not be in Norway" (...). It was very hard because I could have accepted this if it had happened in Somalia where the police regularly talk like this (...), but I never expected this to happen in democratic Norway (...); it was precisely these things I ran away from that I experienced again [voice breaks].

Maryam (Somali, 20s, 5 years of residency) shared this sense of *deportability* (de Genova, 2002). She saw that her gender and lack of family would put her in a vulnerable situation:

(...) I have a constant fear that the police will come and get me. I don't have a residence permit (...) Most of the time when I think of returning (...) I don't have any siblings, no relatives, and my mother is dead (...); as a woman I can end up in prostitution (...). I might survive, but what kind of life will I have?

Having to live without a valid permit also had material consequences for some of our informants. In some cases the responsible municipality would cut social support (for rent and other living expenses) when they had their permits

revoked. However, other informants reported that they were grateful to their municipality, which had maintained their level of social support even after the revocation. As Ibrahim (Somali, 20s, 6 years of residency) put it:

I am terrified of the police but grateful for the help I receive from the municipality. They have said, "Ok, now we know what is going on with you. We cannot kick you out on the street, so we will give you support for life expenses. We can guarantee those two things."

Despite receiving a final decision from the UNE of revocation, Yusuf (Somali, 30s, 5 years of residency) tried to do the same as Ibrahim, continuing to do his daily routines, including going to work. This seemed to work out, until one day he received a phone call from the police. They told him he had lost his work permit as well as the residence permit:

(...) the police informed me that I do not have a work permit anymore (...) I got an expulsion order with two weeks' notice (...); then they told me I can't come back to Norway for the next 10 years (...). I said, "I have loans here, credit card debts; is it ok that I work until that debt is paid off?" (...). Then I had a meeting with my employer (...); I had never told him before [now] [because] I thought it was shameful to tell him that I had lost my residence permit.

The phone call was a reality check for Yusuf. Here the police made it clear to him what the harsh reality is of someone staying illegally in Norway. The quote also demonstrates the bonds that exist between those affected and their surroundings. Interestingly, the personal debt that Yusuf had to the bank would probably persist past the immediate situation created by the revocation decision. So, while the revocation in principle cuts the individual loose from the host state, societal bonds may persist. And, it can even be discussed how clear-cut the detachment is from the host authorities, having seen the above examples where municipalities sometimes maintain support beyond a final revocation decision.

So far in this chapter we have described the effects of the revocation process on the individual. The informants reported psychological stress, insomnia, lack of concentration, and mental challenges. In addition, they linked their revocation cases to a list of physical ailments, including reduced breast milk quality, ulcers, and high blood pressure.

Revocation also had spillover effects (Golash-Boza, 2019) on persons in these individuals' social networks, that is, on their family, friends, and communities.

## Spillover effects of revocation

Friends and family of those directly affected also experienced fear of losing their permits and being deported. We asked Faduma (Somali, 30s, 15 years of residency, friend of Amal) to reflect on how immigrants from Somalia talk about revocation; she said:

It is a difficult and painful situation. Revocation is high on the agenda (...). I feel it in my body, too. I am very close to my friend who experiences this physically. It is very difficult because many Somalis who have their permits revoked are very anxious. They have trouble sleeping. They feel unsafe. We have seen concrete results of this. Some have been transported by the police and sent back, or put in jail. So this is very difficult [and] tough. I ruminate a lot. I have experienced this, too. You can say that I also have felt this physically because I am close to my friend who experiences this.

She spent a lot of time together with her friend who was already going through a revocation process. Faduma told us that police cars and sirens now triggered her fear:

When we see a police car driving by, I become anxious for my friend. Sometimes I sleep over at her place. We're very aware of police cars. I stand by the window and look for police cars—are those police sirens? I react when I hear sirens. It is hard to distinguish between ambulance sirens and police sirens.

Her fear of revocation was triggered by seeing her friend's physical and psychological reactions to the revocation process and was amplified by stories circulating within the Somali group.

## Summary

This chapter has described the informants' experiences and reactions to different stages in the revocation process—from the moment they became aware that they may be involved in such a process—either triggered by a letter from the police or the UDI, by the police showing up in person, or merely by indirectly sensing that “something was wrong.” These variations demonstrated that the process was implemented quite differently across the country and from case to case.

The local police departments appeared to handle revocation cases differently, something that was confirmed in our interviews with civil servants. Face-to-face encounters with the police were experienced as particularly stressful.

The informants did not feel sufficiently informed about the process involved in revocation cases. Often they were not told why a case had been opened. They were skeptical in regard to the UDI's use of Facebook as source information.

They also described the negative effects of prolonged and open-ended periods of waiting. Those who had their permits revoked experienced substantial material and psychological losses.

Revocation had spillover effects on friends, family, and communities. In the next chapter, we turn to the potential effects of the revocation process on integration.

## Chapter 5: Effects of (possible) revocation on integration

Across our dataset, we find that revocation affects immigrant integration in a range of ways. The informants reported that being notified of a potential revocation severely impacted both integration processes and outcomes. As we have seen, the opening of revocation cases introduces uncertainty. This uncertainty directly affects integration processes and outcomes, with specific articulations and concrete implications, which we turn to below.

Integration processes (see also Chapter 1) here denote both formal, tangible dimensions referred to as systemic/structural integration—such as employment, permits, access to ID documents and bank cards, and enrollment in school—and to informal, intangible dimensions referred to as socio-cultural integration—such as social and relational experiences, trust in Norwegian institutions, a sense of being a part of Norwegian society, and questions of identity. Thus, we draw on the prevailing theorization of integration, both in the academic literature, and in Norwegian policy, whereby integration is acknowledged to be a process spanning over time, which is relational, including migrants and non-migrants as well as institutions and the outcomes of such processes.

In this chapter, we focus on effects on integration for both those directly and those indirectly affected by the revocation practice. The span from direct impact to indirect is a continuum, especially when considering the families and close friends of those whose permits/citizenships are being revoked. Also, as noted earlier, the revocation practice can impact the integration processes of broader communities—such as those of Somali and Afghan origins.

Consider the potential effect on the Somali community in Norway of a combination of a high number of community members being subjected to revocation processes that they see as unpredictable, an unclear mix of bases for revocation (revocation and cessation), and the suspension and confusion surrounding the revocation of citizenship. Add to this that the group already sees itself as a frequent target of negative reporting in the media. With the methodology applied in the current study, we can only speculate what the consequences may be at the group level, for example, with regard to trust in Norwegian institutions and a general-



ized experience of belonging to the Norwegian society. We will, however, include a few of the comments provided on this topic by the informants.

We subdivide our discussion on the effects on integration processes into the following sections, based on themes that were central in the accounts of our interviewees: 1) exclusion and self-exclusion, 2) stigma and rumors, 3) social media, and 4) the erosion of belonging and sustained commitment to Norway. We end with a summary of the impacts of opening revocation cases on integration processes and outcomes, considering direct and indirect effects, at the individual, family, group, and societal levels.

## Exclusion and self-exclusion leading to disintegration

The effects of (possible) revocation on integration, beyond the moment of notification, are clear in the ways in which people change their participation in society. Whether working or studying, we see patterns of dis-integrating. This is driven both by self-exclusion and by formal exclusion, either as permits are put on hold or in the form of experiences of effectively being excluded from society.

### **Example: Ibrahim**

Ibrahim (Somali, 20s, 6 years of residency) reflects on the contrast between his everyday life now, and in the past, before his revocation case was opened:

I was a student, but during the two past years with the revocation, I don't have a meaningful everyday life. I do not do anything. I don't know what it is I'm doing. The days are difficult, hard. I am not able to go to school and to concentrate anymore. I can summarize it like this: I do nothing ... that I see as meaningful. [This is in stark contrast to before, when I] was very happy and content both with the teachers, my fellow students, and with the environment at school.

He goes on to explain how his disintegration is not only limited to the sphere of schooling but also in his social relations and everyday activities:

I used to be very active and social, I played football. Most of my friends were ethnic Norwegian. There aren't that many Somalis in [this town]. When this happened, I just stayed at home. I stopped going out; I stopped playing football with friends. I stopped visiting friends. Friends and acquaintances in my social circle have come to my place, they visited me and asked: "What is going on with you? Why are you like this? Why are you just isolating yourself in your apartment?"

Self-exclusion and isolation are common patterns of behavior in our dataset, often paired with distress and anxiety due both to the inherent uncertainty in the situation and the uncertainty connected with an unforeseeable future stretching ahead (which we return to in Chapter 6).

### **Example: Ayaan**

For Ayaan (Somali, 30s, 7 years of residency), formal exclusion also has the implication that pursuing a driver's license is made impossible due to problems with identity documents. Meanwhile, this is also put into the broader context of her everyday life on the whole, where disintegration becomes visible:

Yes, it has implications ... because I had the aim of completing primary school ... and this has affected my capacity to concentrate ... so that's a pity. I had a dream to get a permanent job, but now I am less motivated to apply for a job ... it's hard. And I had ambitions about getting a driver's license, but that's difficult without a residence permit.

Changing opportunities, changing motivation, and changing frames of what is possible all affect the ways in which processes of integration in the present, and future outcomes of integration, are being affected by the revocation practice.

### **Example: Abdirahim**

At the group level, Abdirahim (Somali, 30s, 9 years of residency) suggests that a new fear has emerged, linked to a turn to disintegration, as a result of the many revocation cases concerning Somalis in Norway:

It has had implications for integration. I know there are many Somalis who are negative about becoming part of the Norwegian society [now]. There is a new fear ...

We find that the directly affected individuals and family members are often quite open about their cases among Somalis, in contrast to the case among Afghans. The group-level difference here has less to do with the revocation practice and more to do with inherent differences in the demographics and dynamics of these two migrant groups in Norway. This openness among Somalis means that information is shared and advice may be solicited. Rather than a sense of being alone, there is a sense of the risk of revocation being a group-level threat, either targeting Somalis in general or specifically Somalis who arrived in Norway in 2012–2013 and who were specifically targeted as candidates for cessation (Immigration Act §37, Section 2). Due to this group-level interpretation, the revocation cases among Somalis in Norway may impact the group's active participation, their perceptions of the possibilities of

becoming fully recognized as a legitimate and equal member of society in Norway.<sup>42</sup>

## Stigma and rumors

The group-level dynamics of disintegration discussed above are composed of both internal dimensions (among Somalis) and external dimensions (with the Norwegian society) but in addition also have individual dimensions. Despite openness among many Somalis to share information about being in a process involving revocation, and a shared experience of the risk of revocation at some level among many Somalis, there are also instances where stigmatization occurs:

They don't say your name, but her with the revocation, so then you become reduced to the problem. (Maryam, Somali, 20s, 5 years of residency)

The individualization of the issue, whereby revocation becomes a primary way in which you are seen by others, is experienced as extremely stigmatizing by individuals and their close family members. This individual-level experience of stigmatization from within the Somali community is, however, then paired with group-level dynamics of standing together as Somalis in other instances. Among the interviewees a sense of closure from society at large was expressed, often involving suspicion of monitoring and a distinct distrust of the Norwegian authorities:

Many in the Somali community close themselves off to each other. People believe they are spied on, that their phones are tapped, tapped by the UDI. It is very difficult. You cannot trust anyone. I find that terribly hard. And [...] who is listening to you? The police or someone else? Maybe fellow Somalis are listening. It's difficult that you can't trust anyone ... (Halima, Somali, 30s, 5 years of residency)

While stigmatization was primarily an internal, and limited, problem, the effect of rumors was substantial. Rumors may be understood as “a story or piece of information that may or may not be true, but that people are talking about,”<sup>43</sup> and as such are closely affiliated with information and communication trust. Arguably, rumors arise easily in contexts of uncertainty, where there is limited information and lack of mutual trust. In particular, we noted the impact of limited knowledge and information about the revocation process. Both stigma

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42 See next chapter on the different life strategies undertaken by the interviewees.

43 <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/rumour>

and rumors were outcomes of the revocation practice, which in turn affect integration, primarily as mechanisms that interfere with integration processes: “It feels like they are coming after us, for some reason or another. We don’t understand why” (Abshir, Somali, 40s, 24 years of residency).

The way in which Abshir concludes underscores the impossibility of continued integration processes in the face of what is experienced as a Kafkaesque situation.

## Social media and disintegration in the digital society

Almost all interviewees discussed social media, either in relation to the revocation cases, in general, or both. Meanwhile, for most, social media emerged in connection with the discussion of information that the UDI was using to support the revocation case, which was harvested from open Facebook profiles. Some reacted by shutting down their Facebook accounts:

A number of people have closed their Facebook-accounts due to fear. They don’t have a case [yet], but they know they might be targeted (...) exactly the same thing could happen to them. (Halima, Somali, 30s, 5 years of residency)

As Halima explains, here too, fear is an important dimension of the generalized ways in which integration processes are affected—sometimes with direct actions as a result, but most of the time as a subtle break put on involvement with society at large and, therefore, with integration processes.

Knowing that social media are an integral part of life—of maintaining contact with friends, family, and extended networks for many people in Norwegian society—it should not be surprising that retracting from social media, whether completely or partly, is likely to have an effect on individuals’ and families’ wellbeing as well as embeddedness and linkages with others in society (locally as well as elsewhere). For migrants, social media are important platforms on which to stay in touch with family and friends both in their countries of origin and in the wider transnational diaspora across the world. If self-censorship of social media use hampers the social contact with relatives and friends abroad, this will affect the individuals and families concerned.

Meanwhile, Facebook and social media are also key integration arenas—as these are the sources for information, for instance, about language training, cafés at the local library, and other activities locally. More generally, the use of

social media—such as Facebook—is increasingly important for participation in Norwegian society, especially for parents. This is because children’s spare time activities, whether football or other sports or cultural activities, are coordinated via Facebook. Closed groups on Facebook are also where parents and children register for events, are alerted about changes, and so on. In today’s world, not being on social media means not being able to take part in a normal social life and, perhaps more crucially in this context, being excluded from integrating activities.

Finally, rumors also move quickly via social media within a city context, as well as nationally and across borders. The lack of clear information about revocation created a context where rumors could flourish. This may have contributed to the confusion and emergence of distrust, further eroding integration processes.

We find that disintegration is also experienced and articulated in highly practical ways in the digitized Norwegian society, such as with access to and opportunity for using bankcards. For instance, Maryam (Somali, 20s, 5 years of residency) tells us that while her Visa card is working now, she is worried about what will happen when it expires later in 2019. Another informant was forced to borrow the bankcard of a relative after his own card had been withdrawn after he lost his residence permit. Halima (also discussed in Chapter 4) refers to her Visa card being taken by the police officers who visited her in her home following the revocation decision. The exact connection between the circumstances of the individuals in question and their access to the use of bankcards illustrates a broader point about the ways in which a highly digitized society, such as that of Norway, can exclude and contribute to disintegration processes among people whose everyday lives remain firmly anchored in Norway for long periods of time. This also underscores the potential invisibility and mundaneness of the effects of (possible) revocation on integration processes and outcomes. It is a mundaneness that is often highly bureaucratized and lacking in transparency for the individuals concerned—worrying about whether or not they will have a Visa card once their present card expires— while their revocation process, including appeals, may be unfolding.

## Erosion of belonging and sustained commitment to Norway

Processes of integration—as well as outcomes—are highly related to length of residence in a country, especially in the first 5–10 years, where much of the basic “integration work” on the parts of migrants has to be undertaken, such as

learning the language, acquiring knowledge of the labor market and working life, and possibly putting children through school. While the labor market participation of Somalis as a group in Norway is an oft-lamented area due to relatively low employment rates for men and even lower for women, Somalis in Norway express relatively high degrees of attachments to Norway and the Norwegian society (Vrålstad & Wiggen, 2017). Arguably, one's own sense of belonging in the society of settlement is a relevant way to approach integration processes, especially considering the degree of socio-economic deprivation that Somalis face. Add to this the group's vulnerability to Islamophobia and discrimination, and the high rates of reported sense of belonging are remarkable. These attachments to Norway and the Norwegian society are echoed by Amal (Somali, 30s, 6 years of residency), who stresses how such attachments are currently being weakened by the practice of revocation, not just among those directly affected:

... when they got citizenship, it was really a great joy for many. But now people interpret the situation [such that] if those with temporary residence lose it and there is some consideration of revocation, then they believe there are degrees. First, they will get the temporary ones, then those with permanent residence, and then citizens (...) they love Norway—so many Somalis that I know love Norway, they are very fond of Norway, and they have strong attachment to Norway, but that attachment is being weakened.

Amal seems to be making the point that citizenship used to be a substantial shift from outsider to insider. After the increased pressure of revocation, the formal attachment has become one of degrees, a continuum, from temporary permits at one end to citizenship on the other. And now, all of these can be lost. As a result, the group's attachment is being weakened.

Beyond more subjective assessments of sense of belonging, the interviewees also discuss the absurdity of the revocation (possibly) occurring at a point in time when they feel that they have become a part of society:

It's an odd situation ... I don't get that this happens after all these years. One goes to school and to work, and then all of a sudden you get these problems. [Colleagues at work say]: "No, it can't be right." They are shocked. It's so hard to get this message when you have become a part of the society. (Amina, Afghan 20s, 8 years of residency)

Returning to questions of belonging at the group-level, Faduma (Somali, 30s, 15 years of residency) explicitly makes a distinction between "the Norwegian people" and "the authorities and politics." The two are intimately intertwined:

Somalis are not in conflict with the Norwegian people but with the authorities and politics. But it [conflict with the Norwegian people] can become an indirect consequence because the trust has been weakened, because you know that you don't belong to society at large anymore. When you know that you can lose residence permit or citizenship at any point in time, that creates a fear which destroys the trust. That's what I am the most worried about (...). We don't really know what it'll be like in the future.

While attachments and commitment to Norwegian society are ubiquitous across our material and expressed in stronger terms with longer duration of stay, the mixing of fear and weakened trust is stressed as particularly damaging for both integration processes and long-term outcomes. This is primarily concerning for the individuals and families in question but also has implications for Somalis as a group in Norway and, beyond this, for the Norwegian society as a whole. Faduma illustrates the ways in which formal belonging as a member of the national community—most clearly expressed through the citizenship institution—is closely linked both with one's own sense of belonging and perceived (and actual) recognition from society at large.

These more subtle aspects of integration processes and outcomes, while harder to measure than employment, are critical to the success of social cohesion efforts and policies of inclusion that the Norwegian Government is advocating. Meanwhile, in the face of (possible) revocation, a commitment to the Norwegian immigration law and its logic remains visible:

It's totally fine if I get rejected when I first apply for asylum. Then I can leave Norway. I would have understood that. But after you've established yourself and lived in the country a while, learned the language, perhaps had children, become a part of society, then I think it's completely wrong to go after people. This is what hurts. This should end. This is the only thing I'd like you to communicate to the UDI. (Halima, Somali, 30s, 5 years of residency)

Halima expresses frustration with the authorities' apparent disregard for how time makes a difference—with the fact that the integration work exerted over time, in many cases with solid and demonstrable results in the form of educational diplomas or jobs, is not considered a factor. This sentiment was shared by all our interviewees. Interestingly, she expresses continued loyalty to the immigration control regime. However, the practice of revocation, which in our material included individuals having lived in Norway from three to 24 years prior to the opening of their cases, is questioned, precisely for its negative effects on integration processes and outcomes. The data thus present a paradox whereby

the erosion of belonging to a degree runs parallel to some degree of continued commitment to Norway.

## Effects across different legal statuses

Lawmakers and caseworkers distinguish sharply between the different grounds for revocation.<sup>44</sup> For those directly affected by revocation these distinctions are blurred, particularly at the outset of a revocation process. The most obvious marker of difference is the length of stay in Norway. While cessation presupposes a shorter stay (although recent changes may shift the three-year deadline), revocation of citizenship affects those with a seven-year or longer residency in Norway.

Time spent in Norway is of essence when considering the effects of revocation on integration for the different types of cases. A person with a citizenship case who has strived to integrate for 10 to 15 to 20 years or more will have invested and had time to become part of the Norwegian society in a more profound way than someone who has arrived two to three years before.

The Norwegian experience regarding time passed and revocation can inform the European discussions of increased use of temporary protection.

The effects on integration processes and outcomes, which we have discussed, draw on cases of revocation in general and illustrate the paradox inherent within the immigration–integration nexus—namely, that immigration policy goals and practices are in direct conflict with integration policy goals and practices.

The informants raise, as we have seen, a range of critical points regarding the Norwegian revocation practice. However, this does not mean that the revocation process was seen to not have any legitimacy. Some explicitly stated that those who provide wrong information in the first place cannot expect this to simply pass. Others, however, exemplified the manifold ways in which identities and thus also identity papers can be complex and counter-intuitive, casting light on the gray area between fraudulent information and information that reflects confusion and a lack of information. We found that support for a clear-cut immigration system, one that is predictable and understandable to the individuals, is in general accepted as legitimate. The practice of cessation did not find much support, however. Instead, informants pointed out the dangers of returning to

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<sup>44</sup> Cessation (Immigration Act §37), revocation of residence permits (Immigration Act §63), and revocation of citizenship (Nationality Act §26, Section 2).



and living in a politically unstable Somalia and the particular challenges facing the population in Mogadishu.

## Summary

The practice of revocation affects integration processes and outcomes in a range of ways, spanning from the mundane at one end—such as being able to use credit cards and taking part in sports activities—to the existential at the other, where the mere prospect of losing once permit can unsettle the individuals' sense of basic security.

This effect starts as those affected become aware that they are involved in a revocation process. This marks a change in the temporalities of how life and life strategies are considered by individuals and families. This situation is then often experienced as completely out of the ordinary, echoing insights from studies of extreme uncertainty (e.g., Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Menjivar, 2006; O'Reilly, 2018). This is relevant and important for considering specific effects on integration—over months and years—as these cases are weighed by the relevant Norwegian authorities because everything else appears tempered by uncertainty of the situation.

We find that revocation leads to both (social, systemic) exclusion and practices of self-exclusion, thus directly affecting integration. Migrant communities and society in general may contribute to a perceived or real individual stigma connected with revocation. Such stigma is closely related with the free flow of rumors, at times at the more extreme end of the spectrum akin to conspiracy theories, at other times, simply the passing on of information picked up in specific revocation cases. The digitization of the Norwegian society should make it no surprise that both integration—and disintegration—processes also have digital lives, and, as such, social media as well as online banking are relevant aspects to consider as regards impacts of revocation processes on integration.

Finally, our material presents a paradox: the erosion of belonging to Norway, which revocation cases (and the fear of them) may lead to, runs parallel to commitment to Norway, described in terms of “being a part of society.”

# Chapter 6: Life strategies in the face of revocation: Views of the future

When immigrants acquire a legal status, this has lasting transformative effects on immigrants' wellbeing and integration (Menjivar & Lakhani, 2016). Having this regularization reversed by a revocation process therefore constituted a turning point in the interviewees' legal and social integration process in Norway. They experienced the prospect of revocation as a fundamental disruption in their everyday lives, which they in hindsight described as stable and predictable. Not knowing whether or not they would be allowed to stay in Norway produced feelings of temporariness and limbo and fundamentally altered their perceptions of the future.

Faced with (possible) revocation and substantial uncertainty, the informants developed different life strategies, which were based on how they viewed their future. We find six distinct life strategies in the face of (possible) revocation: *coping, preparing, dual orientation, directionless stasis, exit, and reorientation*. For some individuals these strategies might be overlapping, whereas others might switch strategies over time.

## Coping

Most of our informants were working, going to school, or participating in Norwegian courses at the time they became aware of the revocation process. Some of these chose to carry on with their everyday lives while they simultaneously had to cope with the ever-present threat of revocation and a possible future deportation. Formally, their lives were suspended and put on hold while they awaited a decision, either positive or negative. Practically, however, they had to cope with this uncertainty and try to carry on with living their lives as best they could. This is evident in Abshir's (Somali, 40s, 24 years of residency) following statement:

I have to get up tomorrow morning. I have to make a lunch box for the kids, how am I supposed to do that [now]? I was completely shaken (...) it disrupted everything about my life.

Abdirahim (Somali, 30s, 9 years of residency), who had appealed the decision of revocation, also underscored the duality between the ever-present fear of deportation and going on with everyday life:

(...) you live in uncertainty. You never know when you will be deported from Norway. I have to live with that uncertainty. But I think it is very good that while I hold legal residency in Norway [appeal], I can live safe, go to the doctor (...) live free. I can work, do my daily errands, and finish meaningful workdays without fearing that the police will get me. On the other hand, I think that it is not permanent, the police can come and get me anytime.

Besides going on with his everyday life, Abdirahim also tried to reinforce his ties to Norway to strengthen his case in order to stay. This type of *active* coping suggests that (possible) revocation in a few cases also may motivate individuals to strengthen their attachment to Norway.

As the quotes from Abshir and Abdirahim illustrate, life goes on in the midst of the revocation process, spanning the mundane to existential dimensions. Thus, a relevant life strategy is simply coping. To outsiders, they were able to live as if nothing had happened, yet their perception of the future was changed.

## Preparing

In our data, there are also examples of strategic choices made in preparation for the event that revocation might result in having to leave Norway. The first of these life strategies is that of *preparing*. These informants disregarded long-term plans and instead invested in short-term projects that may yield mobile capital, such as monetary savings.

Parwais (Afghan, 20s, 6 years of residency) exemplified this life strategy. He came to Norway as a minor and was in upper secondary school, aiming to become an engineer at the time he got the notice. After the revocation case opened, however, he changed his strategy. Parwais still wanted to become an engineer, but in the face of possible revocation, he perceived it as too uncertain, too long-term, and put these plans on hold while he awaited a decision. In the meantime, he has now opened a pizza place as a short-term investment, giving him a place to work and the opportunity to save money.

Abshir (Somali, 40s, 24 years of residency) also seemed to prepare for the (possible) revocation of citizenship (see Chapter 4). At his place of work, they were currently talking about pensions. Given the nature of his open-ended case,

however, he was incapable of engaging in these discussions since he was uncertain about how long he and his family were going to stay in Norway. Instead, Abshir put money aside regularly to prepare for possible citizenship revocation and future deportation.

## Dual orientation

As the possibilities of staying in Norway seemed to narrow down, some developed a dual orientation by pursuing options that they could capitalize on in Norway and abroad.

Amina (Afghan, 20s, 8 years of residency) was in nursing school when we spoke to her. As a consequence of the revocation case, she had trouble concentrating in school and missed an exam because of this. Finishing school in Norway was, however, a goal she strived after no matter the result of the revocation case; she said:

I managed to focus in school, to finish this part [of school] before I start with this [revocation] case. It's a very burdensome, disgusting feeling, but I can't stress all the time, because school is very important to me and my future, whether it lies here in Norway or if ... if other things [i.e. revocation] happen. I need education and that job anyway.

Despite facing legal difficulties, she nevertheless tried to focus on school, viewing this as a long-term investment providing her with opportunities both in Norway and abroad, in case of revocation.

## Directionless stasis

For other interviewees revocation (actual or potential) led to *directionless stasis* (Griffiths, 2014) and hopelessness. In the waiting period, particularly between notification and decision, their lives were suspended, and they spoke of it as if life had stopped completely. Plans for education, job training, or acquiring a driver's license were put on hold or dropped. Ibrahim (Somali, 20s, 6 years of residency) had high educational aspirations prior to the opening of his revocation case, but these plans were now cut short:

(...) [now] I do nothing that I think is meaningful (...) imagine a youth who came to a country, with opportunities, who got a [residence] permit, got the opportunity to study and take an education. Suddenly, this stopped. The future is dark. It's tough and hard.

Ibrahim here compared his current situation with a hypothetical situation, one in which revocation had never occurred, where he would have finished his education and started working. Other interviewees facing revocation compared their situation to that of peers from the same country of origin that had not experienced revocation. While our informants were stuck in time, these peers had moved ahead with their integration efforts, excelling in education, work, and family life.

The uncertainty about what would happen, and where their future lay, rendered some more passive than others. For Ilhan (Somali, 30s, 4 years of residency), the situation remained difficult:

Instead of ambitions, plans, you have to think where you are going to be in the future—are we going to be in Norway or do you have to leave Norway? That’s hard and hampering.

Experiencing such directionless stasis was also accompanied by sentiments of hopelessness and resignation. Halima (Somali, 30s, 5 years of residency) saw no hope in her case, which made her simply stay at home: “I decided to stay at home in my apartment (...) there’s no hope of getting a residence permit in Norway. That is why I have stayed home.”

Directionless stasis, and the sense of hopelessness it engenders, is not so much a life strategy, but rather a description of the circumstances in which many of the interviewees experienced themselves to be in. So due to hopelessness the pursuit of other life strategies was viewed as irrelevant, impossible, or both. Thus, disengagement with integration processes ensued, in effect practically disengaging while physically remaining present.

## Exit

A strategy that was mentioned by several interviewees was simply to leave Norway—to *exit*—either as a pre-emptive action at some stage of the process or as an option to pursue at some later point.

Mohamed and Mona (Somali, both 30s, 6 years of residency) and their two children tried to escape revocation by fleeing to Germany after their appeals to the UNE were denied. This was a preventive measure—trying to escape the situation and find stability. They were returned from Germany after eight months and interviewed by the Norwegian police upon return. In Mohamed’s and Mona’s

subjective scope of action, exit was the only reasonable strategy as revocation and deportation to Mogadishu meant persecution and returning to the danger they originally tried to escape.

As the Mohamed's and Mona's case suggests, the exit strategy was tried by some, often with the result that due to Dublin rules they were simply returned back to Norway. For others the exit strategy was an idea contemplated but not acted upon. Finally, others saw leaving Norway as a long-term strategy should they lose the right to remain in Norway.

## Reorientation

Some were actively planning to leave Norway, regardless of the outcome of their case. In light of increasing revocations, they no longer believed that Norway could provide a secure life for them in the future. Because of this unease, they saw it necessary to *re-orient* themselves toward alternative futures in other countries.

Halima (Somali, 30s, 5 years of residency) had received a revocation decision. Although there still existed legal avenues for retaining her residence permit (appealing the case to the UNE), she did not want to stay in Norway: "I don't think I will stay in Norway for a long time. No matter what happens, I want to move to another place."

Persons who were *not* (yet) affected by revocation also employed the life strategy of reorientation. Moving from Norway to another European country was a way of avoiding the risk—whether or not this fear was legitimate—of facing possible revocation sometime in the future. Ayaan (Somali, 30s, 7 years of residency) told of widespread unease among Somali immigrants in Norway over revocation and deportation, regardless of legal status and having an open case or not: "[People think that] first they [the immigration authorities] take away temporary [permits], then permanent residence permits, and lastly citizenship." Further, Ayaan claimed that people in the Somali community left Norway out of fear of possible *future* revocation:

(...) several of the people I know have moved. They love Norway—most Somalis I know love Norway (...) [and] feel a strong sense of belonging to Norway. Now that sense has weakened. Many of those I know who have moved to other countries, such as England. Maybe they'll change citizenship. But they move away from Norway to avoid experiencing revocation of citizenship or other permits.

According to Ayaan, the sense that Norwegian immigration authorities were “coming after Somalis” in general forced people to move from Norway, thereby cutting both their formal ties, by changing citizenship, and emotional ties, in terms of weakening their sense of belonging to Norway.

## Summary

Prospects of revocation altered many informants’ perceptions of their future and thereby affected their current actions. Faced with (possible) revocation, they developed different life strategies: coping, preparing, dual orientation, directionless stasis, exit, and reorientation. Life strategies may overlap, and individuals may switch between them over time. Where the informants were in the revocation process (e.g., interviewed but not notified, notified and awaiting a decision, or after receiving a decision) influenced which life strategy they ended up with, but did not seem to determine this. The strategy of exit, whereby people leave the country out of fear of possible revocation in the future, illustrates this point well. Although we do not have data to suggest the prevalence of this strategy, it is the clearest articulation of disintegration among the life strategies present in the data.

# Chapter 7: Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations

When we put together the data presented in the previous four chapters (statistics, experiences, integration effects, and strategies), a series of findings and patterns emerges. The overall impression is that the practice of revocation has profound effects on the affected people and their immediate social surroundings. Integration processes are put on hold or reversed. Prolonged periods of waiting without understanding the process amplify the negative effects of the revocation practice for those affected. The Somali community is particularly affected, which may also cause disintegration at the group level.

At the political level, these negative effects must be weighed against potential beneficial effects (see Chapter 1). However, in doing so, it is crucial that decision makers weigh negative effects and potential beneficial consequences separately within each of the three categories of revocation: the cessation of temporary permits, the revocation of both temporary and permanent permits, and the revocation of citizenship.

In this chapter, we discuss the most prevalent findings by, first, briefly reintroducing and discussing the research questions from Chapter 1; second, giving an overview of the different types of effects of revocation; and, third, revisiting the three concepts introduced in the first chapter (integration, time, and loss [aversion]), adding a comment on the strategies of those affected. The chapter ends with a list of conclusions and recommendations.

## Research questions revisited

Based on the data presented in the previous chapters, we can now answer the research questions raised in Chapter 1.

First, we asked what the formal outcomes of the revocation cases were. The statistics presented in Chapter 3 showed that the Somali and Afghan nationals had experienced long waiting times. Few cases had been processed during the period covered by the data (March 2017–December 2018). Of all the Somali and Afghan cases (2,567) that had been registered, 75% were still open at the



end of the period. Of the cases that the UDI had processed, three out of four had been dismissed (*henlagt*), and only 17% of those that had been processed had been revoked. In other words, more than eight out of ten cases that were processed did not lead to a revocation decision.

If we isolate the cessation cases (Immigration Act §37), we also find long waiting periods and see similar low numbers in the outcomes. Twenty percent of a total of 1,600 cases had been processed. Among these, fewer than two out of ten ended with cessation. We discussed the causes for these numbers in Chapter 3.

To sum up these findings, in both categories, we see long waiting times and a low rate of processed cases. Of those that are processed, few end with revocation/cessation. The majority are dismissed (*henlagt*). As noted earlier, no citizenship cases were revoke throughout this period, due to a political decision to suspend them.

We also posed the question of whether those affected by the revocation practice continued to stay in Norway or whether they returned or were returned to their country of origin. Based on available statistics, the answer to this is simple: very few of those involved in the revocation process returned or were returned to Somalia or Afghanistan during the 22-month period (five persons out of a total of 3,077 Somali and Afghan cases). Our informants reported instances where the revocation practice resulted in persons leaving for third countries. We are not able to trace such actions in the available statistics. What is confirmed by the data is that 18 persons (out of the 3,077) were registered with new permits and were allowed to stay. Therefore, the short answer to this question is that they stay.

Further, we asked whether those with Somali and Afghan backgrounds who were affected were aware of the regulations on revocation and cessation. Here we found that there was little general knowledge and widespread confusion with regard to the legal background in revocation regarding case processing and potential outcomes. The division of labor between the police and the UDI further obscured the process. Our informants had little comprehension of the distinction between revocation and cessation.

We also asked broader questions regarding the way in which immigrants experienced and were affected by the revocation process. In short, the process had a profound impact on their physical and mental well-being, perception of time, integration (including systemic, social, and value aspects), outlook, and life strategies.

The interviews indicated a difference in the effects of revocation on the group level between the Somalis and the Afghans. While it appeared that the practice of revocation was discussed extensively within the Somali community, this was not the case among the Afghans. The interview material indicated that people within the Afghan community were less aware of revocation or less willing to talk about it. The statistics presented in Chapter 3 showed that the Somali group was the nationality most affected by the revocation process, by far. This group also has a strong sense of community and organized social structures. There is reason to believe that the majority of Somalis in Norway are aware of the general phenomenon and know that some will risk losing their permits.

### The effects on children

One of our research questions regarded the potential effects of revocation on children. We did not interview children as part of this study, but several of our informants had children. During some interviews, infants and children were present, and in one case, they spoke on behalf of the family.

The effects of the revocation process on children and youth can be divided into three categories. First, they were affected by their parents' experiences and management of the situation they found themselves in. Depending on the age of the children, the parents in our data material either sought to either shield the children from this information, or they explained and shared their worries and changed their outlook. In some cases, the parents were simply unable to shield their children from their precarious situation, although they wished to do so. Even when the children were unaware of the revocation process, they experienced secondary bereavements. In cases where they were aware of the process, they experienced some of the same consequences, such as (self-) exclusion from social arenas, changes in outlook, and a reduction in mental well-being.

Second, the children and youth by and large continued schooling throughout the revocation process. The only concrete effect of the cases being open for these children and youth in relation to schooling was that they were barred from going abroad (e.g., "But I shield my son, who goes to school. I do not want him to know about the revocation thing ... Sometimes he asks me questions when his peers take the boat to Denmark or Kiel, but I say 'not now, some day we can go'" [Ayaan, Somali, 30s, 7 years of residency]).

Third, the children and youth are often directly affected by the revocation cases, as their rights and permissions are dependent on their parents' legal status. Revocation entails basic questions on children's rights, such as whether children

should be punished for their parents' sins, and under which circumstances the destiny of children should be tied to their parents' cases.

## Different types of effects

We can distinguish between different types of effects of the revocation practice. These effects may be intended or unintended by the immigration authorities, they may be short-term or long-term, and they may affect both the subjects of the revocation practice and the UDI's processing system itself.

In this report, we have not studied whether the effects of the revocation practice that were intended by the political decision makers were realized. These would, for example, be expected to include: establishing correct ID for those affected; signaling restrictive policies to potential new arrivals and to voters; increasing returns (cessation cases); lowering the number of pending cases; signaling temporary protection as default format; and securing the legitimacy of the asylum institute.

Instead, we have looked at both short-term and long-term effects that were unintended, if not wholly unexpected. These are listed in Table 2.<sup>45</sup>

**Table 2. Short- and long-term unintended effects of revocation.**

	Unintended effects
<b>Short-term effects</b>	Physical ailments Negative psychological effects Slowing down/stopping integration processes Disintegrating effects for family members Persons with related pending cases affected Lengthy case processing
<b>Long-term effects</b>	Group-level unease (Somalis) Prolonged temporary uncertainty Reduced trust, loyalty, system support Long-term effects of interrupted integration processes Reduced motivation to integrate Social withdrawal (e.g., from Facebook)

<sup>45</sup> These were short-term (e.g., physical ailments, psychological effects, disintegration) and long-term (e.g., unease at the group level, reduced trust).

### **Unintended short-term effects**

A range of unintended short-term effects of revocation appeared in our material. The effects on those who were affected have been described in detail in the previous chapters. There were also unintended short-term effects on the immigration authorities. Employees within the UDI spoke of a system that was overloaded because of a combination of backlog, limited resources, and time-consuming processing.

### **Unintended long-term effects**

The interview material also pointed to clear unintended long-term effects of revocation, such as unease at the group level (Somalis); reduced trust in, loyalty to, and support for the Norwegian system; lower motivation to integrate; and experiences of reduced freedom of expression due to monitoring and social withdrawal.

To sum things up, the practice of revocation has the following effects on the individual, group, and societal levels:

- 1) Revocation primarily affects individuals who face (possible) loss of rights to stay and deportation from their immediate social surroundings.
- 2) The revocation practice has effects on the group level, with some immigrant groups particularly affected, leading one informant to label it a “collective threat against Somalis’ rights to stay in Norway”.
- 3) Revocation carries the potential for societal costs by creating disintegration and weakened loyalty among immigrants who remain in the country.

## **Temporality**

As the interview material demonstrated, time or temporality took center stage for those affected by revocation. The statistical data presented in Chapter 3 confirmed the experiences of those affected by prolonged processing times and open-ended waiting, and thereby, a prolonged period of uncertainty. They felt like they were left in “limbo”.

The perception of time also broke the normal correlation between the passing of time and increased opportunities for integration. As time stopped, many experienced that their integration was also put on hold.

The revocation process directly affected the outlook and sense of future belonging for those who were directly affected. Not knowing where their futures lay, for example in Norway or in Somalia, blurred their perceptions of who they were going to be. This again made them question their understanding of how they viewed themselves in the present. Their identity was challenged.

## Integration

The interviews suggested that revocation affected the informants' integration processes negatively in a range of ways. As we saw in Table 2, these effects were both short- and long-term and affected individuals, their immediate social surroundings, and wider immigrant communities. In the first chapter, we divided the integration process into three different dimensions of systemic integration, social integration, and value integration.

At the systemic level, the individuals and their families were affected in various ways relating to their formal connections to society, including residence permits/ legal status and access to work, education, social support, and housing.

The doubt about their legal status during the process affected their ability to obtain other permits, such as family reunification, travel permits, citizenship, and permanent residence. The formal limbo also affected everyday life, including, for example, the access to banking services.

Access to work was also restricted as a result of revocation. The revocation process was unclear to their employers. The informants' lack of status following revocation also excluded some of them from social life and from attending courses in the Norwegian language.

Local authorities varied in how they responded to those affected by revocation. While some local governments maintained social support and offered housing throughout the process, others cut support down to a minimum.

With regard to social integration, some informants withdrew from social contact and social media as a consequence of the revocation process. This increased the risks of long-term disintegration at the individual, community, and societal levels.

Revocation practices also affected the informants' value integration by threatening their sense of belonging and trust in the immigration authorities and their loyalty to the Norwegian system in general.

## Loss

Loss played a key role in the informants' experiences with being affected by revocation. The distinction between minor and major loss can help us understand the severity of the sense of loss they experienced.

When they became aware of the revocation process, they immediately lost their basic sense of security and of knowing that they could continue to live in Norway if they wanted to. Even the first suspicion that something was wrong could alter their state of mind. A letter from the UDI or a first contact from the police disturbed the normality of their everyday life. In other words, what would appear from the outside to be a minor loss or a potential loss was experienced as a major loss.

In many cases, the process led to a reduction in resources and options, constituting a major loss as defined by Harvey (1996). The subjective experience of loss was significant, while their friends and families would confirm the objective loss (Harvey & Miller, 1998, p. 430).

As we have seen, the loss of certainty and loss of formal status in many cases led to secondary bereavements, such as loss of concrete objects (housing, financial support, access), loss of progress in processes (integration, work, education), and loss of psychological stabilizing factors (hope, outlook, identity).

The frustration and uncertainty of (possible) permit loss engendered different strategies from those affected. The psychological pain involved in losing something so valuable, and for some, so taken-for-granted—their right to stay in Norway—was substantial. While some withdrew from life and became increasingly passive, others took action in different ways. One of these was to preemptively leave the country to avoid the effects of a possible loss of permits.

## Strategies

The interviewees handled (possible) revocation and the uncertainty that follows it by developing different life strategies, which were based on their views of the future, whether in Norway or elsewhere. We found six distinct life strategies in the face of (possible) revocation.

First, some interviewees *coped* with the situation by moving on with their daily routines while living in constant fear of revocation and deportation. Others actively *prepared* for possible revocation by suspending long-term plans of edu-

cation, and they regularly saved money in case they had to move to another country. Since losing the right to stay became a likely outcome of the revocation case, a few interviewees employed a *dual orientation* of their future lives. These interviewees remained in the country and continued to invest in human capital (e.g., education), which they believed could be capitalized on both in Norway and abroad if revocation became the outcome.

Some experienced *directionless stasis* in the face of (possible) revocation, which was not so much a strategy as a mental state marked by inaction. A sense of hopelessness could also lead people to undertake drastic measures in order to escape their current situation, such as simply leaving Norway—exiting. Finally, reorientation toward alternative futures in other (European) countries, regardless of being affected by revocation or not, was also a strategy that was mentioned. Moving from Norway out of fear of possible revocation in the future is the clearest strategy of disintegration.

## Conclusions

Based on the empirical material in this study, we are able to draw a set of conclusions. They are sorted under the following headings: limited output, unclear process, social media, effects on health and integration, coping strategies, and statistics and coordination.

### Limited output

Revocation has attracted increased public and political attention over the past few years. Despite this, limited resources combined with complex case portfolios have resulted in long processing times and continued backlogs, creating long waiting times for those affected.

The output was meager: during a two-year span, 3,000 revocation cases involving persons with Somali and Afghan backgrounds were opened. Of these, 2,250 were still pending at the end of the period. Three out of four cases that were processed were dismissed (out of 750).

The Somali group was by far the largest nationality affected by revocation due to faulty information and was the only group affected by cessation (of temporary permits due to their home country being deemed safe).

### **Unclear process**

The Somali and Afghan informants did not understand the different stages of the revocation processes they were involved in. They experienced a lack of information about the process and the basis of their case, including the reasons for revocation.

Furthermore, it was unclear to those affected what the difference was between revocation (§63), cessation (§37), and revocation of citizenship (§26, Nationality Act).

There was substantial variation in how the interviewees discovered that they were affected by a revocation process. Some were notified by letters from the UDI or the police, while some were interviewed before being notified that there was a process. Local police had different practices regarding interviewing and notification, with some conducting house visits and showing up at workplaces and schools.

### **Social media—a disputed source**

The informants found that the UDI and the police made extensive use of Facebook as part of the revocation process. They questioned the reliability of the information on social media, pointing to cultural lingo, pictures, “likes”, and friend lists as possible sources of misunderstanding. Interviews with civil servants confirmed the extent of the use of this source information of but pointed out that it was used in an informed and responsible manner.

### **Severe effects on health and integration**

Long processing times for revocation cases resulted in prolonged temporary existence. This amplified the negative effects on the mental and physical health of those affected.

The informants also reported negative effects on integration, such as a halt in education and work, social exclusion and withdrawal, stigma, reduced Facebook activity, and an erosion of belonging and sustained commitment to Norway.

Furthermore, the interviews pointed to spillover effects of revocation, producing uncertainty and anxiety among the friends, families, and communities surrounding those who were directly affected.



### **Different coping strategies**

Those affected by revocation reacted in different ways. Their coping strategies varied from giving up and becoming completely inactive to leaving the country out of fear of future revocation.

### **Gaps in available statistics**

There are gaps in the information on revocation in the UDI database. Most notably, there is no reliable information on case processing time for the categories of revocation and cessation. This makes the control and refinement of processing difficult. Processing time is also essential for those affected.

### **Coordination of immigration authorities**

The UDI and the police cooperate closely in the processing of revocation cases. Local police appear to have different routines regarding how the first contact is made and how interviews are conducted. We saw variation in how the revocation process and its (unclear) timeline were communicated. Variations in local practices were confirmed in interviews with civil servants.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the data in this report and the above conclusions, we can suggest the following recommendations:

### **First contact**

Immigration authorities (the UDI and the police) should develop clear common guidelines on how persons affected by a revocation process should be contacted at different stages in the process, and in particular, when she/he becomes aware of the process. This can be a life-altering moment for them. Today's practice is not streamlined, and there are local variations.

The same authorities should review the contents of the letters of notification and summons letters from the police to minimize confusion among the recipients.

### **Communication**

The UDI should develop a coherent communication strategy directed at those affected by revocation processes. This should include routine updates, ideally with an indication of what can be expected from the process and, crucially, when.

The communication should also secure an understanding regarding which public bodies are involved at which stages of the process, as well as easing access to the grounds and legal basis for the process (e.g., securing an understanding of the difference between cessation and revocation).

By default, the immigration authorities should provide the individual with as much information as possible at the earliest point possible. In particular, the grounds for (possible) revocation should be revealed as early as possible. In some cases, there are tactical reasons for holding back information, but this should be time-limited and kept to a minimum.

The immigration authorities should prioritize explicitly informing persons who are no longer under threat of revocation/cessation.

In cases of the continued political prioritization of cessation due to the home country being deemed safe (§37, Section 1e), the UDI should develop a long-term communication strategy that systematically targets immigrant communities that are particularly affected.

Those affected by caseloads that are suspended, such as the citizen cases over the past few years, should routinely be updated on their situation. This should be done even when there have been no changes to their situation.

### **Case processing**

Immigration authorities should review measures that can reduce the processing time pertaining to revocation and cessation. Given the continued political push for strengthening this practice, more resources should be added to ensure that the documented negative consequences of the practice, including on a societal level, are kept to a minimum.

When Facebook information is used in interviews in the revocation process, strict internal guidelines should be followed, specifying, for example, the practice of having those affected commenting on other persons' Facebook profiles.

Using Facebook to ask for the names of friends and contacts should be kept to a minimum. If this is done, the purpose must be stated. Some interviewees experienced the pressure to provide information about friends and people in their network in the interviews, which they in turn believed could cause trouble for them.

### **Cooperation between the UDI and the police**

The routines for cooperation and communication between the police and the UDI during the different stages of the revocation process should be reviewed. For instance, the police should routinely inform the UDI when they have contacted the person in question. This data should also be registered in the UDI's database. Closer cooperation should also open more effective case processing.

### **Statistics**

The UDI should prioritize improving the registration of data on revocation and cessation. The data for when those affected are notified that a case has been opened must be registered and readily available for analysis. This is necessary in order for the UDI to monitor the efficiency of case processing and to estimate the waiting period for those affected.

### **Input vs. output**

The immigration authorities along with the political leadership in the Ministry of Justice and Public Security should weigh the input (resources) against the output (primarily the number of revocation decisions, returns, dismissals, and new permits) of the revocation practice.

Furthermore, they should weigh the intended potentially beneficial consequences of the practice against the unintended negative effects that are documented in detail in this report. These consequences affected not only the individuals with revocation cases but also their immigrant communities and the society at large.

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# Appendix 1

Når skal politiet vurdere om saken er en mulig tilbakekallssak?

Politiet skal vurdere om saken er en mulig tilbakekallssak etter utlendingsloven §§ 63, 37 eller 31 ved levering og behandling av søknad til politiet om

- fornyelse av en midlertidig tillatelse
- søknad om oppholdstillatelse på nytt grunnlag
- reisedokumenter
- oppholdstillatelse i familieinnvandring
- permanent oppholdstillatelse
- statsborgerskap

Politiet skal også vurdere om saken er en mulig tilbakekallssak etter utlendingsloven §§ 63, 37 eller 31 hvis personen legger frem dokumenter med nye identitetsopplysninger.

Politiet kan vurdere om saken om saken er en mulig tilbakekallssak etter utlendingsloven §§ 63, 37 eller 31 hvis

- personen legger frem dokumenter
  - for eksempel hjemlandets pass, reisedokumenter eller andre dokumenter fra hjemlandets myndigheter (uten nye identitetsopplysninger)
- politiet er i kontakt med personen
  - for eksempel via telefon, e-post, møter i skranken eller under forvaltningsintervju
- politiet driver ulike typer kontrollvirksomhet
  - for eksempel utlendingskontroll, bostedskontroll eller grensekontroll
- politiet får informasjon fra andre deler av politiet
  - for eksempel der KRIPOS gir informasjon om grensepasseringer
- det kommer inn tips i en sak
  - for eksempel informasjon fra relasjoner
- det kommer inn informasjon fra andre offentlige organ
  - for eksempel Tollvesenet, Skatteetaten, Arbeidstilsynet eller Nav

Source: RS 2017-01

<https://www.udiregelverk.no/no/rettskilder/udi-rundskriv/rs-2017-001/#1.5%20Forholdet%20mellom%20tilbakekall%20og%20utvisning>

# Appendix 2

## 1.9 Illustrasjon av saksgangen i tilbakekallsaker

	Politiets oppgaver	UDIs oppgaver
<b>Identifisering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifisere mulige tilbakekallsaker</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifisere mulige tilbakekallsaker</li></ul>
<b>Saksforberedelse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forbereder tilbakekallsaken</li><li>• Hvis UDI ber om detytterligere forberedelser av saken</li><li>• Vurdere inndragning av norske reisedokumenter</li><li>• Vurdere beslag av andre reise- og identitetsdokumenter</li><li>• Søk i registre</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forbereder tilbakekallsaken</li></ul>
<b>Forhåndsvarsel/henleggelse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Politiet kan skrive forhåndsvarsel i noen saker</li><li>• Politiet underretter om forhåndsvarsel om tilbakekall (hvis ikke personen/advokaten underrettes direkte)</li><li>• Samordnes evt. med forhåndsvarsel om utvisning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skriver forhåndsvarsel</li></ul>
<b>Vedtak</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Politiet underretter om UDIs vedtak (hvis ikke personen/advokaten underrettes direkte)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vurderer tilbakekall etter utlendingsloven §§ 63, 37 eller 31</li><li>• Vurderer evt. ny tillatelse etter utlendingsloven §§ 28, 38 og 73</li><li>• Vedtak om inndragning av norske reisedokumenter</li></ul>
<b>Klage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Politiet underretter om UN Es vedtak (hvis ikke personen/advokaten underrettes direkte)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vurderer klagen</li><li>• Sender klagen til UNE for behandling</li></ul>

Source: RS 2017-01

<https://www.udiregelverk.no/no/rettskilder/udi-rundskriv/rs-2017-001/#1.5%20Forholdet%20mellom%20tilbakekall%20og%20utvisning>



# Losing the Right to Stay

## Revocation of immigrant residence permits and citizenship in Norway—Experiences and effects

In recent years, the Directorate of Immigration's (UDI) handling of so-called revocation cases has received increased attention. These are cases where the authorities first grant residence permits and citizenship to migrants but later consider revoking these.

Immigrants can have their right to stay in Norway revoked for a range of reasons, including having provided incorrect information when they were granted permits and in the case of refugees, because conditions improve in their home country.

This report describes how those affected experience the process of revocation.

The report is based on multiple data sources: statistics from the UDI's data base; interviews with affected individuals from Afghanistan and Somalia, including representatives of their communities in Norway; and interviews with employees of the UDI and the police. After presenting descriptive statistics, we describe how the informants experienced the revocation process, including the effects of the revocation process on integration. Furthermore, we analyze how revocation affects the outlook and life strategies of those interviewed.

This report provides a number of recommendations for improving the government's handling of revocation, including developing a coherent communication strategy and reducing case processing time.

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