

# 'Ej Efternavn': Indian in Denmark unable to get real name on residence card



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Illustration photo. An Indian resident in Denmark has described how Danish authorities continue to struggle with naming conventions that do not use last names, resulting in wasted time and resources. Photo by [ConvertKit](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**An Indian national who requested his name be written differently on his passport for easier interpretation in Denmark was bumped around authorities when attempting to update his residence permit.**

In the past, the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI) has experienced technical

For such persons, who have two first names and no family name on their passports, Danish records including residence permits will display their last name as *ej efternavn*, meaning ‘no surname’ in Danish.

A Statistics Denmark [search](#) shows 907 Danish residents have their last name registered as *Ej Efternavn* in 2024, up from 582 last year.

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SIRI told The Local in 2022 that it had resolved the problem relating to the physical production of residence cards, but it appears that authorities still struggle to accommodate names that do not fit with Danish first and last name conventions.

Raghavendra Selvan, an assistant professor and Computer Science researcher at the University of Copenhagen, was [among Indian nationals resident in Denmark who experienced the residence card issue in 2022](#).

When applying for a new residence permit in 2023, he was advised by SIRI to consider correcting his name in his Indian passport so that the last name field on his residence card would no longer be empty.

“This was unnecessary but it is annoying to carry documents with *ej efternavn*, so I decided to get it adjusted in my passport,” he told The Local via email.

So, instead of first name: “Raghavendra Selvan” and no surname, his passport (and residence card) would now display first name: “Raghavendra” and “Selvan” as last name, although this is not technically correct: naming conventions in some regions of south India can mean a last name or family name is not given, while the second ‘first’ name is the father’s given name.

The Indian embassy in Denmark is aware of the issue relating to the surname-less residence cards and “treat it as a name correction, and not name change,” Raghavendra said.

“I got that done in Sep. 2023. So, my passport does have a last name now,” he said.

to get my name corrected with Citizen Service [*Borgerservice*, ed.], so that this change is reflected in CPR [civil registration number, ed.]," he said.

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He then spoke to citizens' services "assuming it would just be a fix as I did not have my name changed," he said.

But he was informed by citizens' services that his details could not be changed on the civil registry and that he was to contact the Agency of Family Law (Familieretshuset), the authority that approves name changes, since *Borgerservice*, unlike the Indian Embassy, was treating the correction as a name change.

In turn, the Agency of Family Law said they could not help.

"The Agency of Family Law said I should talk to my local Parish who handle name changes," Raghavendra said.

So, I then spoke to my parish, who consulted the Danish Church Ministry (Kirkeministeriet).

The ministry "suggested this was not something they could help with at the outset as I was a foreign national, and I had to talk to SIRI. So full circle!", he said.

The situation is yet to be resolved, he explained.

"The representative at my parish empathised with my situation and spoke to everyone in the chain, and finally has told me that I have to apply for a name change according to Danish laws," he said.

In short, this requires him to prove that one of his parents' last names is Selvan, and argue that it is a tradition in his culture to have a father's given name as a last name.

"I have now applied for a name change using to my parish, who will take it up with the Agency of Family Law. They may consider this and review it. And it could take months," he said.

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