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## **Denmark: Arrest of Iraqi asylum- seekers during raid**

(Turkey) Amnesty International is gravely concerned by the clearing of the Brorson's Church in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the subsequent arrest of 17 Iraqi asylum-seekers, who for three months had sought refuge in the church, fearing being returned to Iraq.

"Amnesty International calls on the Danish government to immediately release the 17 detainees and grant all 282 Iraqis leave to remain pending a review of their cases," said Irene Khan, Secretary General.

The UNHCR has clearly and unambiguously outlined the risks for forcibly returned Iraqis in a letter to the Danish government, stating that no Iraqis from the five central regions should be forcibly returned, until substantial improvements have been made in the state of the security as well as the human rights situation of the country.

Amnesty International is also deeply disturbed that the police raid on the church in the middle of the night, by officers reportedly in full riot dress, may have caused further stress and suffering for Iraqi families with children, who may very well be already traumatised as a result of torture and war, and by a stay of up to 10 years in Danish refugee centres.

"The Danish government should at a minimum allow the Iraqis to remain in the country on humanitarian grounds" said Irene Khan, Secretary General. "However, given concerns about the unduly restrictive interpretation of the 1951 Refugee Convention by the Danish government and the refusal to acknowledge the assessment of UNHCR regarding Iraq, we also call for cases of the Iraqis to be reviewed."

During the night between Wednesday and Thursday, Danish police raided the Brorson's church in Copenhagen, in order to detain and deport the rejected Iraqi asylum seekers. When attempting to transport 17 Iraqi-asylum seekers from the church in a police bus, police apparently used excessive violence, captured on film, to remove demonstrators. The 17 Iraqi asylum-seekers were eventually transported to a prison-like facility in the Sandholm detention centre and have reportedly now begun a hunger strike.