

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Iraq: Amnesty International condemns attacks on Christian minority**

Amnesty International is greatly concerned by the recent spate of attacks on Christian churches in Baghdad, which killed four civilians and injured more than 30 others. Amnesty International condemns such attacks and demands that those responsible cease attacking civilians.

On Sunday, 12 July 2009, five Christian churches in Baghdad were targeted in bomb attacks. The most serious attack occurred close to the Virgin Mary Church on Palestine Street in central Baghdad early on Sunday evening, when a car bomb was detonated killing four civilians, Christians and a Muslim, and injuring at least 21 other people, mostly women and children. Three other people were injured by a bomb explosion outside a church in the Dora district, south of Baghdad, which also damaged the church building.

Attacks targeting Iraqi civilians, including members of ethnic and religious minorities, have intensified in recent weeks. On 9 July two suicide bombings were carried out in Tal Afar, a predominantly Turkoman town near Mosul, which killed 34 people and injured more than 60 others. No armed group has yet claimed responsibility for these attacks.

Hundreds of people have now been killed by armed groups and many more injured in the run-up to and following the 30 June deadline for the pullout of US troops from Iraq's cities and towns as stipulated for by the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), a security agreement signed between Iraq and the US at the end of 2008 and which entered into force in January this year.

As direct attacks on civilians and on religious buildings these church bombings constitute war crimes. To the extent that these bombings are part of a widespread or systematic attack on the civilian population of Iraq in furtherance of an organization's policy, they would constitute crimes against humanity. War crimes and crimes against humanity are among the most serious crimes under international law. These attacks must be stopped immediately and those responsible must be brought to justice.

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