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DENMARK: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES INITIATIVES FOLLOWING  
CHRISTIANIA INVESTIGATION

Amnesty International welcomes the prompt announcement by the Director of Copenhagen Police of initiatives to be taken in relation to criticism raised in the report of the investigation of 11 cases of alleged ill-treatment in Christiania.

These initiatives include: clarifying the police regulation on the use of handcuffs and exploring the requisitioning of new handcuffs which, according to the Director of Copenhagen Police, would cause less discomfort.

"We see the initiatives of the police and government authorities in this case as signs of their commitment to ensure that the methods of restraint used by the police in the future will not lead to ill-treatment," Amnesty International said.

The report of the investigation into these 11 cases highlights concerns raised in Amnesty International's June 1994 report on alleged ill-treatment by police, including repetitive instances in which people detained by the police were placed face down on the ground and handcuffed behind their backs. In some cases the handcuffs were so tight that those detained lost feeling in their hands. Some were placed in the fixed leg-lock, an extremely painful and dangerous method of restraint which Amnesty International considered to be cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

Amnesty International has welcomed many of the initiatives taken to date by the Danish Government aimed at preventing the instances of ill-treatment in the future. Such initiatives include:

- permanent suspension of the use of the fixed leg-lock as a method of restraint;
- initiation of a wide-ranging review of restraint and self-defence methods used by police;
- payment of compensation to people found to have suffered ill-treatment at the hands of the police;
- initiation of investigations into individual allegations of police ill-treatment.

Amnesty International is hopeful that in the future, the government will keep under regular review police training, regulations, equipment and practices as required by international standards. In addition, when there is reason to believe that acts of ill-treatment by law enforcement officials have occurred, that the authorities will:

- initiate prompt and impartial investigations aimed at uncovering the facts, making the results of such investigations public;
- bring to justice in the course of criminal or disciplinary proceedings those people alleged to be responsible for acts of ill-treatment; and,

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- pay reasonable compensation to victims of ill-treatment for the injuries and ill-treatment suffered.

In doing so, the Danish authorities will be taking steps to prevent repetition of these unfortunate incidents, to ensure protection of the human rights of those within its borders and to comply with their obligations set forth in international human rights treaties which the government has ratified.

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