

10 June 2008

UA 162/08

Forcible return/torture and other ill-treatment

DENMARK

At least 4 Iraqi men, aged 28-45

The Danish authorities are preparing to forcibly return four men to Iraq, where they would be in danger of human rights abuses including torture or death. Denmark is a state party to a number of treaties that expressly prohibit them from returning anyone to a country where they would face this kind of danger. The men are held in Vestre Fængsel prison, in the capital, Copenhagen.

According to the Danish police, eight Iraqis have already been forcibly returned to the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, since the beginning of May. Each had been convicted of criminal offences while in Denmark. At least 11 Iraqi men were arrested in Denmark on 20 May, to be forcibly returned to Baghdad; a twelfth man, who was already in custody, was also given an order for removal to Baghdad. All were legally resident in Denmark; some had been granted refugee status.

The men now facing forcible return, and those returned since May, had completed sentences ranging from 40 days to 13 years in Danish prisons. Though it was part of their sentences, the men had not been forcibly returned to Iraq when they completed their prison sentences. The Danish Refugee Board has now decided that the men can safely be returned to Baghdad.

Any asylum-seekers or refugees forcibly returned to Iraq would face very real risks of being tortured or otherwise ill-treated, detained arbitrarily by the security forces or even killed, or kidnapped for ransom by the various armed groups operating in the country. Amnesty International remains opposed to the forcible return of any Iraqi refugee or asylum-seeker to any part of Iraq.

Amnesty International wrote to the Danish Refugees, Immigration and Integration Minister on 23 May to raise concerns about plans to forcibly return the men to Baghdad. In her reply, the Minister expressed confidence in the Refugee Board's assessment that the men could return to Baghdad in safety; she also said that more Iraqi nationals would be returned from Denmark.

On 28 May, a number of demonstrators protesting against forcible returns to Baghdad were arrested at Copenhagen airport. The Danish police later said they would no longer give any advance details of flights being used for forcible returns. They had previously indicated that the forcible returns of the group of Iraqi nationals now in custody would go ahead as soon as possible.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iraq is one of the most dangerous places in the world. The people face a daily risk of death at the hands of armed groups, the US-led Multinational Force (MNF), the Iraqi security forces and private military and security guards. Kidnapping, torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary detention are also everyday risks. Food and clean drinking water are increasingly difficult to find.

The Danish authorities are trying to reach an agreement with the Iraqi authorities to facilitate the forcible return of 364 rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- urging the minister not to forcibly return the four Iraqi men now in custody, all of whom are legally resident in Denmark;
- reminding her that Denmark is a state party to various international human rights treaties that expressly prohibits the forcible return of anyone to a country where they would be at risk of torture or other serious human rights violations;
- calling on her to put an immediate end to all forcible returns of Iraqis to any part of Iraq.

APPEALS TO:

Ms Birthe Rønn Hornbech
Minister of Refugees, Immigration and Integration
The Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs
Holbergsgade 6
1057 København K
Denmark

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Salutation: Dear Minister

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 July 2008.