

Iraqi protesters storm Swedish embassy in Baghdad over planned Qur'an desecration

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Baghdad, July 20 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Iraqi protesters have stormed the Swedish embassy in the capital Baghdad and set part of it on fire in protest against the second planned desecration of the Holy Qur'an in

Sweden.

The angry protesters, who were reportedly the supporters of prominent Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, stormed the main gates of the embassy building on Thursday, holding up copies of the Qur'an and chanting pro-Sadr slogans. "We are mobilized today to denounce the burning of the Qur'an, which is all about love and faith," a protester told AFP. "We demand that the Swedish government and the Iraqi government stop this type of initiative."

Iraq's Foreign Ministry condemned the torching of the Swedish embassy building in a statement, saying the Iraqi government had instructed security forces to carry out a swift investigation, identify the perpetrators and hold them to account.

The ministry further said Iraqi authorities have the responsibility to protect diplomatic missions and staff, adding that attacks on embassies and diplomats "constitute a serious violation of the Vienna Convention."

The development comes as Swedish authorities have approved an assembly to be held later in the day outside the Iraqi embassy in Stockholm, where organizers plan to burn a copy of Muslims' holy book as well as the Iraqi flag.

Two people are set to participate in the demonstration, Swedish media reported on Wednesday, adding that one of them is the same person who set a Qur'an on fire outside a Stockholm mosque in June.

Condemnations are pouring in from Muslim countries following the burning of a copy of the holy Qur'an by a right-wing Swedish-Danish politician in Stockholm.

On June 28, Salwan Momika, a 37-year-old Iraqi immigrant stomped on the Qur'an before setting several pages alight in front of Stockholm's largest mosque. The insult to the Muslim holy book was made under the authorization and protection of the Swedish police.

The incident, coinciding with the start of the Muslim Eid al-Adha and the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, drew the anger of Muslims from across the world.

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