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# COMFORT IN A COLD PLACE

Millions of Iraqis have fled their devastated homeland. For members of the middle class, refugee-friendly Sweden is the destination of choice

BY VIVIENNE WALT

**AT ANOTHER TIME OR PLACE,** the unknown gunmen who smashed Alaa's front door and ransacked his home in January might have been armed burglars. But this was Baghdad, a few days after Saddam Hussein was hanged. "They were aiming to kill me," says Alaa, a television producer who was at work at the time. "I covered every day of Saddam's trial and his execution. Of course people wanted me dead. I ran." Three weeks later, Alaa, 29—like many interviewed for this article, he did not want his last name to be used—peers out of a high-rise apartment building in Stockholm at sidewalks carpeted with fresh snow, a disorienting contrast with the carnage he has left behind.

Alaa's escape is hardly rare. As Iraq's bloodletting crystallizes into a civil war, the stampede of Iraqis fleeing their homes has accelerated so fast that U.N. officials now rank it as the region's biggest exodus in nearly 60 years. Since the war began nearly four years ago, about 2 million Iraqis have left the country and more than 1.6 million others have been displaced inside it, according to U.N. estimates. Tens of thousands more who fled just before the U.S. invasion in 2003—figuring they would sit out what many anticipated



<b>SWEDEN</b>	<b>Pop. (mill.)</b>	<b>Old* %</b>	<b>Born outside Sweden</b>
	<b>%</b>		
<b>1749</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>?</b>
<b>1870</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>&lt;1 %</b>
<b>1900</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>&lt;1 %</b>
<b>1930</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1 %</b>
<b>1945</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1.5 %</b>
<b>1975</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8 %</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15 %</b>

\* 65+





VARFÖR KALLAR  
NI AHMED FÖR  
"PROFESSORN"?

FÖR ATT  
HAN ÄR DET!



Göran Persson besökte Östergården i Rinkeby i går, och fick en pratstund med en nöjd Iran Abidi, 85 år gammal som bott 30 år i Sverige, och gruppleddaren Nevart Ghazarida.

FOTO: TOMAS ONEBORG



**Undrar.** Najah Al-Hamed och Anna-Karin Bergenholtz på Kärrhökens äldreboende undrar varför hissen aldrig kommer i gång. Boendet består av 48 lägenheter och är sju våningar högt.

FOTO: BEA TIGERHJELM

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