



Ministry of External Affairs

Government of India

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Q. NO. *143 HELP TO INDIANS TRAPPED IN IRAQ

July 17, 2014

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO.143
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.07.2014

HELP TO INDIANS TRAPPED IN IRAQ

* 143. SHRI BALWINDER SINGH BHUNDER:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether many Indians were taken hostages and trapped in the war- torn cities of Iraq by insurgents of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); if so, the details of Indians taken hostages and trapped therein;
- (b) the efforts that were made by Government to get released the hostages and evacuate Indians from Iraq; and
- (c) the number of Indians who have been evacuated and the efforts that have been made to ensure the safety of others left behind in Iraq?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (c) OF THE RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 143 REGARDING "HELP TO INDIANS TRAPPED IN IRAQ" FOR ANSWER ON 17.07.2014

(a) An estimated 22,000 Indian nationals were in Iraq at the beginning of the conflict. This included 500 in Baghdad, 2,300 in Najaf, 1,000 in Karbala, 3,000 in Basra, 15,000 in Kurdistan and about 200 in other cities. Some Indians got trapped in the conflict areas following sudden attacks and capturing of several cities in northern and central Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) beginning 8 June.

A group of 46 nurses working in a local hospital in the city of Tikrit got stuck due to the conflict, but were

safely brought back to India in a special Air India flight on 5 July. Another group of about 41 Indian nationals working in a construction company in Mosul were taken captive by an unidentified group. The Government of India is making every effort and taking all steps to secure their release as well.

(b) & (c) Our Embassy in Baghdad is in close and regular contact with the Iraqi Government authorities and Iraqi Red Crescent Society for safe return of our nationals from Iraq.

On 19 June, the Government suspended emigration clearance to Iraq, until further notification and advised Indian nationals to avoid all travel to Iraq. The Government issued travel advisories on 15 June, 24 June and 28 June advising Indian nationals to leave Iraq by commercial means. Our nationals living in areas affected by the ongoing armed conflict have been advised to stay indoors as far as possible and to remain in contact with our Embassy in Baghdad for necessary guidance and updated information on the evolving security situation. Those Indian nationals, who do not have travel documents or need other consular services, have been advised to seek assistance from our Embassy in Baghdad.

Our Mission in Baghdad and the Ministry of External Affairs have established 24 hour helplines to assist our nationals in Iraq and their concerned family members in India. The Government has set up special camp offices in Najaf, Karbala and Basra and strengthened our Embassy in Baghdad through the addition of 25 staff members. These new officers are proactively contacting Indian nationals and companies where they work, offering all necessary assistance, including provision of travel documents, air tickets and facilitation in any other form for travel out of Iraq.

The contact details of our camp officers in these cities are available on the websites of our Embassy in Baghdad and the Ministry of External Affairs. The details of these helplines have been well publicized through the media.

Our Embassy has been providing all necessary assistance to Indian nationals, including provision of travel documents, air tickets and special flights.

As of 14 July, over 3,500 Indian nationals have been provided assistance for travelling back to India. This includes air tickets to over 2,500 Indian nationals.



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