

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-2103
ANSWERED ON-12.05.2016

Financial help for families of persons languishing in Pakistani jails

2103 Dr. Vijaylaxmi Sadho

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of alleged Indian citizens and fishermen languishing in the jails in Pakistan and the time from when they are languishing;
- (b) whether the Government has been providing any financial assistance to the families of those persons languishing in jails in Pakistan for several years, if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the measures Government has taken or proposes to take in order to get them released from prison?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) to (c) As per information available with the Government, there are 516 fishermen who are Indian or believed to be Indian currently in the custody of Pakistani authorities. Formal confirmation from the Government of Pakistan of the presence of 296 of these fishermen in the custody of Pakistani authorities, apprehended in the past few months by Pakistani authorities, is yet to be received. The year-wise details have been tabulated below:

No. of fishermen	Year of detention
2	2011
1	2012
15	2013
202	2015
296 (confirmation sought from Pakistani authorities)	2016

There are 49 civil prisoners, who are Indian or believed to be Indian, lodged in Pakistani jails, from early 1990s to the current year.

Government of Pakistan does not acknowledge the presence of 74 Missing Defence Personnel (MDPs) in Pakistan. A committee comprising of the family members of MDPs visited Pakistan from June 01-14 in 2007.

In March 2009, a Non-Plan scheme of Soft Loan Package for Replacement of Fishing Vessels at a total cost of Rs 1956 lakhs was launched. Under this scheme, which is administered by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and implemented by Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), a capital subsidy to the tune of 30% of the cost of each vessel, subject to a ceiling of Rs 6 lakh, is provided to each vessel owner for replacement of his/her fishing vessel seized in Pakistan.

The Government on a continuing basis monitors the status of all Indian prisoners, including fishermen in Pakistani jails, and takes up the matter with the Government of Pakistan for their early release. During the meeting of Prime Minister with Pakistan's Prime Minister on the margins of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit on 10th July 2015, both sides agreed for early release of the fishermen in each other's custody along with their boats. As a result of Government's efforts, a total of 448 fishermen and 57 fishing boats were returned by Pakistani authorities in 2015, including 172 fishermen released after the Ufa meeting of the two Prime Ministers. In 2016, 172 Indian fishermen and 1 Indian civil prisoner have been released and repatriated so far. The matter of well-being and early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen from Pakistani jails was also recently discussed with Pakistan, when the Foreign Secretary met his counterpart on April 26, 2016 on the sidelines of the Heart of Asia-Senior Officials Meeting on Afghanistan.

An India-Pakistan Judicial Committee on Prisoners, consisting of retired judges from both countries, has undertaken reciprocal visits to each other's prisons and given recommendations on ensuring humane treatment and expeditious release of prisoners, including fishermen, who have completed their sentence.