

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:42
ANSWERED ON:09.07.2014
SAFE EVACUATION OF INDIANS IN IRAQ
Pradhan Shri Nagendra Kumar;Venugopal Shri K. C.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether several Indians, including nurses, were/are trapped/held captives in Iraq and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the assistance provided to Indian nationals stranded in Iraq so far;
- (c) the details of the help desks opened at the Indian Embassy in Iraq and India;
- (d) the steps taken by the Government in consultation with the Iraqi Government to ensure the safety and security of Indian nationals and their safe evacuation; and
- (e) the number of Indians returned to the country and the estimated number still residing/trapped in Iraq and yet to be evacuated?

Answer

THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

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

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 42 REGARDING "SAFE EVACUATION OF INDIANS IN IRAQ" TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.07.2014

(a) Several 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 have now been safely brought back to India. 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 efforts and taking all steps to secure their release as well.

(b) & (c) 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, available on the websites of our Embassy in Baghdad and the Ministry of External Affairs, are as follows:

1) Najaf
+964 771 6511190
+964 771 6511181
+964 771 6511179
Email: controlroomnajaf@gmail.com

2) Karbala
+964 771 6511183
+964 771 6511180
+964 771 6511176
E-mail: controlroomkarbala@gmail.com

3) Basra
+964 771 6511185
+964 771 6511182
+964 771 6511178
E-mail: controlroombasrah@gmail.com

4) 24 hour help line in Baghdad
+964 770 444 4899
+964 770 484 3247
+964 771 6511189
+964 771 6511193

Emails: amb.baghdad@mea.gov.in
hoc.baghdad@mea.gov.in
cons.baghdad@mea.gov.in
edubaghdad@yahoo.com

5) 24 hour help lines in Ministry of External Affairs.
+91 11 2301 2113
+91 11 2301 7905
+91 11 2301 4104
Email: controlroom@mea.gov.in

The details of these helplines have been well publicized through the media.

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

A few thousand Indians were estimated to be in Iraq, mostly in relatively safer autonomous Kurdistan region and in southern Iraq before the conflict. Our Embassy has been providing all necessary assistance to Indian nationals desirous of returning to India, including through provision of travel documents, air tickets and special flights.

As of 6 July, 2117 Indian nationals were provided assistance for travelling back to India. This includes air tickets to 1020 Indian nationals.