

Parimal Nathwani

Member of Parliament
(Rajya Sabha)

Member:

Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law & Justice
Consultative Committee, Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Permanent Special Invitee:

Consultative Committee, Ministry of External Affairs



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Media Release:

558 Indian Nationals Including 252 Fishermen and 74 Missing Defense Personnel in Pak Jails

MP Nathwani's Question Creates Uproar in RS

August 12, 2011: There are 558 Indian nationals in custody in Pakistan as per the available reports; out of which 232 are civilian prisoners, 252 are Indian fishermen and 74 are missing defense personnel. The 74 missing defense personnel include 54 prisoners of war (PoW) since 1971. Pakistan, however, does not acknowledge the presence of any missing defense personnel in its custody.

Mr. S.M.Krishna, the union minister for external affairs stated in rajya sabha yesterday in reply to a starred question of rajya sabha member Mr. Parimal Nathwani. The question and the answer triggered a spate of questions and participation from several members in the debate that led to even an intervention from the prime minister.

As a result of government's efforts, Pakistan released 454 Indian fishermen and 19 Indian civilian prisoners in 2010. Similarly in 2011 also Pakistan has released 103 Indian fishermen and 12 Indian civilian prisoners; the minister's statement informed.

On Mr. Nathwani's question about financial or other assistance to family members of those detained in Pakistan for years, the minister replied that the department of animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries under the ministry of agriculture was the nodal agency for payment of compensation to the fishermen lodged in Pakistani jails a scheme for soft loan package for replacement of fishing vessels held in captivity in Pakistan was under implementation by Marine Products Export development Authority (MPEDA).

The statement of the external affairs minister tabled in the upper house said that the matter pertaining to the Indian nationals in custody in Pakistan was taken up at the foreign secretary level talks in February 2010, June 2010 and June 2011; in the Home/Interior secretary level talks in March 2011 and foreign minister level talks in July 2010 and July 2011; it added.

It was stated further that an India-Pakistan Judicial Committee on Prisoners was formed on February 26, 2008 to make recommendation to the two governments for immediate release of and consular access to fishermen as well as exchange of consolidated list of nationals in each other's jails. The committee has met four times so far- in February 2008, June 2008, August 2008 and April 2011; the statement said and added that the high commission of India in Islamabad monitored on continuing basis the status of Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails and requests for consular access for these prisoners. The India-Pakistan Judicial Committee on Prisoners consists of four retired judges each from both the sides.

Mrs. Brinda Karat while participating in the debate raised specific question about alleged Indian spies and a case of Mr. Sarabjit Singh who is locked up in Pakistani jail on the false charge of being an Indian spy. Mr. Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi too associated himself with this question.

On the question that what was government doing for the family of such persons the minister said one time ex-gratia payment of Rs. three lakhs to the next of kin in the case of each of the person who is detained overseas provided