

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 1994
ANSWERED ON- 12/12/2024

INDIANS TRAPPED IN WAR ZONES ABROAD

1994. SMT. SAGARIKA GHOSE

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

- (a) the number of Indians trapped in war zones abroad;
- (b) the efforts being made for the relief and rescue of Indian citizens trapped in war zones;
- (c) the number of Indian citizens that have been evacuated from these regions; and
- (d) the efforts being made to protect the livelihood of Indian workers who find themselves trapped in conflict zones in countries across West Asia?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a to c) Government accords the highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indian nationals abroad. It issues advisories as required by developments, especially in war zones, to caution Indian nationals to avoid unnecessary travel and follow safety guidelines issued by local authorities. Additionally, Indian Missions in foreign countries also issue advisories requesting Indian nationals to avoid unnecessary travel and remain in touch with the Indian Missions on published helpline numbers. Depending on the situation, the Government launches evacuation operations to safely evacuate any trapped Indian nationals. During the previous five years, a total number of 24,017 Indian nationals were reported stranded in war zones in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Sudan, Israel and Haiti, but were safely evacuated under various operations. The details of the number of Indian nationals evacuated from war zones under various operations are provided below.

Operation-wise details of evacuation of stranded Indian nationals

Year	Country & Name of the Operation	Total number of people evacuated (including foreign nationals)
2021	Afghanistan <i>Operation Devi Shakti</i>	669 (including 15 other foreign nationals and 206 Afghans, which includes members of the Afghan Hindu/Sikh minority)
2022	Ukraine <i>Operation Ganga</i>	18,282

2023	Sudan Operation <i>Kaveri</i>	4,097 (including 136 foreign nationals)
2023	Israel Operation <i>Ajay</i>	1,343 (including 14 OCI card holders and 20 foreign nationals)
2024	Haiti Operation <i>Indravati</i>	17

(d) The safety and security of Indian nationals abroad, including in West Asia, has remained a matter of foremost concern for the Government. Indian Missions and Posts monitor the working conditions of Indian nationals abroad. The Government has established various channels to enable Indian nationals working abroad to reach out to the Missions/Posts through walk-in interview, email, multilingual 24x7 emergency numbers, grievance redressal portals like MADAD, CPGRAMS, eMigrate portal and through social media. As and when such cases are reported, the Missions/Posts take prompt action in coordination with the employer/sponsor/agent and local authorities and extend all possible assistance to the aggrieved Indian workers including their rescue and repatriation to India. Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras (PBSK) have been set up in Dubai, Riyadh and Jeddah to provide guidance and counselling to Indian workers on all matters.

A dedicated Labour Wing has been established in the Missions/Posts in countries where there are a significant number of Indian migrant workers, which ensures expeditious redressal of labour grievances. Shelter homes for distressed Indian nationals have been set up in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. These shelter homes provide free boarding and lodging to Indian nationals in distress, pending their repatriation to India.

Indian Missions/Posts regularly organize Open Houses and Consular Camps in remote areas for Indian nationals, including workers residing in such areas, to render consular services including addressing their grievances and providing assistance, if any. The complaints pertaining to employment issues are also taken up with the local labour department and other relevant authorities of the host country for prompt redressal. Based on Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) signed with the host countries, matters related to welfare and protection of workers are also taken up during regular meetings of Joint Working Groups with host countries. In addition, such matters are also regularly taken up with respective government through diplomatic channels.

The Missions/Posts utilize the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) from time to time to provide financial and legal assistance to Indian nationals in distress abroad on a 'means test basis'. The major assistance under the ICWF includes boarding and lodging, air passage to India, legal assistance, emergency medical care, transportation of mortal remains to India, and payment of small fines and penalties, etc.
