

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-134
ANSWERED ON- 02/02/2024**

LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO INDIAN CITIZENS ABROAD

134. SHRI E.T. MOHAMMED BASHEER

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

- (a) whether the Government has noticed that there is delay from the side of Indian mission for providing welfare activities, especially legal assistance for jailed Indian person;**
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the remedial steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard; and**
- (c) the total number of Indian citizen in jails abroad and the number of persons released during the year 2023?**

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)**

(a & b) There has been no delay from the side of Indian Missions for providing welfare activities to Indian citizens abroad including legal assistance for jailed Indian persons. The Government of India and the Indian Missions/Posts give the highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indians in foreign countries, including those in the foreign jails. Indian Missions/Posts abroad remain vigilant and closely monitor the incidents of Indian nationals being put in jail in foreign countries for violation/ alleged violation of local laws. Whenever, the information about the detention/arrest of an Indian national is received by an Indian Mission/Post, it immediately gets in touch with the local Foreign Office and other concerned local authorities to get consular access to the detained/arrested Indian national to ascertain the veracity of facts of the case, confirm his or her Indian nationality and ensure his or her welfare and to ensure that rights of the Indian prisoners in foreign jails are protected. Missions/Posts abroad also approach the law enforcement agencies to complete the investigation and judicial proceedings at the earliest possible.

Apart from extending all possible consular assistance to Indians imprisoned abroad, Indian Missions and Posts also assist in

providing legal aid wherever needed. Missions and Posts also maintain a local panel of lawyers where Indian community is in sizeable numbers. No fee is charged from any Indian prisoner for extending facilities by the Indian Embassy concerned. The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is set up in Indian Missions & Posts abroad for assisting overseas Indian nationals in distress situations on a means tested basis in deserving cases. The support extended under ICWF includes financial assistance to Indian prisoners for legal aid as well as travel documents/air tickets during repatriation.

In addition, the issue of release and repatriation of Indian nationals in foreign prisons is regularly pursued by Indian Missions and Posts abroad with the local authorities concerned. The Government also follows up this issue during consular and other consultations with other countries. In addition, the Government, through its Missions/Posts abroad and during high level visits, also takes up and pursues grant of amnesty/commutation of sentences of Indian prisoners in foreign countries.

(c) As per the information available with the Ministry, the number of Indian citizens in jails abroad is 9309.
