

## 39 Indian Hostages in Iraq are confirmed dead, says External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj

India has said that 39 Indians, who were believed to have been kidnapped by militants in Iraq in 2014, had been confirmed dead after their bodies were found. The bodies were recovered from a mass grave and DNA tests had confirmed them to be the construction workers who went missing from the Iraqi city of Mosul, Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj told parliament.

“With full proof, I can say these 39 are dead,” the minister said. The government had for years said it would only declare the men dead once it had full evidence. “We wanted to give the families closure only after getting concrete proof,” she said. A moment’s silence was observed in the Rajya Sabha after the foreign minister’s statement.



Minister for External Affairs EAM Sushma Swaraj. (Picture: REUTERS/Alex Brandon/Pool)

“We used a deep penetration satellite to see a mass grave... We requested that the bodies be brought out, exhumed,” EAM Swaraj told the Rajya Sabha.

“It was a most difficult task to get the proof. Such a barbaric terror organization...there were mass graves. It was a pile of bodies. To track down the bodies of our people and to take them to Baghdad for DNA tests was a huge task,” she informed, commending her junior, Minister of State VK Singh, for supervising the job in challenging circumstances.

The Indian labourers mostly from Punjab, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Bengal, were taken hostage when the ISIS overran Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, in 2014. The workers were trying to leave Mosul when they were caught.

Days after Mosul’s liberation from ISIS was announced, Minister VK Singh was sent to Iraq.

*Source: PIB*

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