



External Affairs Minister's Statement in Rajya Sabha on case of Shri Kulbhushan Jadhav, Indian Citizen, awarded death sentence by a Pakistani military court

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Following is the text of the External Affairs Minister's Statement in Rajya Sabha on case of Shri Kulbhushan Jadhav, Indian Citizen, awarded death sentence by a Pakistani military court (April 11, 2017)

Hon'ble Deputy Chairman Sir,

1. I rise to share my concern with the House regarding the report that an Indian citizen, Shri Kulbhushan Jadhav, has been awarded a death sentence by a Pakistani military court martial on concocted charges, I repeat on concocted charges.
2. I would like to inform the House that Shri Jadhav was doing business in Iran and was kidnapped and taken to Pakistan. The exact circumstances are unclear and can only be ascertained if we have consular access to him. Accordingly, from the time his abduction was known, our High Commission in Islamabad has continuously pressed Pakistani authorities for such access. Although this is provided for by international law and is deemed a norm in international relations, the Government of Pakistan did not permit it. That itself should tell us much about the strength of the case against Shri Jadhav. Hon'ble Members would also recall that a senior Pakistani leader has himself expressed doubts about the adequacy of evidence in this case.
3. Deputy Chairman Sir, earlier this year, the Pakistan Government sought our assistance to obtain evidence and other materials for the investigation process. In doing so, they levelled ridiculous charges against senior Indian officials who had no connection to this issue. Thereafter, they linked providing consular access to our acceptance of their position. Nevertheless, in the hope that some forward movement could be made, our response was constructive. We pointed out that consular access to Shri Jadhav would be an essential pre-requisite in order to verify the facts and understand the circumstances of his presence in Pakistan.
4. Given this exchange, it is extraordinary that yesterday, a decision is suddenly announced awarding a death sentence in this case when previous exchanges with India itself underlines the insufficiency of evidence. To make matters even more absurd, three hours after the death sentence was announced, the Indian High Commission received an official communication from the Foreign Ministry of Pakistan reiterating the Pakistani proposal for conditional consular access. That tells us a lot about the farcical nature of the alleged proceedings which have led to an indefensible verdict against an innocent kidnapped Indian.
5. Our position on this matter is clear. There is no evidence of wrongdoing by Shri Jadhav. If anything, he is the victim of a plan that seeks to cast aspersions on India to deflect international attention from Pakistan's well-known record of sponsoring and supporting terrorism. Under these circumstances, we have no choice but to regard the sentence, if carried out, as an act of pre-meditated murder.
6. Deputy Chairman Sir, yesterday, Foreign Secretary conveyed our position to the High Commissioner of Pakistan. Let me state clearly that the Government and people of India would view very seriously the possibility that an innocent Indian citizen is facing death sentence in Pakistan without due process and in violation of basic norms of law, justice and international relations. I would caution the Pakistan Government to consider the consequences for our bilateral relationship if they proceed on this matter.
7. Deputy Chairman Sir, I would also like to tell the House that I have been in touch with the parents of Shri Jadhav and we are extending our fullest support to them in this difficult situation. A strong sense of solidarity expressed by the House will give them more courage at this time.

YSKataria/Uma

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