

Case Study

# INDIAN PRISONERS ABROAD: A SILENT CRISIS

Unveiling the Numbers, The Stories, and the Urgent Need for Action

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## Introduction

On March 30, 2025, during a parliamentary session, the Minister of State for External Affairs, **Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh**, revealed that **10,152 Indian nationals** are imprisoned abroad. Inspired by this, I cleaned, analyzed, and visualized the data using **Python** to uncover key patterns and trends.

This case study explores the link between Indian migration and imprisonment rates in the Middle East, using data visualization and statistical analysis to reveal key trends. I designed high-impact charts to present findings compellingly, showcasing both the severity of the issue and my expertise in data analysis, visualization, and storytelling with Python.

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## Executive Summary

This analysis examines the concerning situation of Indian nationals incarcerated abroad, with particular focus on those facing death sentences. The data reveals alarming trends, particularly in Middle Eastern countries where thousands of Indian expatriates find themselves imprisoned and dozens face capital punishment. This crisis demands urgent diplomatic attention and policy intervention.

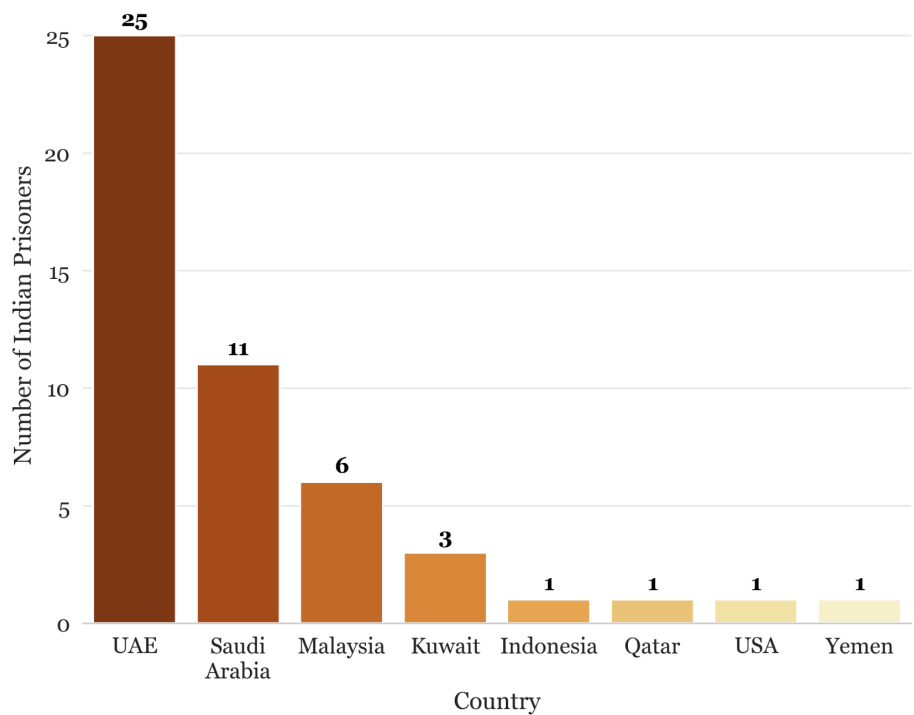
## Key Statistics

- 1. Total Indian nationals on death row abroad: **49+**
- 2. Total Indians in foreign jails: **10,152+**
- 3. Middle East accounts for over **80%** of death sentences
- 4. UAE has the highest number of Indians on death row (**25**)
- 5. Saudi Arabia holds the highest number of Indian prisoners (**2,633**)

## The Geographic Distribution

### Death Row Cases

Countries with Highest Number of Indian Nationals on Death Row



Source: Ministry of External Affairs, India | Visualisation by Mohit Luthra

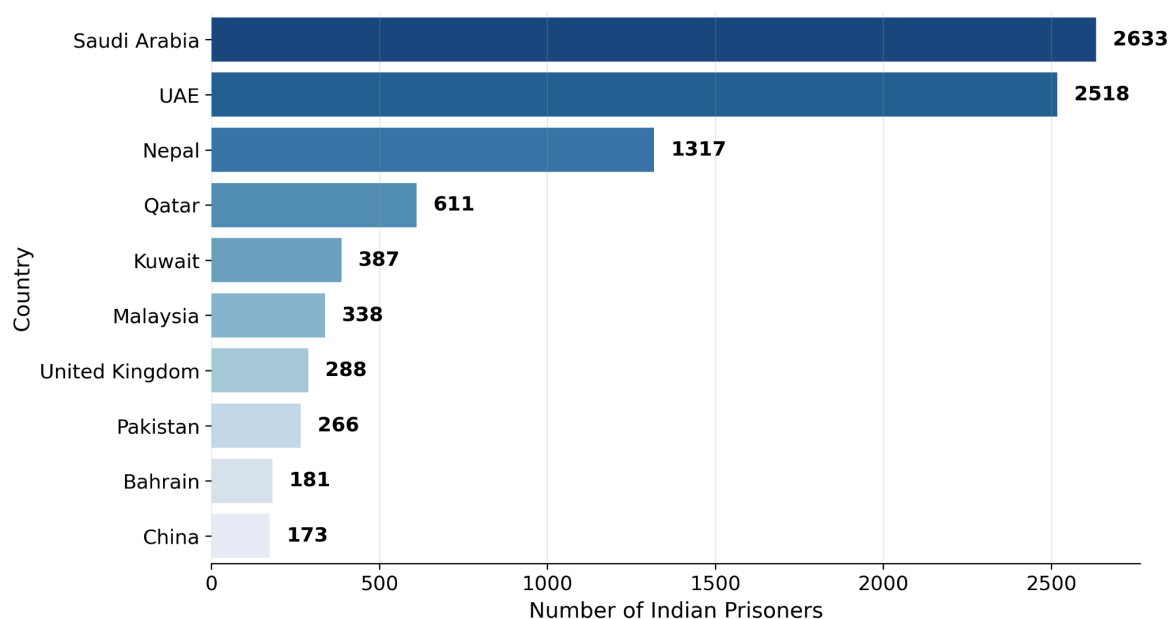
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The concentration of Indian nationals on death row is heavily skewed toward Gulf countries:

1. UAE: 25 (51% of total)
2. Saudi Arabia: 11 (22.4% of total)
3. Malaysia: 6 (12.2% of total)
4. Kuwait: 3 (6.1% of total)
5. Others (Indonesia, Qatar, USA, Yemen): 1 each (2% each)

## Incarceration Cases

**Top 10 Countries with Highest Number of Indians in Foreign Jails**



Source: Ministry of External Affairs, India | Visualisation by Mohit Luthra

The top countries imprisoning Indian nationals:

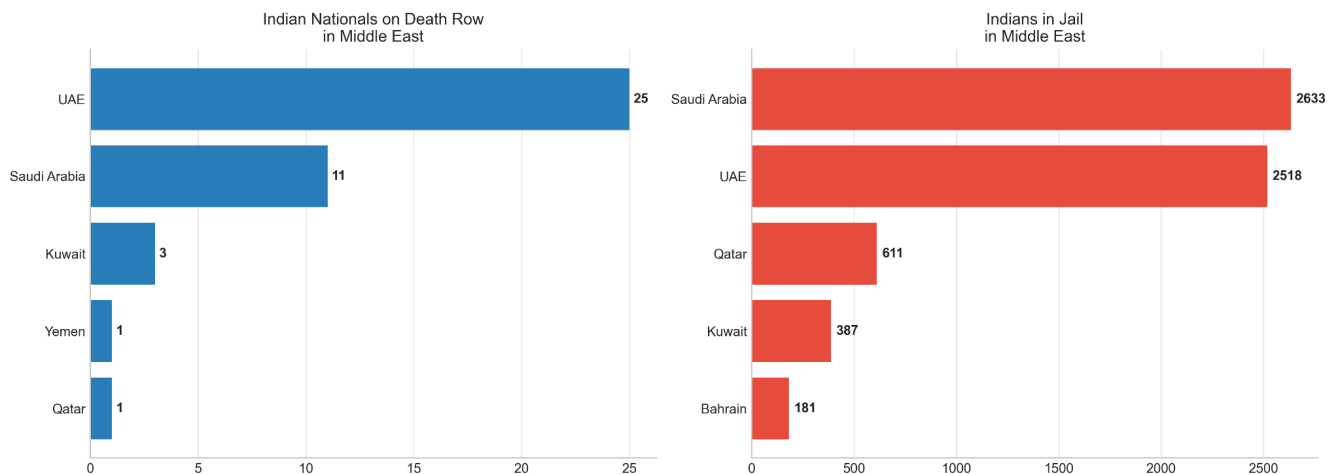
1. Saudi Arabia: 2,633
2. UAE: 2,518
3. Nepal: 1,317
4. Qatar: 611
5. Kuwait: 387
6. Malaysia: 338
7. United Kingdom: 288
8. Pakistan: 266
9. Bahrain: 181
10. China: 173

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## The Middle East Connection

The data clearly demonstrates a troubling pattern: over **80% of Indians on death row** abroad and the majority of imprisoned Indians are located in Middle Eastern countries. This region employs millions of Indian migrant workers, primarily in construction, domestic work, and service industries.

### FOCUS ON MIDDLE EAST: A REGION OF CONCERN



*The Middle East accounts for over 80% of Indians on death row abroad, highlighting concerns about legal systems, labor conditions, and diplomatic protection for Indian expatriates in the region.*

Source: Ministry of External Affairs | Visualisation by Mohit Luthra

## Deep Dive: UAE and Saudi Arabia

### United Arab Emirates

With 25 Indians on death row and 2,518 in prison, the UAE presents a particular concern. The typical profile of imprisoned Indians includes:

1. Low-skilled laborers
2. Domestic workers
3. Small business operators
4. Those charged with financial crimes or drug offenses

### Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia houses 2,633 Indian prisoners (the highest number) and has 11 on death row. Common issues include:

1. Violation of religious laws
2. Drug-related offenses
3. Labor disputes
4. Alleged theft or financial crimes

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## Human Stories Behind the Statistics

While the data provides a macro view, each number represents a human tragedy affecting entire families back in India. Consider these representative cases (names changed for privacy):

1. **Rajesh K.:** A truck driver in Saudi Arabia, gets jailed after making a tearful video about terrible work conditions.
2. **Sunita M.:** A domestic worker in Kuwait imprisoned after being accused of theft by her employer, with limited access to legal representation.
3. **Arjun S.:** Facing death row in Saudi Arabia on drug smuggling charges, claims he was unaware of the contents of a package he was asked to deliver.

## Factors Behind the Crisis

1. **Vulnerable Labor Population:** Most Indian prisoners in the Gulf are migrant workers from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds with limited education and awareness of local laws.
2. **Strict Legal Systems:** Many Gulf countries implement stringent Sharia-based legal frameworks with severe penalties for offenses that might receive lighter sentences elsewhere.
3. **Limited Legal Representation:** Language barriers, lack of funds, and inadequate consular support often leave Indians without proper legal defense.
4. **Drug-Related Offenses:** A significant portion of death sentences stem from drug trafficking charges, often with defendants claiming they were deceived or coerced.
5. **Labor Disputes:** Many incarceration cases begin as labor disputes that escalate when workers protest against exploitation.

## Diplomatic Challenges

1. The Indian government faces significant diplomatic challenges in addressing this crisis:
2. Balancing strategic economic relationships with Gulf countries while advocating for citizens' rights
3. Navigating different legal systems and standards of justice
4. Limited leverage in certain bilateral relationships
5. Consular access constraints in some nations

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## Correlation Between Indian Labor Migration and Imprisonment Rates in the Middle East

Indian labor migration to the Middle East has been a significant economic and social phenomenon for decades. I extracted data on **Indian migrants and imprisoned Indians** in five major Middle Eastern countries:

Country	Indian Migrants (Lakhs)	Indian Prisoners
UAE	35.54	2518
Saudi Arabia	22.19	2633
Kuwait	8.29	387
Qatar	8.00	611
Oman	5.30	181

*Indian Migrants data: Ministry of External Affairs India, 2023*

These figures highlight a stark reality: Countries with the highest number of migrants also report a high number of imprisoned Indians.

### Correlation Analysis

To determine whether a statistical relationship exists, I calculated **Pearson's correlation coefficient (r)** between:

1. The number of **Indian migrants** in each country.
2. The number of **Indian prisoners** in the same country.

### Results:

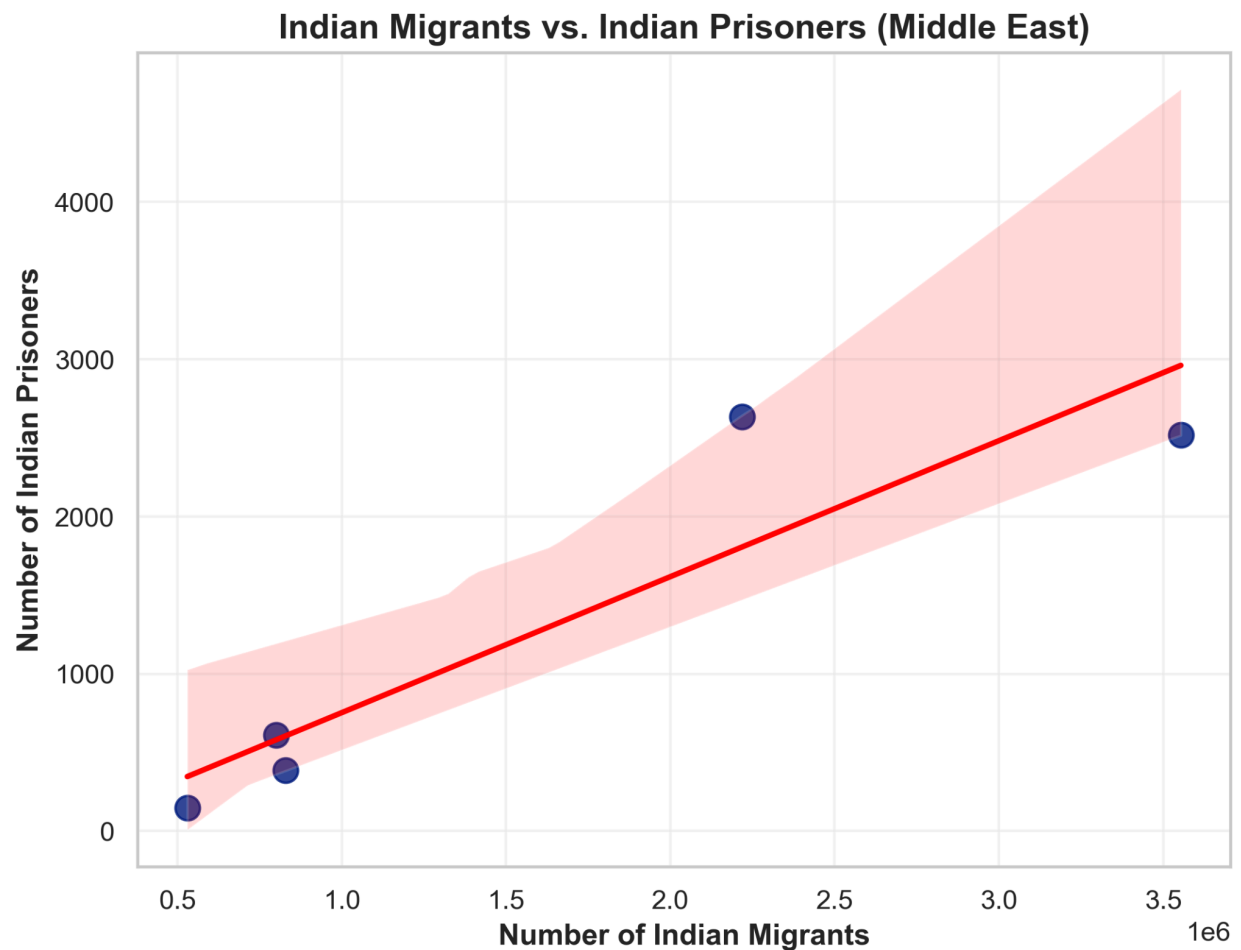
1. **Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.914** → Strong positive correlation.
2. **p-value = 0.0297** → Statistically significant (**p < 0.05**), meaning this relationship is unlikely due to chance.

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## Interpretation:

1. **Countries with more Indian migrants also tend to have a higher number of imprisoned Indians.**
2. **This correlation does not imply causation**, but suggests a trend that warrants further exploration.

## Scatter Plot: Indian Migrants vs. Indian Prisoners in the Middle East



1. The red trend line shows a positive correlation: more migrants often lead to more prisoners.
2. UAE and Saudi Arabia have the highest values in both categories.
3. The shaded region represents confidence intervals.

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## Key Insights

1. Over 80% of Indian nationals on death row are in Middle Eastern countries
2. UAE (25) and Saudi Arabia (11) account for 73% of all death sentence cases
3. Gulf countries employ large numbers of Indian migrant workers, often in vulnerable conditions
4. There is a **statistically significant, strong positive correlation** between Indian labor migration and the number of imprisoned Indians in the Middle East. [**Caution:** Correlation **does not** imply causation—multiple factors such as **legal frameworks, labor laws, visa issues, and local crime rates** may contribute.]
5. Southeastern Asian countries like Malaysia have strict drug laws resulting in death sentences
6. Consular access and legal support remain challenging in many countries
7. Many cases involve alleged drug trafficking, often with claims of deception or coercion
8. Diplomatic relations heavily influence prisoner treatment and potential pardons

## Recommendations

1. Strengthen consular services in countries with high Indian prisoner populations
2. Create a dedicated legal aid fund for Indians facing capital punishment abroad
3. Enhance pre-departure orientation about local laws for workers going to Gulf countries
4. Negotiate bilateral prisoner transfer agreements with more countries
5. Implement a tracking system for Indians detained abroad to prevent "disappearances"
6. Establish legal assistance hotlines in countries with significant Indian populations
7. Engage with diaspora organizations to provide community support systems
8. Form specialized diplomatic teams focused on death penalty cases

## Conclusion

The data paints a sobering picture of a crisis affecting thousands of Indian families. With appropriate diplomatic initiatives, legal support mechanisms, and preventive education, many of these cases could be avoided or mitigated. This situation demands comprehensive policy responses that balance diplomatic imperatives with humanitarian concerns.

The concentration of cases in Middle Eastern countries highlights a specific area where targeted interventions could yield significant results. As India continues to be a major exporter of labor to Gulf countries, addressing this issue should remain a priority for foreign policy and citizen welfare initiatives.



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## References

1. Indian Prisoners in Foreign Jail Data Source: [Ministry of External Affairs, India](#)
2. Indian Migrants Data Source: [Ministry of External Affairs, India](#)
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4. Statistical Analysis: Pearson correlation computed using *numpy* and *scipy.stats*.
5. Data Visualization: Charts created using *matplotlib*, *seaborn*, and *plotly*.