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Title: Statement regarding situation arising out of Indians held hostage by the Somali pirates.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA): Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has raised a very disturbing development which has taken place in the high seas. I would seek the indulgence of this House to make a short statement.

The issue of piracy is a very complicated international problem. Worldwide, hundreds of ships with over 1000 crew have been hijacked by Somali pirates in recent times. Most of them had been released.

According to the information given to us by the Directorate General of Shipping, which is the nodal Government of India agency for shipping, a total of 215 Indian crew were on board some of these hijacked ships. Out of these, 136 have been released. At present, seven ships with a total of 79 Indian crew are in the custody of Somali pirates. The Embassies and the Consulates-General of India in the concerned countries have been in regular touch with the local Governments and the ship-owners for several months. We can only stress with the local Governments and the ship-owners concerned the need to do all that they can for the safe and early release of the Indian nationals whose safety and security remains our highest priority.

The family members of the victims and of the Indian crew members, who have been held hostage, have met me and others in the Government. We are doing all that we can. I myself have been in regular touch with our Ambassador in Egypt and have spoken to our Consul-General in Dubai. I have also met the Egyptian Ambassador to India and requested his Government's assistance for the safe and quick release of the Indians held hostage on 'MV Suez'.

The United Nations has passed a number of Resolutions to combat piracy including the one in 2008. However, in Somalia, where most of the pirates are based, there is a Transitional Government. Our High Commissioner to Kenya, who also looks after Somalia, has taken up with the President of the Transitional Government who has assured us all help. It will be the endeavour of this Government to pursue with whosoever it is possible. Here is a question of some sailors of Indian origin who have been taken hostage by the pirates. We are in touch with the ship-owners. I myself have been in touch, through our Ambassador, with the ship-owners. So, we are depending upon the ship-owners to negotiate with the pirates as it is done in most cases where it has ended up in the release of the hostages. We are hoping that we would be able to rescue the hostages from the hands of the pirates. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ (VIDISHA): Madam, it shows the helplessness of the Government...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM SPEAKER: Please sit down.

...(*Interruptions*)

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज : अध्यक्ष महोदया, यह उत्तर बिल्कुल भी संतोषजनक नहीं है...(*व्यवधान*)

आप बताइए कि जिनको आज मारने की धमकी दी है, उनको आप कैसे रिलीज कराएंगे? वे न मरे, इस बारे में हम उनके परिवारजनों को क्या सांत्वना दे सकते हैं?...(*व्यवधान*)

MADAM SPEAKER: All right. He has made a Statement.

...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM SPEAKER: He has just made the Statement. Let us proceed further.

...(*Interruptions*)

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज : जिन्हें आज मारने की धमकी दी गई है, उन्हें हम कैसे कहें कि वे नहीं मारे जाएंगे...(*व्यवधान*) क्या सरकार इतनी हैल्पलैस हो गई है कि हम शिपओनर को कह रहे हैं कि आप नैगोशिएट कर लीजिए। नैगोशिएशन का मतलब है कि जो रैनसम उन्होंने मांगा है, वह दे दीजिए...(*व्यवधान*) जो रैनसम उन्होंने मांगा है, वह शिपओनर उनको दे दें, क्या यही नैगोशिएशन है?...(*व्यवधान*)

MADAM SPEAKER: Other 'Zero Hour' matters will be taken up later.

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज : वे लोग मारे नहीं जाएंगे, इस बारे में हम परिवारजनों को क्या कहें कि वे नहीं मारे जाएंगे?...(*व्यवधान*) अध्यक्ष महोदया जी, मंत्री जी का

यह उत्तर बिल्कुल भी संतोषजनक नहीं है। हम इस पर वॉक-आउट करते हैं।

12.28 hrs.

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*At this stage, Shrimati Sushma Swaraj and some other Hon. members
left the House*

I MANICKA TAGORE (VIRUDHUNAGAR):