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Title: Regarding early release of a Catholic priest from Kerala abducted by militants in Yemen.

SHRI JOSE K. MANI (KOTTAYAM): It is now one full year since Fr. Tom Uzhunnalil, a Catholic Priest engaged in social service in Yemen was abducted by IS militants and held hostage for possible ransom in their hideout somewhere in the Middle-East.

The captive priest had appeared on TV channels pleading for mercy and intervention by Government of India to work for his early release with the support of friendly Gulf nations as also the Papal Office in Vatican. Following the persistent demand of his family members and clergymen from Kerala, the Centre had setup a Special committee to work towards securing early release of the captive priest.

Fr. Tom Uzhunnalil hails from my constituency, I am duty bound to pursue the matter with the Centre. Now that the IS militants are on backfoot and are retreating from areas occupied by them from all across the Middle-East.

The time is ripe to mount a final offensive on the IS cadres and to free many hostages of different nationalities held by them for ransom. I would urge the Government to step up its ongoing efforts to secure the release of the captive priest to bring cheers back for his relatives and friends back home on the eve of ensuing Easter festivities.

â€¡ (Interruptions)

HON. SPEAKER: Please take your seat. This issue was raised yesterday only. You cannot do that every day.

...(Interruptions)

माननीय अध्यक्ष: श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज, आप अभी स्टेटमेंट करके जाना चाहेंगी तो मैं एलाउ करूंगी। आपने 12.30 बजे बोला था। इसीलिए मैं चर्चा शुरू कर रही हूँ। Do you want to present a statement?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): Hon. Speaker Madam, I want to present a statement.

HON. SPEAKER: Now, Shrimati Sushma Swaraj to present her statement.

12.19 hours

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS Contd.