

RECOVERY OF WOMEN FROM PAKISTAN

*47. SHRI H. C. MATHUR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of women recovered and restored by Pakistan to India and by India to Pakistan so far during the year 1955;

(b) how many of the recovered women are kept in the camps at present; and

(c) whether any cases of forced restoration to Pakistan have been brought to the notice of the Government?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS, HOUSING AND SUPPLY (SARDAR SWARAN SINGH): (a) The number of abducted women recovered and restored by Pakistan to India and by India to Pakistan this year up to the 15th July is 158 and 392 respectively. This does not include children born after abduction, who accompanied their mothers. Their number is 28 and 66 respectively.

(b) On 1st August 1955, 164 Muslim abducted persons (90 adults and 74 children) were in camps in India. Besides these, 49 non-Muslim abducted persons brought from Pakistan (34 adults and 15 children) were also in camps in India pending their restoration. 45 non-Muslim abducted persons (26 adults and 19 children) were in the camp in Pakistan.

(c) No person has been forced to go over to the other country.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: May I know whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the cases of two women from Sangrur who are reported to have jumped out of the lorry taking them from India to Pakistan and who were subsequently taken to the camps?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I would require notice for that. I have not got the details of these cases, but if the hon. Member writes to me about it or puts a separate question, I will collect the information.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: I asked particularly whether the hon. Minister has got any information about such forced restorations. There are two such cases reported. In one case, it was reported that two women had actually jumped out of the lorry when they were being taken from India to Pakistan and then they were taken to the camps. Another case is pending before the High Court of PEPSU. May I know whether or not these cases are within the knowledge of the hon. Minister and whether there are any arrangements at present for the Minister to obtain such information?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: The hon. Member has referred to two cases. With regard to one, he himself says that the case is pending before the PEPSU High Court. That obviously is a case in which no restoration has taken place by force. Obviously the person must be in India still. It is no doubt true that whenever these cases of recovery take place, there are allegations to the effect that the woman concerned is likely to be sent across against her will or by force. These allegations are gone into by the Tribunal and the whole case is examined by the machinery which has been set up for this. If, as a result of that enquiry, it is found that the woman does not want to go, she is not sent across. There may be allegations, but where a woman does not want to go, she is not sent across. She is released in India.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: What about the other case?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: In the other case I am afraid I have not got any information.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: He has not answered my other question. The question was whether there is any agency or administrative machinery which sends up regular reports to the hon. Minister so that he keeps himself fully informed about such cases. May I know whether there is any such agency in the administrative set-up or not?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: In such cases the woman herself has got a right to make representations. Normally she has helpers in this country, because whenever a woman is recovered and she is sent to a home or a camp, then normally somebody from the place from which she has been recovered—her abductor or somebody else interested in her—will make a representation. Some machinery has been set up to tackle that more or less on a quasi-judicial basis. The Government does not interfere with the disposal of these cases, and the Tribunal is left to function freely, but there is a final appeal to the Government against the decision of the Tribunal. It will be only in such cases where a person is aggrieved by the order of the Tribunal, appeals will finally lie to the Government. Otherwise, the organisation is fully in touch with the progress of these cases. There is information in the Central Recovery Office about each individual case. If the hon. Member is particularly interested in any case, I will collect the necessary information if he gives notice to me.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARNAND: Was it not the recommendation of the All-India Women's Conference that in view of the fact that this question of abducted women is eight years old, the recovery work should be stopped and considered afresh?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I know, Sir, the view of the All-India Women's Conference on that point; and the representatives of that organisation have been in touch with me. I have tried to explain the viewpoint of the Government and I got the impression as the result of the last communication that I sent them that they appreciate the circumstances in which this work is being carried on; and particularly in view of the assurance that had been given on behalf of the Government that no person will be sent across against his or her wishes. I got the impression that the All-India Women's Conference also

appreciate the position and are not so much opposed to the continuance of the work as they were at the time when they passed that Resolution.

SHRI JASPAT ROY KAPOOR: May I know, Sir, how much staff is employed for this purpose and what is the annual expenditure incurred thereon?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Sir, I require notice, it is figure work.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: The period of time for the continuance of the Act governing recovery of abducted persons sanctioned by Parliament had long expired and Government was forced to go in for an Ordinance. May I know what were those circumstances owing to which Government could not complete this work within the prescribed time-limit; also may I know if the hon. Minister has now made arrangements to see that those cases which are pending now will be disposed of so that Parliament is not forced to grant a further extension in this matter?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: The hon. Member really is forestalling the legislative measure that is now pending before Parliament, for a Bill has already been introduced in the Lok Sabha and if the Lok Sabha approves of that measure, that Bill will come before the Rajya Sabha also. There the proposal is that the life of this legislative measure may be extended up till the end of November. With regard to the reasons which necessitated the extension of the life of this Act, I may inform this honourable House that the two Governments, that is to say, the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan, had agreed to set up a fact-finding commission on which two officers are to represent each country, to examine the whole question and to make a report. Pending the recommendations of that commission, it will be necessary to continue the work.