

SENATE OF PAKISTAN



REPORT NO. 02

REPORT OF THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS  
PAKISTANIS AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

ON

POINT OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE REGARDING "THE TREATMENT  
BEING METED OUT TO THE ZAIREEN TRAVELING TO IRAQ" RAISED  
BY SENATOR RAJA NASIR ABBAS IN THE SENATE ON 9<sup>TH</sup>  
SEPTEMBER, 2024 AND REFERRED BY THE HOUSE TO THE  
COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION AND REPORT.

PRESENTED BY

SENATOR ZEESHAN KHANZADA  
CHAIRMAN

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS AND  
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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## SENATE SECRETARIAT

### REPORT OF THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

I, Senator Zeeshan Khanzada, Chairman, Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, have the honour to present, on behalf of the Committee, this report on the subject matter of Point of Public importance raised by Senator Raja Nasir Abbas in the Senate sitting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2024, and referred to the Committee for consideration and report regarding "the treatment being meted out to the Zaireen travelling to Iraq."

2. The Composition of the Standing Committee is given as under:-

1	Senator Zeeshan Khanzada	Chairman
2	Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar (Leader of the House)	Member
3	Senator Shahadat Awan	Member
4	Senator Syed Kazim Ali Shah	Member
5	Senator Zamir Hussain Ghumro	Member
6	Senator Gurdeep Singh	Member
7	Senator Nasir Mehmood	Member
8	Senator M. Fesal Vawda	Member
9	Senator Saeed Ahmed Hashmi	Member
10	Senator Raja Nasir Abbas	Member/Mover
11	Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development	Ex-Officio Member

3. The Committee discussed the issue in its meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2024, which was attended by the following members:-

1	Senator Zeeshan Khanzada	2	Senator Shahadat Awan
3	Senator Zamir Hussain Ghumro	4	Senator Raja Nasir Abbas (Mover)
5	Senator Gurdeep Singh		

4. Senator Raja Nasir Abbas, Mover, apprised the Committee that Iraq is a popular destination for Pakistani pilgrims visiting holy shrines. He added that during his recent visit to Iraq, he was approached by several Pakistanis who complained about the treatment they and their relatives received upon entering Iraq. Specifically, the pilgrims expressed concerns about retention of their passports by immigration authorities, which has led to cases of missing passports due to mismanagement and a lack of proper institutional mechanism. As a result, many pilgrims have been forced to extend their stay, incurring additional financial burdens. Moreover, Senator Raja Nasir Abbas also expressed concerns over complaints of misbehaviour by Iraqi officials towards Pakistani pilgrims (Zaireen), which he deemed a disgrace to the Pakistani passport and nation. He urged the relevant ministries to intervene and address the issue at the appropriate level with the Iraqi authorities.

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5. The representative of the Ministry of OP&HRD informed the Committee that the Iraqi government has implemented a policy of retaining the passports of Pakistani Zaireen at all immigration points, particularly during Ashura and Arbaeen. This measure aims to control the illegal stay of Pakistanis in Iraq. Upon completing their ziarats, the passports are returned to the Zaireen shortly before their exit. However, due to weak institutional mechanisms, widespread corruption, and a large number of Zaireen, incidents of missing passports are common. To assist the Zaireen, the Embassy maintained regular contact with local authorities during Arbaeen this year. He added that the Deputy Head of Mission frequently visited Baghdad International Airport, which helped in tracing the missing passports in a timely manner. The Committee was further informed that the Ambassador also held a meeting with the Deputy Minister for Legal and Consular Affairs at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the issue.

6. The Ministry further informed the Committee that as per report of Community welfare Attache, Baghdad, the presence of a large number of illegal Pakistanis (around 50,000) in Iraq is the main reason behind the policy of retention of Pakistani passports at immigration points because the Iraqi government has taken a very serious note of the situation and during all official interactions, the Iraqi side regularly raises the issues such as illegal entry, begging, involvement in crimes, human trafficking and overstay by our nationals are significantly affecting the bilateral relations which may also create challenges for Pakistani nationals to obtain Iraqi visas in future. In order to curb the illegal movement, the Ministry also shared that the role of Ministries of Interior, and Religious Affairs is of utmost importance and proposed following measures to help resolve the issue amicably:-

- (i) The Ministry of Religious Affairs may immediately finalize the pending MoU on Zaireen Management with Iraq, and also formulate a policy for the study of our religious scholars/students in Iraq along with their families.
- (ii) Blacklisting of illegal returnees from Iraq.
- (iii) Awareness campaigns for citizens to avoid agents' traps.
- (iv) Strict action against the agents involved in human trafficking.
- (v) Early finalization of MoU on the transmission of Manpower from Pakistan to Iraq.

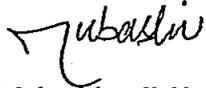
The M/o Overseas Pakistanis & HRD was also of view that since the matter also pertains to the Ministries of Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony, Foreign Affairs and Interior, therefore, they proposed to conduct a joint meeting of the all the concerned stakeholders in consultation with Senator Raja Nasir Abbas and other Members of the Committee, under the patronage of Secretary, Ministry of OP&HRD to resolve the issue of Zaireen in efficient manner.

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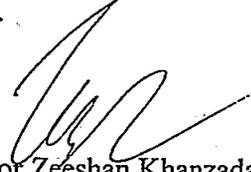
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7. After deliberations, the Committee concluded that the suggestion of Secretary, M/o Overseas Pakistani & HRD seems feasible, hence, directed the Ministry of OP&HRD to initiate immediate measures to resolve the issue upto the satisfaction of Senator Raja Nasir Abbas, Mover of the issue, as early as possible, in coordination with all concerned Ministries/departments and submit its report to the Committee, at the earliest.

8. Thereafter, the Committee decided to dispose off the matter with the direction to submit its report to the House in its forthcoming session.



(Mubashir Ali Shah)  
Director/Secretary Committee



(Senator Zeeshan Khanzada)  
Chairman Committee

Islamabad, the  
5<sup>th</sup> December, 2024.