Mosul Hostages are Dead

What is the issue?

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- It recently emerged that the 39 Indian workers who were captured by the ISIS in Mosul in 2014 were all killed.
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- Considering the long and agonising wait that the concerned families endured, the government could've shown more empathy in communicating the news.
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How did the events unfold?

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- A cohort of 40 Indian construction were captured by the ISIS, when they Mosul in 2014 shortly before declaring their caliphate.
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- While 1 Indian captive had escaped and sneaked out along with Bangladeshi workers and has returned home safe, the status of the rest was ambiguous.
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- Intermittent statements from the government that assured that they were alive and stashed in underground bunkers gave families lingering hopes.
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- Additionally, other incidences of captives being rescued by Indian government interventions in Yemen and Afghanistan furthered optimism.
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- But while Mosul was liberated from the ISIS by the Iraqi government forces a few months ago, there was no word on the missing workers.
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- Recently, dashing all hopes, external affairs Minister Ms. Sushma Swaraj had declared in the parliament that all the 39 workers have been killed in captivity.
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What are the problems in the government handled the crisis?

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- Indian government appears to have tried its very best to secure the resue of its citizens, but did a pathetic job in communicating with the beraved families.
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- Unstantiated statements that conveyed hope were being flung liberally, with Ms. Swaraj herself confirming 6 times that they were very much alive.
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- While it would be morally reprehensive to declare someone death without ascertaining, comfirming that they were alive without proof wasn’t right.
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- Rather, stating that they were missing and that the government was doing its best to rescue them would’ve been more appropriate and sensitive.
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- More shockingly the families seemed to have heard the news of their loss through television channels rather than by an official communication.
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- This is against the protocol and also disregards humanitarian concerns, which potrays arrogance on the part of the government.
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What is the way forward?

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- While loss is indeed incompensable, the government should take adequate measures to support the bereaved families in all possible ways.
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- The economic realities of labour migration coupled with the conflict in West Asia means that Indian citizens could be in danger again.
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- This episode has valuable lessons for the government to learn in order to better handle sensitive security situation in future.
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Source: Indian Express

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