

Bodies of gunmen in Mumbai attacks remain unburied

By Prachi Pinglay

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The bodies of nine gunmen killed during attacks on the Indian city of Mumbai a year ago are still awaiting burial.

The unclaimed bodies are lying in a local government hospital and Mumbai police say they have still to take a decision about their future.

Muslim clerics had denied permission to bury the bodies in Mumbai graveyards, saying the actions of the gunmen had "defamed" their religion.

Ten men attacked Mumbai on 26 November 2008, killing more than 170 people.

Only one gunman, Mohammed Ajmal Amir Qasab, survived and he is currently facing trial.

'Un-Islamic'

The bodies are being kept in the morgue of Sir JJ Hospital. Officials say the area is secluded and guarded around the clock. The seal is checked every day.

The question of what should be done with the dead militants arose soon after the attacks.

Pakistan flatly refused to take them despite India's argument that they should go back to the country from which they originated.

After post-mortem examinations the bodies were taken to the hospital morgue as Indian Muslims said they would not allow the bodies to be buried in their cemeteries.

Ibrahim Tai, president of the Muslim Council Trust, says he opposes such burials as the gunmen's actions were un-Islamic.

He says if the bodies have to be buried, it should be at "an unknown location".

"We know Indian authorities are stuck as the bodies have not been claimed by Pakistan. These nine people should not be identified by anyone. If they

are buried without leaving any trace, then it is fine with us.

"We believe that their actions should not be praised or recognised by anyone. If they set up tombs then tourists will visit and people will talk about it. We don't want that to happen," he said.

Local Muslim cleric Maulana Mustaqil Azmi said it was important that the bodies were disposed of soon and that the matter was closed.

"We do not want them to be buried on any of our burial grounds but they can be disposed of anywhere else in India. Good Muslims are laid to rest in our burial grounds. We do not believe that these nine men are true followers of Islam."

Police say the bodies have been embalmed and are well preserved but a decision on burial has yet to be taken given the religious sensitivity.