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For relatives, the wait is unbearable

Savera R Someshwar in Mumbai | November 28, 2008 16:09 IST

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The lines of worry battle with the lines of fatigue that have etched themselves across her face.

When her sister and brother-in-law, Rita and Sanjay Agarwal, decided to dine at the plush Trident (formerly Oberoi) Hotel on Wednesday, they had no idea it would end up being more than just a pleasant night out.

Instead, as terrorists took over the hotel they faced a nightmare.

Since Wednesday night, Vinita has been more-or-less stationed outside the beleaguered hotel, awaiting a call from her sister and brother-in-law, or at least some information that would indicate they are alive and, hopefully, well.

However, there is no word yet, she says stoically.

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Rita and Sanjay, who live in Mumbai's exclusive Hanging Gardens residential area, have two young children.

There has been no way of communicating with the Agarwals; their phones have apparently been snatched by the terrorists. "A friend of theirs called and told us this, but after that we have had absolutely no word from anyone, nor have we been able to get in touch with anyone who can give us some concrete information," says their uncle, Dilip Jiwrijka, who is waiting outside the hotel with Vinita.

In their home, their family has praying incessantly for the Agarwals' release.

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But it is clear that Jiwrijka, who is maintaining a composed facade, is angry with the system and the government. "We know we have been facing these (terrorism) problems for a long time," he says. "Why aren't we doing anything about beefing up security?"

Calling the latest attack on Mumbai as the "worst ever" he bemoans the fact that India's politicians have still not learnt their lesson.

He is not impressed by their visit to the crisis site. "Let's hope their visit makes them realise how ordinary people suffer when something like this happens. Let's hope they realise how vital it is to take strong action; to have special squads who are capable of tackling such problems and wiping them out."

For the moment, the family prefers to keep their faith in God, "We won't give up hope. We won't say no till the last minute," says the Jiwrijka firmly.

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