

No takers for bodies of nine slain terrorists

Qaid Najmi, [IANS](#), Mumbai/New Delhi
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Almost a year after they were killed during the terrible assault on Mumbai last November, the bodies of the nine terrorists continue to remain in Mumbai's J.J. Hospital morgue. There are no claimants and the authorities are clueless on what to do with them.

They continue to remain in a room sealed with round-the-clock security and where the temperature is set at four degrees Celsius to prevent any decomposition.

The 10 gunmen killed over 170 people in a series of coordinated attacks that began Nov 26 last year. Mohammed Ajmal Amir alias Kasab, currently undergoing trial, was the only one captured alive after the strikes that targeted two luxury hotels, the city's main train station, a hospital and a Jewish centre.

After Kasab's trial started, the government, through Special Public Prosecutor Ujwal Nikam, planned on moving an application before Special Judge M.L. Tahilyani seeking direction on how to deal with the embalmed bodies of the terrorists. But that move never materialised.

The Muslim Council has flatly refused to allow the burial of the bodies of the slain terrorists in the Marine Lines Bada Qabrastan (cemetery). The council said it also sent a message to all cemeteries in India that none of the bodies should be buried on Indian soil.

The influential Muslim Jama Masjid Trust, which runs the 7.5-acre Bada Qabrastan graveyard, said it would not bury the gunmen because they were not true followers of Islam.

Some outfits had even suggested soon after the attack that the terrorists' bodies be dumped outside the premises of the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi or thrown into the Arabian Sea.

"In view of the strong sentiments, police will have to be careful about how to deal with the issue," said a state government official.

Since then both the Maharashtra government and police have been caught in a dilemma over what to do with the bodies.

"We had informed the Pakistan government about the bodies. However, there has been no response from them so far," Nikam told IANS.

A top government official told IANS that with the new government in office, a decision would soon be taken on what to do with the bodies.

So far, apart from the investigators from Mumbai Police, state and central agencies, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) representatives have been the only ones permitted to view the bodies.

Joint Commissioner of Police Rakesh Maria said: "We had sent evidence to Pakistan to claim the bodies of the terrorists with their Pakistani addresses. We have sent another reminder last month but are yet to receive any correspondence from them."

The Pakistan High Commission on its part washed its hands off the entire affair.

"They are not our friends, they are not followers of Islam. We have nothing to do with them at all. Why ask us?" said a senior official.

Shortly after the attackers were gunned down, their bodies were brought to the hospital where a team of doctors performed autopsies and filed post-mortem reports with police.

Thereafter, the bodies were embalmed and shifted to the room where they lie. According to hospital staff, the bodies are still in "perfect condition, recognisable and identifiable". But the big question is how long will the bodies continue to remain in the morgue? A decision will have to be taken sooner or later.

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