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# Qatar court drops death penalty for 8 Indians, Govt says sentences reduced

India's Ambassador to Qatar, Vipul, and other officials were present in the Court of Appeal Thursday, along with the family members of the arrested men; MEA says next steps being decided

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PM Narendra Modi with Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani during COP28 in Dubai. (PTI/File)

In a first but important step bringing relief to the families of **eight former Indian Navy personnel on the death row** in Qatar, the appellate court there commuted the death sentence Thursday.

The detailed order of the Qatar court is awaited, but the Government of India said that the sentences have been “reduced”.

The commutation of the death sentence is the first legal win for New Delhi, almost a year-and-a-half after the detention and arrest of the former Indian Navy personnel in Qatar.

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The Ministry of External Affairs said, “We have noted the verdict today of the Court of Appeal of Qatar in the **Dahra Global case**, in which the sentences have been reduced.”

“The detailed judgement is awaited. We are in close touch with the legal team as well as the family members to decide on the next steps,” the MEA statement said.



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## Qatar Indian Navy Officers: Qatar Court Sentences 8 Navy Veterans



“we have stood by them since the beginning of the matter and we will continue to extend all consular and legal assistance. We will also continue to take up the matter with the Qatari authorities,” the MEA said.

“Due to the confidential and sensitive nature of proceedings of this case, it would not be appropriate to make any further comment at this juncture,” it said.

This comes weeks after the **Indian government appealed against the death penalty** handed to the eight men, on the alleged charge of espionage, by a Qatar court on October 26. The appeal, filed before an appellate court in Qatar was accepted in the last week of November. There have been at least three hearings at the appellate court.

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The Indian nationals, all employees of Doha-based Dahra Global, were taken into custody in August 2022. The charges against them were never made public by Qatari authorities. According to a report in UK daily Financial Times, they were charged with spying for Israel.

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On December 3, for the first time since the eight men were handed death sentences in October, the Indian Ambassador in Doha met them in prison. Before that, the Indian officials had got consular access.

This consular access to the Indian envoy and the subsequent commutation – or, as the MEA called it, reduction of the sentence – was granted after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the sidelines of the COP28 summit in Dubai on December 1.

The two leaders discussed bilateral partnership and the “well-being of the Indian community” living in Qatar – this was read as discussing the situation regarding the eight men on the death row.

Sources said the eight men had been working in their private capacity with Dahra Global to oversee the induction of Italian small stealth submarines U2I2. They were identified as Captain Navtej Singh Gill, Captain Birendra Kumar Verma, Captain Saurabh Vasisht, Commander Amit Nagpal, Commander Purnendu Tiwari, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta and Sailor Ragesh.

Days after the death penalty verdict, which India called “deeply shocking”, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met the family members of the eight men and assured them that the government attached “the highest importance” to the case.

In addition to government efforts, the families of the eight also submitted a mercy plea to the Emir of Qatar.

Here's **what we know about the eight former Indian Navy personnel.**

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