



No. 1431 / 1432
11 November -
24 Nov 2016
£1.80

PRIVATE EYE

25 Nov - 8 Dec 2016

TULIP SIDDIQ, the Labour MP for Hampstead and Kilburn and newly appointed shadow minister for early years education, has been campaigning hard to secure the release of her constituent, the British Iranian citizen Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who was detained six months ago in Iran and jailed for five years on bogus charges of plotting to overthrow the Islamic regime.

Quite rightly Siddiq says Nazanin is "a victim of a miscarriage of justice" who should be "reunited at home" with her family. Alas, the Iranian authorities do not seem to be listening to a word she says.

Given the impasse, perhaps the north London MP should turn her attention instead to influencing a political regime which this year alone has secretly detained and disappeared dozens of its citizens – and where she has very direct access to the country's most senior leaders. The regime in question is Bangladesh.

Tulip's aunt (her mother's sister) is the country's prime minister Sheikh Hasina; her first cousin is the prime minister's son and key adviser Sajeb Wazed Joy; while Tulip's brother, Radwan Siddiq, is one of the government's key propagandists. They are clearly a very tight family.

This year alone Bangladesh's human rights organisations have identified more than 70 people who have been picked up by the state authorities and then disappeared in secret detention. The men are not brought to court as the law requires, and the authorities deny the men are in custody.

While about half of the detainees suddenly reappear after weeks or months, the other half are less fortunate. This year the bodies of 15 of the disappeared were later found dead or were killed by police in what are known in Bangladesh as "gun-fights". Moreover, around another 20 men remain disappeared – stuck in the country's secret detention centres. Or at least that is where the men's families hope they are, the alternative being that they too may have been killed.

The most recent high profile secret detentions involve three sons of political opposition leaders: Humam Quader Chowdhury, Mir Ahmed Bin Quasem and Amaan Azmi, who were picked up in August and whose whereabouts are still unknown.

Tulip doesn't appear to have shown any interest in making a noise about any of these secret detentions. But then perhaps she finds it easier being involved in no-hope human rights campaigns that give her a high media profile rather than picking up the phone to speak to her aunt, cousin or brother to try to secure the release of people illegally detained by a regime controlled by her own family.

Bangladesh Update

AS the last *Eye* pointed out, Tulip Siddiq, Labour MP for Hampstead and Kilburn, and shadow minister for early education, is in a prime position to help free dozens of men secretly detained in Bangladesh.

Not only is her aunt, Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister of the country, but her first cousin is the PM's son and a key adviser, and her own brother is a propagandist for the regime. Most pertinently, perhaps, it emerges that her paternal uncle, retired Major-General Tariq Ahmed Siddique, is the prime minister's security adviser.

Yet Tulip, who used to work for Amnesty International and has campaigned gamely for the release of a London constituent jailed in Iran (*Eye* 1431), has ignored all entreaties to pick up the phone to her close family to try to get these men, many of whose whereabouts are unknown, freed.

One person frustrated by her inaction is barrister Michael Polak, who represents the family of Mir Ahmed Bin Quasem, himself a 32-year-old Bangladeshi barrister attached to Lincoln's Inn, who was picked up late at night on 9 August from his home in Dhaka by law enforcement officers. He has not been seen since.

With a dysfunctional court system in Bangladesh, and the government there denying Mr Bin Quasem is in custody, Polak has his work cut out. In a last ditch effort he asked Tulip Siddiq for "urgent assistance". However, when

Polak wrote to her on 27 October, her office manager was quick to tell him he would get no help from the MP. "As an MP Tulip follows the strict parliamentary [convention] of dealing with her own constituency matters," he was told by email four days later. "She does not involve herself in the domestic affairs of Bangladesh." Perhaps she should.