

February 2, 2005

“We Will Not Rest Until Justice is Done” by Dr. Reza Kibria

Many people here and abroad are shattered at the assassination of my father Shah A.M.S. Kibria, M.P., in a grenade attack in his constituency of Habiganj (in the northeast part of Bangladesh) on 27 January. He was 73 years old.

My father’s life was one of remarkable achievement. He held various senior positions here and abroad, including: Finance Minister in the Awami League Government of Sheikh Hasina (1996-2001); Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP (1981-1992), and Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh (1978-81). At the time of his death he was Editor of his beloved Bengali weekly magazine, “*Mridubhashan*” (softly spoken), which he also founded.

The circumstances of his death have horrified most people. Even after the initial attack he lived for several hours. If he had been given proper medical attention or sent a helicopter to fly to Dhaka or even provided with a fully-equipped ambulance (the one sent for him was stuck on the road without fuel for an hour and had no saline and oxygen equipment) he might well be alive today. He was denied all these facilities and died after bleeding to death without medical treatment. I have heard (this is not confirmed) that government helicopters were available just five minutes away at Sylhet. I understand that just six months ago an injured Jubo Dal leader was given helicopter transportation to Dhaka. When a helicopter was requested for my father the official response was that this facility could only be made available to individuals of high rank.

I know that many tears have fallen for my father. There is no time for tears right now. If you cared even a little for my father in your heart you know that the need of the hour is to ensure his killers do not escape unpunished. Those who count themselves as our friends must steel themselves for the long campaign ahead and prepare to take effective action. My mother, sister and I will not rest until justice is done.

We are demanding an independent international investigation (led by a respected agency, preferably the FBI) into the attack and the events leading to my father’s death. Given the Government’s miserable record of failure with regard to past investigations, we have no confidence in any “joint” investigation in which it has any supervisory role. Please remember that the reports of foreign experts into earlier incidents have never been made public. The Government, while it has made public statements accepting the demand for international help in the investigation, has never stated that it has actually made any official request – everyone should note this clumsy attempt to fool the nation. The FBI is not suddenly going to arrive with a team simply on the basis of press reports of the government’s “willingness” to allow them to come here.

My father was a good and great man. I would give almost anything right now to have just one-tenth of his enormous abilities, so that I could best do what needs to be done. My mother is an artist and housewife, and my sister a university teacher, like myself. All

three of us stand ill-prepared for the task of leading a mass movement or even public campaign. However, we are forced to do so now to ensure that my father's killers are brought to justice, so that his soul may rest in peace.

My mother, sister and I hold no position of political power or public office. We have few family resources at our disposal – we will have to remain dependent on the help and goodwill of others to support our campaign. We are ordinary people suddenly faced with the most daunting task of confronting the powerful dark forces that conspired to kill my father. We would ask everyone to pray to Almighty Allah to give us the strength, courage and wisdom to succeed where so many others have failed.

Although I am just an ordinary citizen, I am my father's son. Let no one doubt my resolve to find my father's killers. Be assured that however long that may take, we will prevail.

Moreover, even my grief-stricken family is not entirely helpless or powerless if those who respected my father are prepared to stand beside us and provide assistance at my mother's call. If 200 people stage a peaceful protest, it may become a fearful business as this group may be arrested, assaulted by goondas or worse. If 200,000 people stage the same type of peaceful protest the fear will be in the hearts of those against whom such a demonstration is directed. Keeping a large protest peaceful is not easy and requires meticulous planning and organization – agent provocateurs must not be allowed to operate. I would therefore ask all concerned citizens of this country to stand united and participate fully in every single program – including the silent protest scheduled for 3 p.m. on Friday, the 4th of February – called by my mother, Mrs. Asma Kibria.

Perhaps some of you may feel you owe this to my father and his family – I thank all of you from the depths of my heart. But I would also remind all the peace-loving people of this country that you owe it to yourselves and your children to finally stand up and be counted, to take charge again, rejecting those driven by greed, hatred and the lust for power. We must unite to pull this great nation of ours back towards the vision of the “Sonar Bangla” that so many millions died for 34 years ago.