

Historic ruling forces government and opposition to make deal on Afghan documents

AFGHAN CONTINUED FROM P1

But with Milliken's ruling, the government has two weeks to reach an agreement with the opposition parties over the documents or face an opposition motion that could find the minority government—or more specifically, ministers of the government—in contempt of Parliament.

At that point, depending on the exact wording of the motion, government ministers could be placed under confinement by Parliament's Sergeant at Arms. In that event, the minister in question would likely be confined in a hotel since Parliament "doesn't have a jail," said Ned Franks, professor emeritus in the department of political studies at Queen's University and a respected expert on Parliamentary procedure.

Another option, said Franks, is that Harper could challenge the motion at the Supreme Court.

While Patrick Monahan, legal scholar and provost of York University told the Globe and Mail such a motion would certainly force an election, Franks says that's unlikely given that it would be a hard issue to fight an election over, and both Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff and the Prime Minister have expressed a wish to find a compromise over the issue.

"It seems to me that cooler heads will ultimately prevail," he said.

Harper also dismissed suggestions during question period that he would force an election over



House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken speaks during Question Period on April 26. REUTERS/BLAIR GABLE

the issue.

If ministers were detained, Franks said the PM could prorogue Parliament to end the confinement, but that is also unlikely given the damage such a move could do to a Conservative brand already tarnished by proroguing Parliament twice.

Given that no matter what the government does it will likely have to hand over the documents, a compromise is more than likely, Franks said.

Milliken ruled on several matters related to the Afghan detainee controversy but only ruled against the government on the issue of the documents. He did not find that the government had intimidated committee witnesses or tried to interfere with their testimony—charges the opposition parties have levelled against the government.

On Tuesday, Minister of Justice Rob Nicholson said the government would review the decision and welcomed the possibility of a compromise.

"The government will not knowingly break the laws that were written and passed by Parliament. Our government will not compromise Canada's national security nor will it jeopardize the lives of our men and women in uniform. That being said, we welcome the possibility of a compromise while respecting our legal obligations as acknowledged by the Speaker."

Ignatieff said he was delighted with the ruling and would immediately seek a solution to the impasse with the government.

"We will make haste to arrive at a process by which we can review the documents, get the information Parliament needs without compromising national security," he said.

"The highest authority in our Parliament has said 'sort it out.' We have had six months of this government pretending that, you know, we can't trust the MPs, we can't trust the Canadian public with these papers. He has said 'find a solution.' Once he has ruled the way he has ruled, you bet a solution will be possible."

NDP leader Jack Layton described the ruling as a "very big win for Parliament and accountability."

"I think this is a very strong and important ruling.... We think there are many ways that this can be sorted out and we have made proposals. I'm sure that this can be worked out if there is goodwill all around the table."

U.S. senator wants Canada border drug strategy

By JOAN DELANEY
Epoch Times Staff

A New York senator is calling for the Obama administration to create an anti-drug smuggling plan for the Canada-U.S. border similar to the one in place for the U.S.-Mexico border.

Sen. Charles Schumer said that since 2007 there have been large increases in seizures of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana entering the U.S. from Canada. Seizures of the club drug ecstasy have also risen, with the Canada/U.S. border now the lead gateway for ecstasy entering America.

Despite these increases, Schumer said the U.S. administration has yet to put together a comprehensive strategy to combat drug-smuggling from Canada, as it has for its southern border with Mexico.

"We need to push back hard against the recent rise in drug smuggling across the Canadian border," Schumer said in a press release.

"It is concerning that no one has yet developed a comprehensive strat-



A U.S. Border Patrol agent rides a snowmobile on a frozen lake near the Vermont-Quebec border. JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

egy for fighting drug smuggling across the northern border, and it's a problem that has to be addressed immediately."

Schumer said that since 2007, seizures of ecstasy smuggled to the U.S. from Canada have jumped from 240 kg to 303 kg—eight times greater than seizures along the southern border since 2005. An av-

erage of almost 400 kg of ecstasy has been seized per year for the last five years.

Heroin seizures rose from less than 1 kg in 2007 to 28 kg in 2009. During the same period, seizures of cocaine jumped from less than 1 kg to 18 kg, and marijuana seizures from 2,791 kg to 3,423 kg. Although these are far less than

the amounts of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana seized by agents along the Mexican border, Schumer said the growing problem must be addressed.

He plans to introduce legislation mandating that the Office of National Drug Control Policy devise and implement a "comprehensive counter-narcotics strategy" for the 6,437-kilometre border. He also wants to restore funding for a program aimed at curbing drug trafficking and crime that the administration proposed cutting in the 2011 budget.

The legislation will be sponsored in the House by New York Rep. Bill Owens, whose district includes the northern part of New York State. Schumer is working to garner support from colleagues in other northern border states as well.

"Right now New York's communities are outgunned in the fight against drugs and that just can't continue," he said. "I'm hopeful that this effort will get the ball rolling on a new approach and ensure that our counties have the resources they need to combat this problem."

Forbidden love: Canadian in Saudi Arabia

LOVE CONTINUED FROM P1

There were several reasons for that, she says, including that his parents were of different religions and his mother was a smoker.

They also had concerns that her boyfriend, Indian citizen Bjorn Singhal whom she met when they were both students at the University of Ottawa, only wanted to marry Quazi in order to become a Canadian citizen or to get his hands on her father's estate.

Originally from India, in 2001 Quazi, her mother Shaheen Unnisa, and her two brothers moved to Canada from Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. Her father, Quazi Malik Abdul Gaffar, didn't become a Canadian citizen and continues to work in Riyadh where he has lived for the past 25 years.

A University of Ottawa IT graduate who holds dual Indian-Canadian citizenship, Quazi says that because of her parents' anger over her relationship the situation had become very tense.

However, things took a turn for the worse when in 2007 she traveled to Dubai to visit her boyfriend where he now lives and works. Her parents flew to Dubai to intervene, and took her from there to India. Then her father took her to Saudi Arabia to do Umrah, the religious pilgrimage to Mecca.

She's been trying to get back to Canada ever since.

After arriving in Riyadh, she says her father took all her travel and identification documents and made himself her sponsor and male guardian without her knowledge. Gaffar also had her temporary visitor's visa changed to a permanent visa.

Now, according to Saudi law, she needs her father's permission to leave the country and he refuses to give it.

"He had all this planned out," she says from Riyadh, where she works for a friend of her father who also pro-

vides her with accommodation.

"He knew that if he sponsored me on my Indian passport rather than the Canadian one, then there would be no way I could escape from here since the Indian government is not so serious about all this and they branded it a private family matter in which they would not interfere."

'If Nazia Quazi was a man she would not be in this situation at all.'

— Shahla Khan Salter

MALE GUARDIANSHIP SYSTEM

Under the Saudi system, women must have her male guardian's permission to do such things as hold a job, travel, drive, or marry. It is thanks to this system that Quazi's father has been able to prevent her from leaving the country—despite the fact that neither of them is a Saudi citizen.

Quazi alleges that both her parents, but particularly her father, have been physically and emotionally abusive to her because she refuses to give up her relationship with Singhal.

"He has held a knife to my throat, threatening to kill me if I did not forget Bjorn. Along with my mother he burnt my abdomen with incense sticks back when I was in India," she said, adding that they also tried to "marry me off forcefully" to another man.

But the most frightening thing of all, says Quazi, are her father's threats of an honour killing.

"He said he can get away with it although I do not know if that would be possible. I am unsure of the law here. Even a Saudi father who killed his son

in the name of honour has had to face the death penalty. But I'm not sure if the same is true for someone who kills his daughter."

She says Canadian Embassy officials, who she first approached for help about six weeks after her arrival in the country in 2007, told her they are working together with their Saudi counterparts to get her back to Canada.

Shahla Khan Salter, chair of Muslims for Progressive Values Ottawa who has been campaigning to get Quazi out of Saudi Arabia, says that under the Saudi system "women are treated like perpetual minors their entire life."

"The only reason she cannot leave the country is because she's a woman. If Nazia Quazi was a man she would not be in this situation at all."

She says she's concerned for Quazi's safety given her father's threats. "I don't know that Saudi laws can protect Nazia."

Quazi's mother in Ottawa could not be reached for comment.

GROWING SUPPORT

Khan Salter is critical of the Canadian government's slowness in getting Quazi out. But Deepak Ohrai, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, says Canada is doing what it can given the situation with Saudi law.

Ohrai told CBC's The Current that although Quazi entered the country on an Indian passport, she has now been issued with a Canadian passport to enable her to leave. He noted however that she also needs an exit permit—which requires her father's signature.

"We have been in contact with the Saudi authorities to see how they can help us and see how we can resolve this issue," he said.

Both Human Rights Watch and

the Canadian Civil Liberties Association have taken up Quazi's case. Paul Dewar, the New Democrat foreign affairs critic, has written to Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon asking him to seek an exception from Saudi authorities on the requirement for her father's permission. Liberal foreign affairs critic Bob Rae has also called for action.

Last week, in protest of the system that prevents Quazi from leaving, retired naval officer Mark Brousseau returned his Liberation of Kuwait medal to the Saudi government that he had received for service during the Gulf War.

Retired Canadian Forces airman and fellow Liberation of Kuwait medal recipient Lou Travis did likewise, and Brousseau hopes more of the approximate 700 Canadian recipients of the medal will follow suit.

Quazi, who says she has nightmares and trouble sleeping, recalls that the last time she saw Singhal was in July 2008 when he travelled to Riyadh to ask her father for her hand in marriage.

"My father called the police on him and warned him to leave before he pressed charges. Bjorn left quietly. In Saudi it is illegal to be seen with the opposite sex if that person is not a blood relative," she says.

Quazi's latest chance for escape is a promise from her mother to go to Riyadh and take her to Dubai so that she and Singhal can finally be together. However, she's not getting her hopes up.

"I'm very suspicious of their plans," she says. "This is due to the fact that in the past they have played this game of cat and mouse by approving and then disapproving over and over again. So I find it hard to believe that they are serious this time."

"But I'm keeping my fingers crossed."

4 PUZZLES FOR PEACE

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A man walks in a mixture of rain and snow near the Bow River in Calgary on April 28. After a fairly typical spring day on Tuesday, a late spring storm hit southern Alberta bringing heavy rain, wet snow, and gusty winds. The return of Old Man Winter is expected to last several days. REUTERS/TODD KOROL