

The Rt. Hon. Sir Malcolm Rifkind, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon David Miliband MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

11<sup>th</sup> March 2009

*Dear David,*

Many thanks for your letter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March on behalf of my constituent Mrs Judith Majlath of 10 Kempford Gardens, London, SW5 9LH about the disappearance of her sister Eva Rhodes in Hungary last September.

While I extremely grateful to you for the reply that you have sent me, I do feel that I must press you further on this very sensitive and difficult matter.

In your letter you refer to the view of the Hungarian police that "nothing...suggests that a crime has been committed. This is why the case remains a missing person case and not a criminal case".

While that may be technically correct I do consider it very disturbing. Miss Rhodes who is of course a British citizen has been missing since September of last year. She is a lady in her sixties and was in charge of an animal sanctuary. All the evidence suggests that she would not have abandoned those animals and simply disappeared. While there might not be hard evidence of some criminal act having been committed there must be an increasing presumption that she has either been murdered or has lost her life in some comparable circumstances. It is deeply worrying that the Hungarian authorities are still treating it simply as a missing person case.

I of course also understand the point that you make that for British police to be involved there is a formal requirement of a request from the Hungarian authorities via Interpol.

I do not know whether you have seen the reference to the conversation that took place between my constituent Judith Majlath and the Police Major General Dr Istvan Hazi, Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Hungarian National Police on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February. During the course of that meeting Dr Hazi expressed a view that there is no objection to co-operation with the British police. He went on to say that "they are welcome, they can even have the files for inspection". He apparently added that since there is

Telephone: 020 7219 3000

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co-operation with the French police already, which had been requested by the French authorities on a similar case of the missing French student Ophelie Bretnacher, a similar procedure could be envisaged and therefore there was no reason for the Hungarian police not to co-operate with the British. He apparently went on to say that there was no request from the British authorities so far.

I am of course aware that the formal requirement is that the first request must come from the Hungarian authorities through Interpol. I would however ask you to let the Hungarian authorities know in quite strong terms that the United Kingdom would welcome such a request given that we are dealing with the disappearance of a British citizen.

On the information that I have received it would appear that the French authorities have been more robust than your own department in pursuing the disappearance of one of their own nationals, and if it is possible for the French authorities to act in this way with some success I am not aware that there is any reason why the United Kingdom could not do the same.

I emphasise that according to the information that I have received the missing lady Eva Rhodes was not a dual national but purely a British citizen and therefore I am sure you will agree the United Kingdom has a very special obligation not to rest on the letter of technical requirements, but to do all within its power to try to identify the cause of this tragic disappearance. I look forward to hearing from you at the earliest opportunity and I hope that you will be able to respond in a positive way.

If it would be helpful I would be very happy to come and discuss this case with you.

