the government during mass arbitrary arrests when at the same time the organisation he founded was producing reports of gross violation of human rights?

What did he do to turn things around being a human rights activist when he was part of the government? It is important for people to offer alternative solutions and defend their position on why they were not able to speak out when they were in positions to make changes happen.

Then also there are the cases of other human rights activists who could never reconcile their roles as human rights activists and their partisan roles for political parties in the past as well. You would not hear these questions now, because if you do, very likely you will be branded an army apologist.

This is not intended as a finger pointing exercise, but an example of people needing to be aware not just about the message but also who the message is coming from. Because at the end of the day, we need to hold not just the politicians but everyone (including me) accountable for their actions as well, and we are noticing that under the wrapper of vocal criticism of the government and all the careless whispers, the real issue of long term relief is not being debated.

This is where journalists and reporters have a critical role by holding the politicians accountable as well (in addition to the current government). When I hear a newspaper editor go on live TV and indirectly accuse Amnesty and its chief of being Western puppets, I cringe because I expect him to know that Amnesty is not government-funded and is one of the few organisations who came out very strongly against the tactics applied in the name of the "war on terror" -- and the fact that he got a lot of claps in Bangladesh for that interview says volumes about the current state of things.





When some of the leading newspapers have apparently decided to bury their traditional role of being a watchdog of the nation, naturally any dissent or anyone even remotely perceived to be filling that role is bound to get the cheers. But amid this chaos, the real substance of the debate is lost.

Editorials have been written about the Amnesty chief's supposed "balancing act" but not much space was spared in the paper on the five recommendations placed by the Amnesty chief to fix the current malaise in the system.

Amnesty (and, indeed, other organisations who have been similarly criticised) has, in fact, asked for genuine commitment from the leadership in addressing human rights abuses in Bangladesh and has asked for systemic reforms for years.

It is unrealistic to expect from them statements actions every time a national leader is denied their human rights or every time they complain about torture. It is also rather immature to throw labels just because they do not say the things that one would like them to say. More important to find at the same time of addressing the current issue, whether the issue of longer term relief is addressed as well.

When Tareque Rahman complains about torture, we can empathise for his rights and speak out against torture by all means, but also we should do not forget to ask him why he was a part of a government where torture took place with impunity and extra judicial killings were a norm.

We should not forget to ask him why human rights defenders were charged with treason and labelled enemy of Bangladesh for speaking out on these issues. Also, we need to ask him what his party would do if they come to power again on similar issues now that he has seen the other side of being a victim of it as well. Will he repeal the black laws of Bangladesh or will he be perfectly happy keeping them intact