

Boris Johnson Accused of Covering Up “Bullying Allegations”

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*‘The Home Secretary is doing an outstanding job’: **Boris Johnson’s** repeated response to the allegations of bullying by **Priti Patel** across three different government departments in recent times. At Prime Minister’s Questions on Wednesday opposition leader **Jeremy Corbyn** asked if Johnson was even aware of some of the allegations regarding Patel’s conduct, and if so, why did he appoint her?*

*The resignation of **Sir Phillip Rutnam**, as Home Office permanent secretary on Saturday, a man with 33 years’ service, was a sure sign something was not right in Patel’s department. Rutman is now suing the Home Office for constructive, unfair dismissal as he accuses Patel of being involved in ‘a vicious and orchestrated briefing campaign’ against him.*

It emerged on Wednesday that Priti Patel is also facing allegations dating back to her time as International Development Secretary, which she resigned from back in 2017 over an unauthorised trip to Israel. The BBC [reported](#) that during her time there she was ‘humiliating civil servants in front of others, of putting heavy pressure in emails and of creating a general sense that “everyone is hopeless”.’

Prior to that position, Patel was employment minister, during which time she has been accused of bullying an official in the Department for Work and Pensions who subsequently received a payout of £25,000 after a suicide attempt. Jeremy Corbyn said at PMQs that if the allegations were indeed true, that ‘this suggests a shocking and unacceptable pattern of behaviour across three government departments – on each occasion, tens of thousands of pounds of hard-earned taxpayers’ money has been spaffed up the wall to buy their silence.’ The opposition leader also called for an independent enquiry. According to The Guardian newspaper, Westminster sources say the Conservative party was warned about the bullying allegations when Patel was in the DWP, before she was promoted to Home Office minister, but it failed to take any action.

So how has Patel survived? Clearly, it is in part due to her loyalty to Johnson. This tough Brexiteer has stuck by Boris Johnson, just as he said he would be ‘sticking by Patel the other day. A staunch admirer of Margaret Thatcher; Patel’s Britain-first, anti-immigration stance has been just what Johnson has been looking for in a Home Secretary. Never mind the fact that her parents themselves were immigrants, and under her rules would not have been granted entry to Britain. Indeed her latest [advert](#) on the new immigration rules – which will take effect – in 2021 is quite frankly disgusting. It boasts allowing entry to only the ‘best and brightest’ – as if being highly qualified on paper suddenly makes you a better, more worthy human being.

The scandal over the Home Secretary has just been one of many indications of a somewhat

unhealthy setup at Number 10. Only a few weeks ago the Chancellor for the Exchequer, Sajid Javid, resigned, after rejecting Number 10's instructions to sack an advisor. Javid stated that 'no self-respecting minister could have accepted such a condition. His resignation came on the back of rumours of a rift between him and Boris Johnson's controversial advisor Dominic Cummings. A later statement delivered in the House of Commons hinted at such discord as Javid said Johnson's plans to bring the PM's office and the Treasury closer together were a threat to the 'national interest'. Indeed it has been suggested in [The Express](#) that Javid's resignation 'brilliantly represents Cummings' Treasury masterplan - as in 2014 the Brexit guru had already made his intentions to reform the cabinet and to "break the power of the Treasury" clear'.

If anything, Johnson is a survivor. Having survived the Brexit election, to lead the country out of the EU; having survived allegations of racism and sexual harassment; having survived criticism over his lack of leadership during last month's floods and claims of him being a 'part-time Prime Minister'; it seems the blonde buffoon is indefatigable. And it has set a precedent for others in his team. One quite honestly gets the impression that the Johnson cabinet could almost get away with anything now. Even the investigation into Priti Patel will be an internal one, rather than an independent one, and led by Michael Gove, who has already come out to vehemently defend the Home Secretary - so how unbiased is that likely to be?

The real test for the Johnson cabinet now will be, however, in the form of something utterly intangible; a completely new phenomenon which rivals any terrorist threat or military adversary: coronavirus. Sweeping across Europe now, it will not only pressurize our health services but will impact every aspect of our daily lives. Our economy is also likely to suffer, they say on a par with the last economic crash in 2008. The competence of the current government, therefore, could not be faced with a better test.

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