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## **UK: Inquiry needed into Stobie murder**

*Amnesty International was seriously disturbed by the news that William Stobie was murdered this morning in North Belfast by armed gunmen. The Red Hand Defenders have claimed responsibility for the shooting.*

*"William Stobie's murder reinforces the need for the government to initiate immediately a full, independent and public inquiry into allegations of official collusion into the murder of Patrick Finucane," Amnesty International said. Patrick Finucane was a human rights lawyer, who was shot dead by the Ulster Defence Association (UDA, a Loyalist paramilitary group) in February 1989.*

*Charges against William Stobie -- of aiding and abetting in the murder of Patrick Finucane -- were dropped on 26 November, just two weeks ago. William Stobie had been a quartermaster of the UDA and an agent of Special Branch (police intelligence) during the time that Patrick Finucane was killed. He claimed that prior to the killing of Patrick Finucane, he had warned his Special Branch handlers that someone was about to be killed, and that he had provided enough details to possibly prevent the killing and to arrest people who still possessed the weapons after the killing. He claimed that the police had failed to act on this information. No charges were brought against him until 1999 when Sir John Stevens was requested by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to return to Northern Ireland and investigate allegations of collusion in the murder of Patrick Finucane.*

*William Stobie was a key witness concerning allegations of official police collusion in the murder of Patrick Finucane. His claims that Special Branch may have been able to prevent the killing and of their failure to*

arrest the perpetrators, have never been tested in court. The involvement of Special Branch in allegedly obstructing the investigation into the killing of Patrick Finucane was raised again recently by an RUC officer, who claimed that one of the people who had shot Patrick Finucane had confessed on tape in 1991, in the presence of a Special Branch officer. He claimed that Special Branch blocked further investigation of the confession or any prosecution. It was alleged that the Special Branch officer was also William Stobie's handler.

"Given the allegations of Special Branch involvement in the killing of Patrick Finucane, the government should initiate a thorough, genuinely independent and impartial investigation into the killing of William Stobie," Amnesty International said.

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