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HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS SUPPORT INQUIRY INTO FINUCANE MURDER

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights today lent their support to renewed calls for the establishment of an independent inquiry into claims of official involvement in the killing of Belfast human rights lawyer, Patrick Finucane.

Friday 12 February 1999 marks the tenth anniversary of the murder of Patrick Finucane. On that date representatives of the Finucane family will hand over to the UK and Irish governments copies of a confidential report into the killing compiled by the London-based human rights group British Irish Rights Watch. The report, based on highly sensitive government documents, indicates a close and active collusion by members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Force Research Unit (FRU), a branch of military intelligence, in Patrick Finucane's death.

- Amnesty International is calling on the UK government to act on the new information provided by the Finucane family and establish an inquiry to examine the very serious allegations made about this case. "The killing of Patrick Finucane is the tip of the iceberg. A wide ranging inquiry must investigate allegations of official collusion in political killings," a spokesperson for the organization said.
- Mike Posner, Executive Director of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, said that the Finucane case has become a symbol of the official intimidation and harassment endured by defence lawyers in Northern Ireland. "This case must be resolved in order to ensure the proper functioning of the rule of law in future in Northern Ireland."
- Julia Hall of Human Rights Watch also supported the call for an inquiry, adding that the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers had already called for such an inquiry. "It is of the utmost importance that the government react without delay to these latest developments."

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