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UK: Government's failure to immediately establish public inquiry into killing of Patrick Finucane is shameful

In failing to establish an immediate public inquiry into the killing of human rights lawyer Patrick Finucane, the UK government is making a mockery of its commitment to ascertaining the truth and to the rule of law, said Amnesty International today. Using one outstanding prosecution as the excuse further undermines the government's credibility and raises more questions as to its real intention.

"This is a major opportunity to establish the truth behind Patrick Finucane's killing and justice for his family. The UK government's refusal to establish an immediate public inquiry is shameful," Amnesty International said.

Background

As early as October 1999, following a request from the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam, Amnesty International obtained a legal opinion in respect of the inter-relationship of ongoing criminal proceedings and setting up a judicial inquiry. The opinion stated incontrovertibly that there was ample justification to establish a judicial inquiry in the case of Patrick Finucane and that outstanding prosecutions were not bar to it.

In April 2003, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir John Stevens, confirmed widespread collusion between state agents and Loyalist paramilitaries, including the extreme of state agents being involved in his killing. In July 2003, the European Court of Human Rights held that the UK authorities had violated Patrick Finucane's right to life by failing to provide a prompt and effective investigation into the allegations of security personnel collusion in his murder.

Justice Peter Cory, a retired Canadian Supreme Court Judge, was appointed by the UK and Irish governments in May 2002 to investigate the killings of human rights lawyers Patrick Finucane and Rosemary Nelson, in 1989 and 1999, respectively; the 1997 sectarian killing of Robert Hamill, a 25-year-old Catholic man; the 1989 killing of Chief Superintendent Harry Breen and Superintendent Bob Buchanan, two police officers; those of Lord Justice Maurice and Lady Cecily Gibson in 1987; and the 1997 killing of Billy Wright, a leading Loyalist paramilitary, shot dead in the Maze prison.

Public Document

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