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**UNITED KINGDOM: NO PEACE WITHOUT RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN NORTHERN IRELAND, SAYS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

As the political debate about prospects for peace in Northern Ireland continues, Amnesty International today warned that human rights must be given higher priority.

Launching its first major report on political killings by all sides in the civil conflict, the human rights organization details unanswered questions about security force killings and patterns of killings by paramilitary groups.

"There is also mounting evidence of collusion between government forces and groups like the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) that oppose any change in Northern Ireland's status quo," Amnesty International said, "and we are urging the government to set up a wide-ranging independent inquiry to examine the wider issue of collusion."

In the report, Amnesty International details possible concealment of unlawful killings by the army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and allegations that the security services have been one-sided in protecting the population from paramilitary violence and terror -- exposing the Catholic minority to random attacks from Loyalist "death squads" even in areas usually ringed by security cordons.

"The government must make every effort to show equal concern for all members of the Northern Ireland population, by guaranteeing equal protection," Amnesty International said.

The 48-page report details for the first time patterns of abuse by armed Republican groups -- which call for a united Ireland and are drawn largely from the north's Catholic minority -- and armed Loyalist groups, drawn from the Protestant population, who support continued union with the United Kingdom.

"Now more than ever the government must expose the actions of its security forces to public scrutiny -- and act on the evidence by prosecuting agents who break the law, changing practices that are shown to lead to shooting rather than arrest and bringing in laws to end unwarranted killings," Amnesty International said.

There have been repeated allegations that members of the police and army have colluded with Loyalist groups: by turning a blind eye to their paramilitary organizations, by aiding and abetting them through the provision of arms or intelligence information (such as photographs of potential targets), or even by direct involvement of security personnel in Loyalist "death squads".

Evidence of large-scale collusion reached the public domain in 1989 when Loyalist groups published leaked police security documents on suspected Irish Republican Army (IRA) sympathizers in order to justify their campaigns of murder.

The public exposure of evidence that security dossiers were regularly passed to Loyalist paramilitary groups like the UDA, and its "death squad" the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), prompted the establishment of the Stevens inquiry. But its terms of reference were

strictly limited, and it could not address the key issues: why inside information about the Loyalist groups, which were responsible for dozens of killings, was not used to prosecute Loyalists, and whether intelligence information was passed on specifically to encourage Loyalist groups that randomly kill Catholics to turn their attention to murdering specific Republican suspects.

"The revelations leading up to the establishment of the Stevens Inquiry should have been alarming enough to any government to warrant a wide-ranging independent .. inquiry into alleged collusion between members of the security forces and armed Loyalist groups," Amnesty International said.

"Instead, the government inaction revealed an official reluctance to tackle head on, and get to the bottom of, such serious allegations."

Even more serious is the allegation that the army failed to intervene to save lives when it knew that people were targeted for killings.

In one disturbing case, it has been alleged that the army knew of a likely attack on a prominent civil rights lawyer - and did nothing to prevent his death. Patrick Finucane was shot dead in February 1989 and the UDA/UFF claimed responsibility.

Amnesty International is campaigning for an inquiry into his death and urges that the Stevens Inquiry - reopened in 1993 - look into these issues and make its findings public. The inquiry should also re-open the case of Brian Nelson, the army's agent who served as the UDA's chief intelligence agent and who targeted Republican suspects with the alleged complicity of his army handlers.

There have also been allegations that the RUC has been negligent in the gathering of evidence about Loyalist attacks on Catholics, that it has failed to respond adequately to demands for protection, and that it has failed to deter Loyalist paramilitaries from entering Catholic areas or to detect them despite sophisticated surveillance.

A long standing concern of Amnesty International has been killings by security forces in disputed circumstances, killings which have led to repeated accusations that the government has a "shoot to kill" policy.

Although there were no such killings in 1993, questions remain. The government has repeatedly denied that such a policy ever existed, but Amnesty International remains unconvinced since there still has not been public clarification of the circumstances of many of those incidents with the facts publicly available and very few perpetrators of such killings have been brought to justice.

In the past, repeated measures to conceal the truth contributed to what was effective immunity from prosecution, and possible impunity for murder, the report states.

As well, the government has still not taken steps to bring UK laws into line with international standards on the use of force by security forces.

In 1993, political killings by armed groups went on unabated - 48 by Loyalists and 35 by Republicans.

The IRA, for example, continued to murder civilians - despite the laws of war, which outlaw this. This included targeting civilians who provided services to the security forces. Between 1985 and September 1993, the IRA killed 30 people for doing contract work for the security forces - including Adrian McGovern, a father of four, who was gunned down on his doorstep in September last year, while looking after his children. The IRA claim he had been supplying the security forces with building materials.

The sharp increase in violence by Loyalist paramilitaries since 1990 has included the deliberate killings of many ordinary members of the Catholic community, including through the random firing at short range into crowded shops, clubs and pubs.

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