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## **Northern Ireland: Who was behind the Finucane murder?**

*"Where the state's own authorities are concerned we must be as sure as we can of the truth"* -- Prime Minister Tony Blair on the need for a full-scale judicial inquiry into Bloody Sunday.

Allegations of official state collusion and a cover-up in the murder of Patrick Finucane remain unchallenged. These allegations must be investigated by an independent judicial inquiry or the UK government runs the risk of further perpetuating a climate of impunity for human rights violations, Amnesty International warned today.

According to a legal opinion provided to Amnesty International, the UK government has a responsibility to properly investigate evidence of collusion between police and military intelligence agents and Loyalist paramilitaries in the murder of civil rights lawyer Patrick Finucane in Belfast 11 years ago. Thirty-nine-year-old Finucane was shot 14 times in front of his family by two masked men on 12 February 1989; one of the weapons had been stolen from British Army barracks.

Over the years, documented evidence has emerged indicating a systematic practice of collusion between state agents and Loyalist paramilitaries in killings in Northern Ireland. To date, there has been no serious attempt to investigate these practices.

Amnesty International states that allegations of serious misconduct made against the state are widespread and in the absence of an inquiry they continue to undermine public confidence in the integrity of the state and the rule of law.

Last November, the legal opinion was presented to Northern Ireland's Secretary of State Peter Mandelson who stated that the issue of an inquiry has been put aside pending the outcome of criminal proceedings. However according to the legal opinion, the establishment of an independent judicial inquiry at this stage would not compromise criminal proceedings.

"From national and international legal associations and human rights groups to the United Nations, the world community has spoken with one voice in calling for an inquiry into the murder of Patrick Finucane. It is about time the British government sat up and listened," Amnesty International urged.

A delegation consisting of Geraldine Finucane, Patrick Finucane's wife, and other members of the family, the family's lawyers, and representatives of Amnesty International, British Irish Rights Watch, and The Committee on the Administration of Justice is meeting the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, and the Foreign Minister, Brian Cowen, in Dublin on 24<sup>th</sup> February.

National Director of Amnesty International Ireland, Mary Lawlor, will present the legal opinion to the Taoiseach at the meeting.

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**For more information or a copy of the report *Patrick Finucane's killing: Official collusion and cover-up* (EUR 45/26/00) please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 171 413 5566 or Mary Lawlor in Dublin on mobile phone 0868 399 355.**