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Raymond McCord case on European stage

North Belfast News

BY Aine McEntee

27/04/2007

The case of North Belfast murder victim Raymond McCord junior will be the focus of a top level debate at the highest level of parliament in Europe it's been confirmed.

Raymond McCord Senior was invited to Strasbourg this week by Sinn Féin MEPs Mary Lou McDonald and Bairbre de Brún to lobby for support for his son's case which has cracked the underworld of British spooks and collusion with loyalists wide open.

"Sinn Féin have worked really hard on young Raymond's case and so far I've met all the MEPs from all the different parties in the European Parliament. I've already had positive meetings with the Greens and Spanish MEPs. They've said they will support me in whatever way they can. At the moment a motion is being worked out so that it can be read out in parliament. I think it's a case of working out exactly what we can say and how far we can go."

Earlier this week it emerged that Raymond's application for Victims' Commissioner was rejected on the grounds that he didn't know enough about the conflict.

Speaking from the seat of European parliament in Strasbourg Mr McCord said his legal teams are currently looking at ways to challenge the ruling.

"It could be something like a judicial review we just don't know at the moment but the reason they gave was a disgrace, a total insult."

He says they told him he had shown insufficient awareness of the conflict and inadequate public relation skills.

Raymond McCord defied UVF death threats to mount a media campaign pointing out links between police and the loyalists who murdered his son in 1997.

His work led to a Police Ombudsman's report that concluded there had been collusion between police and the killers.

He was also once severely beaten for defying murdered UDA leader John 'Grugg' Gregg.

Mr McCord, who said he had applied for the job to help other victims, was surprised at the grounds he was rejected for the post.

"I'm not saying I'm the best person for the job, but I thought the reasons they gave were ludicrous," he said.

"My son was murdered by the UVF, I've been threatened by that organisation for daring to ask questions about the murder, and I've been left for dead by the UDA – but I'm not aware of the conflict?"

The First Ministers' Office said it could not comment on individual applications.

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A total of 46 people applied for the Victims' Commissioner job when it was advertised in January.

Thirteen people have been interviewed, but no appointment has been announced.

Officials confirmed that the final appointment will be a matter for First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, after they are confirmed in their jobs on May 8.

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