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Government resists calls for Omagh bomb inquiry

Henry McDonald, Ireland correspondent
[The Guardian](#), Wednesday September 17 2008

The government is to defy renewed calls for an independent public inquiry into the Omagh bomb atrocity despite the revelations that the UK's eavesdropping centre, GCHQ, had been monitoring the Real IRA bombers on the day of the massacre.

In an interview with the Guardian, Northern Ireland security minister Paul Goggins questioned whether a public tribunal, covering the whole island, would obtain justice for the dead and injured. "We are not immediately attracted to the idea of a public inquiry," he said. "Having said that, the first thing to acknowledge is the sheer anguish of the families.

"They have not seen justice done and that must be terrible. I understand that and there might be some people who think a public inquiry is going to somehow remove that anguish. I am not sure that it would. What they want is people brought to justice."

The controversy over the investigation reignited yesterday after the BBC's Panorama programme revealed that GCHQ was tracking phone calls between Real IRA figures alleged to be involved in the attack.

Twenty-nine men, women and children and two unborn babies died in the blast on August 15 1998. No one was convicted of direct involvement in the bombing.

The Omagh families' lawyer Jason McCue said they would give the authorities to the end of the week to hand over any evidence from GCHQ. McCue said they wanted the material for their ongoing civil case against a number of men they claim were central to the Real

IRA bomb plot.

Michael Gallagher, a spokesman for the families, whose son Aidan died in the blast, said that if the authorities failed to hand over the GCHQ material for the continuing civil case then there would be "irresistible pressure" for a public inquiry.



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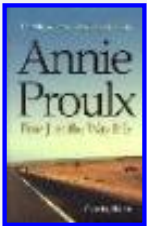
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