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'Mr Ahern, please clear our son's name in the Dail'

powered

By Michael Brennan
and Elaine Keogh
Tuesday December 18
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Unison

THE parents of a murdered South Armagh man have called on Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to withdraw his Dail claim that the death was linked to criminal feuds.

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Paul Quinn was beaten to death by a gang in a paramilitary style attack in a barn in Monaghan in October.

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His parents Stephen and Brid Quinn were told by Foreign

What are these?

Affairs minister Dermot Ahern in Dundalk yesterday that the Government had "no evidence" that Paul was a criminal.

"It gave us a great breakthrough, it gave us peace of mind that the Government is not saying Paul is a criminal. Anyone that's saying it now is saying it on their own," Stephen Quinn said.

However, he said he wanted the Taoiseach to correct the record, following his claim in the Dail last November that the death "was not paramilitary but pertained to feuds about criminality that were taking place".



A tearful Brid Quinn, mother of murdered teenager Paul Quinn, surrounded by journalists, speaking to the media in Dundalk. Photo: Dermot Ahern in Dundalk

"We are hoping to get a meeting with the Taoiseach and get the record straightened out," he told RTE.

Gang

His 21-year-old son had been phoned by friends who told him to come across the border to help muck out a barn. But they had been forced to do so by a gang of up to nine men, who beat Paul to death with iron bars.

Although the family believe the IRA were responsible, this has been denied by Sinn Fein. Foreign Affairs Minister Dermot Ahern indicated that the Government believed the killing may have been carried out by IRA members but not ordered by the IRA army council -- which means that the political process will not be affected.

He said there was nothing to suggest Mr Quinn's death was "orchestrated or at the behest of a paramilitary organisation, whatever about maybe members of that organisation being in someway involved."

Mr Ahern said he was awaiting the results of the joint investigation being carried out by the Gardai and the PSNI, which was getting very good co-operation on both sides of the border.

"It is an incredible change to see gardai knocking doors in Crossmaglen and Cullyhana. It is vital people come forward and give evidence because for too long people in this area have suffered."

Mrs Quinn said the purpose of the meeting had been to ask for her son's name to be "cleared of criminality" and she was "very pleased" with the outcome.

She was still broken hearted, but did have faith that the culprits would be brought to justice, she said.

SDLP Assembly member Dominic Bradley said that Mr Ahern's comment about Mr Quinn was a major step forward for the family.

"The slur of criminality was causing great pain to the family and the Minister has very welcome removed that slur and removed a huge burden of the family."

- *Michael Brennan and Elaine Keogh*

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