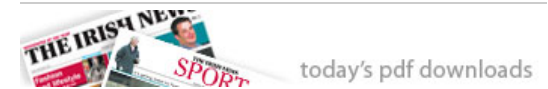


[Most Popular](#)[Most Emailed](#)

[Breaking](#)[Sport](#)[Business](#)[World](#)[Gossip](#)



Issue Changer:



[NEWS](#) >

PSNI accused of blocking man's inquest

By Donna Mc Cusker

28/02/08

POLICE have been accused of putting "hurdle after hurdle" in the way of a Co Armagh family finding out how their son died.

The inquest into the murder of dissident republican Gareth O'Connor, has been postponed until autumn.

Yesterday a lawyer for the dead man's family blamed the delay on the failure of detectives to disclose files.

Mr O'Connor's family believe the 24-year-old was killed by the IRA .

His body was found in his blue Volkswagen Golf car in Newry Canal in June 2005.

The Armagh city man was last seen in May 2003 as he drove towards Dundalk to answer bail at the town's Garda station after being charged with belonging to the Real IRA.

At a preliminary hearing yesterday chief coroner John Leckey was told by a solicitor acting for the chief constable, Sir Hugh Orde that it was likely to be at least another two months before the PSNI would be able to say which of its documents could be released.

Paul Dougan, representing the family, said the issue of disclosure "has been parked for an in-ordinately long time".

"Every time we come to these preliminary hearings there is another hurdle, another delay," he said.

"It is unfortunate that we don't seem to be able to timetable anything."

Mr Leckey said it was now unlikely an inquest could be held before the autumn.

However, Mr Dougan said there appeared to be "uncontrollable slippage".

"I have no confidence we will be any further ahead by summertime or early autumn," he said.

Mr Dougan asked that the family be given some hope the matter would be resolved "by the end of the calendar year".

The PSNI's Retrospective Review Team is investigating the case and the Police Ombudsman's office is probing the original investigation after criticisms by a judge during an unrelated trial.

Mr Leckey suggested that if the case reached an impasse over files he could hold an inquest with what information that was available.

However, Mr Dougan said the family would be unhappy "to rush into an inquest simply to have an inquest".