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Allister welcomes Victims Commissioner to Brussels



03 October 2006

DUP MEP Jim Allister held talks with Interim Victims Commissioner, Mrs Bertha McDougall, in Brussels today during a visit by her to the EU Institutions.

Mr Allister said, "I was pleased to see the Commissioner in Brussels promoting the interests of victims. As the voice of the victims it is important that she be heard here, as elsewhere. Funding, of course, is a key issue. Such limited funding which there has been for victims from the PEACE Programme is fast reducing as the total PEACE fund shrinks to a mere 26M pa from 2007. Core funding from Government is the answer, with long term commitment to making a difference for those who suffered the most during the relentless terrorist campaign. I had a very useful discussion with the Commissioner on the various funding options.

Europe has a special, though limited fund, for victims. Naturally, we explored how this could be exploited and, also, how the lead taken in Northern Ireland in having a Victims Commissioner could be used as a template elsewhere in Europe. Clearly, there are parallels between the suffering in Northern Ireland and the ETA-inflicted terrorism in Spain.

It is also important that a legitimate distinction is maintained between innocent victims and those who would claim victimhood from their own involvement in violent insurrection. To me there is no commonality between the family of a policeman murdered in the line of duty and the terrorist lawfully killed by the security forces or imprisoned for his crimes. Some would wish to equate their status. This must not happen."

Terrorism

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- [November 2007](#)
- [October 2007](#)
- [September 2007](#)
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- [July 2007](#)
- [June 2007](#)
- [May 2007](#)
- [April 2007](#)
- [March 2007](#)
- [February 2007](#)
- [January 2007](#)
- [December 2006](#)
- [November 2006](#)
- [October 2006](#)
- [September 2006](#)
- [August 2006](#)
- [July 2006](#)
- [June 2006](#)
- [May 2006](#)
- [April 2006](#)
- [March 2006](#)
- [February 2006](#)
- [January 2006](#)
- [December 2005](#)
- [November 2005](#)
- [October 2005](#)
- [September 2005](#)
- [August 2005](#)

- [July 2005](#)
 - [June 2005](#)
 - [May 2005](#)
 - [April 2005](#)
 - [March 2005](#)
 - [February 2005](#)
 - [January 2005](#)
 - [December 2004](#)
 - [November 2004](#)
 - [October 2004](#)
 - [September 2004](#)
 - [August 2004](#)
 - [July 2004](#)
 - [June 2004](#)
 - [May 2004](#)
 - [April 2004](#)
 - [March 2004](#)
-
- [Top](#)
 - [Home](#)
 - [Accessibility](#)