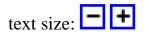
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# Commission committed to treating terrorists as victims – Allister

## 14 October 2008

Following a protracted battle with OFMDFM which resulted in the intervention of the Information Commissioner, Traditional Unionist MEP Jim Allister has obtained documentation which raises serious questions about the Victims' Commission. Commenting Mr Allister said:

"Way back in February I submitted a Freedom of Information request to OFMDFM. Following a complaint to the Information Commission, the Department has finally disclosed some of the information I requested. The reason for the delay is obvious.

"Those who interviewed candidates for the post of Commissioner – and it was still a commissioner at that stage – in November 2007 were provided with a list of "Points to look for at interview". Among these was "A commitment to the broad definition of victim and survivor provided by the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006".

"This Order defines a victim or survivor as someone who is or has been physically or psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident, thus equating the terrorist injured by his own bomb with the innocent victims of Enniskillen and La Mon.

"It is nothing short of outrageous that a Department jointly under DUP management should be complicit in propping up this obscene definition – a definition which DUP spokesmen, from time to time, have publicly claimed to oppose. How can innocent victims how have confidence in the proposed Victims' Forum which is supposed to consider the definition? After all, the Forum must "act in accordance with principles laid down by the Commission as to the conduct of its business" (Outline Draft Strategic Approach for Victims and Survivors).

"Additionally, interviewers were instructed to look for an ability to "work with different political parties". Of course this includes Sinn Fein/IRA – an organisation most innocent victims would have nothing to do with.

"The documents which I have obtained also raise serious questions about the willingness of the Commissioner for Public Appointments to stand up to OFMDFM. Minutes from a meeting which she had with joint First Ministers Paisley and McGuiness on 11th September 2007 reveal that she thought the initial process relating to the selection of a commissioner "had been very well run in line with OCPA guidance and that there had been a good level of interest and field of candidates." However, when McGuinness suggested that Direct Rule had made some people "reluctant to apply" she meekly rolled over and agreed that this would be a legitimate reason to begin a new process.

"Small wonder that, at a further meeting held on 5th October 2007, the joint First Ministers "thanked the Commissioner for her help and very positive approach"!

## NI politics

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