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[30/11/20] Statement from Chief Constable Simon Byrne following the announcement from the Secretary of State on the murder of Pat Finucane

4-5 minutes



Statement from Chief Constable Simon Byrne

The murder of Pat Finucane was a truly horrendous crime.

It has been the subject of extensive criminal inquiries, a Report by Judge Cory and a Report by Sir Desmond de Silva. A former Prime Minister and a former Chief Constable have apologised for State involvement in the murder.

Today, I echo the apology given by the Chief Constable in 2012 to Mr Finucane's wife, Geraldine, and her family.

Absolutely no one is above the law and the Finucane family deserve to have justice for the loss of a husband and father.

The decision around the holding of a Public Inquiry is a matter for the Northern Ireland office and is outwith the statutory responsibilities of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Due to the absence of any other solution for dealing with the past in Northern Ireland, the statutory duty for investigating deaths during the Troubles continues to sit with the Police Service of Northern Ireland. For this reason, the murder of Mr Finucane rests within our Legacy Investigation Branches' caseload. The Branches Case Sequencing Model routinely brings Troubles related deaths forward for a review.

Following the publication of the de Silva review in 2012, we established a review of the de Silva Report to assess if there were any outstanding actions for police. As a result of that review, we referred a number of issues to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. Four recommendations were also for the Police Service.

We also made contact with those responsible for the conduct of the de Silva review regarding the material described by de Silva as "new and significant". Following consideration by the Public Prosecution Service, it was concluded that this material did not provide credible opportunities to pursue criminal investigations.

The Northern Ireland Office recently wrote to us to ask if there were any outstanding matters in relation to the murder of Mr Finucane. We confirmed that the case sat within in our Case Sequencing Model and it would be due for its review and that four recommendations for Police were outstanding following our internal review of de Silva.

It is our view that there are currently no new lines of inquiry. We now need to decide if a further review is merited given all the previous investigations into this case. Once we have determined that, we will inform the Finucane Family. If we determine that a review should take place, we will then have to decide if we are best

placed to carry out that review. As it stands it is unlikely that we would enjoy a perception of independence in this case, given the accepted position of State involvement in this matter. Therefore, it is highly likely that any review would need to be conducted independently.

A review itself is not an investigation. Any decision to investigate would only be made following the review process. Again, it is likely that any new investigation would need to be independently led. We would also need to be satisfied that given the extensive work of Lord Stevens, Judge Cory and Sir Desmond de Silva, that a further investigation has a reasonable prospect of furthering this matter either by bringing more persons to justice or answering the unanswered questions of the Finucane family and their ongoing search for justice.
