

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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The Victims Commission
Commission/Coimisiún: John P. Wilson, M.A.

An Coimisiún um Íospartaigh
Secretary/Rúnaí: Éamon Mulligan

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

Commission on Victims of N.I. Violence Now Open for Business

or

Former Tánaiste John P. Wilson invites interested parties to contact The Victims Commission

Referring to the announcement at the end of last May by John O'Donoghue, T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, of the Government's decision to set up The Victims Commission, former Tánaiste, Mr. John P. Wilson, said that he was deeply honoured to have been asked to carry out this review of the services and arrangements in place in the South to meet the needs of victims of N.I. related violence.

He went on to say that ads would be appearing over the next few days in the national dailies as well as in local papers in the southern border counties. "Interested groups or individuals are invited to contact the Commission if they would like to meet with me and/or make submissions to the Commission" he said.

He believes that the job he has been asked to do is a very important one in its own right as well as being a very valuable adjunct to the Peace Process. The Good Friday Agreement, he went on to say, recognises that it is essential to acknowledge and address the suffering of victims of violence as a necessary element of reconciliation and refers to the need to provide services which are supportive and sensitive to the needs of victims.

"I know", he said, "that many victims feel that they have been forgotten and that no one is listening to their stories. I sincerely hope that I can give them a voice".

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Mr. Wilson referred to the Taoiseach's press statement of 13th May in which he (the Taoiseach) acknowledged that the feeling of isolation of many victims of violence, identified by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield in his report, is also shared by victims in this jurisdiction. The Taoiseach then pledged that the Government would, in consultation with the victims themselves, consider what further steps should be taken to address their particular needs. "This Commission is the first step in that process" said Mr. Wilson.

The Commission will be consulting broadly both within this jurisdiction and in other jurisdictions. ~~The Commission~~ It will consult with various agencies of central and local Government who are responsible for providing services and support to victims. Mr Wilson said he is particularly interested in hearing from voluntary and community groups or agencies in this field.

No target date has been set for the completion of the review. Mr Wilson feels that it is important that all victims get a chance to be heard and he does not wish to compromise the thoroughness of the consultative process by setting a fixed target date. "However, I would hope to be able to report back to Government by the end of this year or early next year" he said.

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