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Secretary - General
Have you or M/FA to your knowledge, raised 4 and 13, Lana 9 of this report, with Taoiseach - If not, I will do 20, unless you wish to. (There is a risk of overplaying our release with Blair on the eve of his meeting all three relatives' groups.) 15.9.00

RECEIVED
13 SEP 2000

**Meeting between the Minister and members of Rosemary Nelson's family**
**Thursday, 7 September 2000**

1. The Minister met with members of Rosemary Nelson's family at their request to hear their concerns about the lack of progress in the murder investigation. In attendance were Caitlín McVeigh, Bernadette McQuillan (Rosemary Nelson's sisters), Sheila Magee (Rosemary's mother) and Colm Owens, their solicitor. The Minister was accompanied by Second Secretary O'Ceallaigh, Mr. Ansbro, Mr. Kelly and the undersigned.

2. The Minister welcomed the family and said that he shared their wish to see Colin Port's investigation into Rosemary's murder concluded, with charges brought against the perpetrators. Wider issues beyond the murder investigation itself needed to be looked at also. He assured the family that officials of the Department are in contact with Port on an ongoing basis and that a meeting is scheduled for Wednesday next, 13 September.

3. Ms. McQuillan began by saying that Port, in her opinion, was placing very much emphasis on the issue of Nationalists' lack of cooperation with the investigation. She stressed that the family have cooperated fully with Port and that if any-one in the Nationalist community knew anything, she felt they would have come forward, such was the regard the community had for Rosemary. She expressed frustration at the way in which their expectations had been raised on several occasions by the Port investigation, only to be disappointed. (She cited as an example the "Britain's most wanted" programme on 30 August which contained "nothing new").

4. Ms. McQuillan gave the Minister a copy of notes she had made at a meeting at the end of July between the family and Colin Port. She said that the family was dissatisfied with the rate of progress in the murder investigation and that they had hoped the meeting would give them an idea of how far Port was from "making arrests". Ms. McQuillan said that the document contained a lot of sensitive information which Port had disclosed to them. Indeed, the family felt that Port had "thrown so much information at them that it was like a farewell speech". Ms. McQuillan also raised some of the wider issues involved (lack of protection for Rosemary, RIR involvement).

5. The Minister agreed that Port's investigation has to come up with specifics and that, sooner rather than later, an assessment has to be made as to whether the investigation is going to be successful. He said that while the length of time the investigation was taking was in itself a cause for concern, it appears that it is being conducted professionally. He said he was fully aware that the circumstances of the investigation were testing the family's patience to the limit and he said that in next week's meeting with Port, there would be a strong push to get information from him.

6. Ms. McQuillan and Mr. Owens made the following requests:

- that Port be pressed on whether he thinks the investigation will lead to successful indictments and on what exactly is missing from the book of evidence at this stage

Note
Discussed with [illegible] PLE disclosure 18/12
Secretary-General on A.9.00 – see separate note of discussion with 12.9.00

- that the issue of leaks to the press, presumably from within the investigation team, be raised with Port,
- that the Minister raise the family's concerns with the Secretary of State
- that the Taoiseach raise them with PM Blair and
- that the Irish Ambassador in Washington raise the matter with a representative of the NSC.

Mr. Owens added that, during their meeting with him in July, Port had indicated that he does think there will be a need for a public inquiry.

7. The Minister said that the meeting with Port next week ~~will be used to get Port's best~~ judgement on where he sees the investigation going and what his assessment is of its progress. We would keep the family informed of developments. We needed to give the investigation some breathing space, in order to bring the perpetrators to justice. However the investigation could not go on indefinitely. We needed to assess within a matter of months whether the time was right to call for a public inquiry into the broader circumstances surrounding Rosemary's murder.

8. On the issue of leaks, the Minister said that it was important to establish what proactive steps Port takes in the event of leaks to the press, to identify possible sources of leaks and what he does to assess possible damage to the investigation when information is leaked.

9. The Minister said that both he and the Taoiseach are aware of the serious issues involved in the case. He added that a meeting between the family and the Taoiseach would not be a problem in principle. In response to a request from the family to raise, in particular, the allegation that a member or members of the RIR may have been involved in the murder the Minister said that he would consider the efficacy of speaking to Mandelson about effective follow-up on the part of the investigators. He also undertook to raise the issue with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on his visit to Washington next week. He would also ask the Taoiseach to raise the issue once again with Tony Blair.

10. The Minister concluded by saying that Rosemary had been greatly admired as a member of the legal profession and assured the family that the Department would keep them informed of developments in the case.

Fiona Flood
7 September 2000

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