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Northern Ireland: Amnesty launches global online appeal urging Gordon Brown to hold independent inquiry into Finucane killing

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UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown is set to receive a mass of appeals from Amnesty International members worldwide, urging him to hold an independent public inquiry into the killing of Belfast solicitor Patrick Finucane. Amnesty launched the global online appeal today (12 February) on the 20th anniversary of Patrick Finucane's death.

[The appeal](#), urges people to write both to Gordon Brown and to Northern Ireland Secretary Shaun Woodward.

Patrick Finucane was murdered at his home in Belfast on 12 February 1989. Twenty years later, the UK government has still failed to establish a genuinely independent public inquiry into all of the circumstances of his death, including into credible evidence that UK state agents colluded in the killing.

Amnesty International UK Director Kate Allen said:

'On this day in 1989, Patrick Finucane was shot dead in front of his wife and three children. Twenty years on, the truth about his killing is still kept from them and from the public.'

'With each day that passes, the chances of an inquiry uncovering that truth get smaller. Already at least two potentially crucial witnesses have died.'

The UK government continues to insist that an inquiry in this case can only be held under the Inquiries Act 2005, which will effectively extinguish the chances of a genuinely independent and effective investigation. In July last year, the UN Human Rights Committee criticised this legislation, because it 'allows the government minister who established an inquiry to control important aspects of that inquiry'.

Kate Allen said:

'With the Inquiries Act 2005, the UK government has tried to ensure that any inquiry will lack real independence. Under the Act the government can control who sits on the inquiry; it can order that part of the inquiry be held in private; and it can decide which of an inquiry's findings are published and which remain secret.'

'The UK government's failure to hold a properly independent inquiry into the killing of Patrick Finucane after 20 years - despite repeated promises to do so - is an outrage.'

'The government has made it clear that it intends to use the Inquiries Act to ensure that part of any inquiry into this case would be held in secret, behind closed doors and in the absence of the Finucane family.'

'An inquiry under the 2005 Act would be a travesty. A properly independent investigation should be held without delay.'

Background

In the aftermath of Patrick Finucane's death, extensive and compelling evidence began to emerge that his killing took place within the context of widespread state collusion with armed groups. Since then, further evidence has given rise to strong

suspicions that numerous state agencies may have played a part in attempting to cover up state collusion in his murder.

Kenneth Barrett, a former loyalist paramilitary, was convicted in 2003 of the murder of Patrick Finucane. Since he had pleaded guilty to 12 charges, including that of the murder of Patrick Finucane, no significant information about alleged state collusion in the killing or about the alleged subsequent official cover-up emerged in court.

In July 2003 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that 'the proceedings following the death of Patrick Finucane failed to provide a prompt and effective investigation into the allegations of collusion by security personnel' , and that there had therefore been a violation of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights in his case.

Also in 2003 Sir John Stevens, a senior UK police officer who carried out three inquiries into allegations of collusion between the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, confirmed that his investigations had uncovered evidence of 'collusion, the wilful failure to keep records, the absence of accountability, the withholding of intelligence and evidence, and the extreme of agents being involved in murder'. The full findings of the investigations conducted by John Stevens have, however, remained secret, not only from the public but also from the Finucane family and their lawyers.

In June 2007, following an extremely lengthy delay, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for Northern Ireland announced that no further charges would be brought following the review of the material submitted by the third investigation conducted by Sir John Stevens ('Stevens III').

Throughout this time the family of Patrick Finucane have campaigned tirelessly for a genuinely independent public inquiry into the circumstances of his death.

[ACT NOW: Call on the UK government to establish genuinely independent public inquiry into all of the circumstances of Patrick Finucane's death](#)

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