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## New unit to probe unsolved killings

By David Gordon  
Wednesday, 28 January 2009

Unsolved murder cases from the Troubles could continue to be investigated under recommendations tabled today for dealing with Northern Ireland's past.

A new unit operating as part of a Legacy Commission would take over past case probe work currently carried out by the police's Historical Enquiries Team (HET) and the Police Ombudsman.

It would have equivalent powers to the police and could refer cases for possible prosecution.

A separate wing of the commission would operate an "information recovery" process to address unresolved questions for victims' families.

Statements made to the information recovery unit would not be admissible in court proceedings.

This recovery process would only begin once any investigation work is deemed to be "completed".

Today's report by the Consultative Group on the Past said: "Many families to whom the Group spoke still have an understandable desire to see someone prosecuted for causing or contributing to their relative's death.

"The Group understands this desire for penal justice and wishes to keep this avenue open.

"It therefore proposes that the process of reviewing and investigating historical cases should continue."

However, the report also referred to "increasing difficulties" facing investigators in historic cases and also cited "the question of where best to allocate scarce resources".

"With the lapse of time, it may be difficult to find new evidence or substantiate old evidence," it said.

"Potential witnesses are more difficult to discover and may be regarded as less reliable."

The document continued: "Since prosecution might be possible only in a very few of the historical cases under review, the Group believes that now is the time to open new avenues for information recovery, to resolve if possible unanswered questions, and to examine themes from the conflict."

This 'information recovery' and 'thematic examination' work would be undertaken by a distinct unit of the proposed Legacy Commission.

Its procedures "would be flexible and might include contacts with suspected offenders, or paramilitaries, or government agencies, as the case may be", the report said.

"There would be no public hearings or formal parties to proceedings," it added.

The Consultative Group also concluded that individual cases could only switch from investigation to the information recovery process with the agreement of the victim's next-of-kin.

"The Group recognises the concerns which some families might have about a case passing into information recovery against their wishes," the report stated.

"Some might feel that, even if the chances of a prosecution were low, they would want the case to rest on that basis without allowing someone to make non-admissible statements.

"In an extreme case, a person could, for example, during this process admit to a murder and it would not be possible to use that statement against him or her."

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Do people not realise that even if a person is charged and convicted of a murder within the time period of the troubles, that person will be convicted and freed almost immediately under the terms of the Good Friday agreement.

The next thing that will happen is that his criminal record will be expunged so that it won't affect his future. Heaven forbid that his murdering someone should stop him working with children or the elderly, because he's now got Human Rights thanks to this Govt, & people need to realise that the terrorist is being exonerated, and there's nothing that you or I can do to stop it.

I know who murdered my relative, and believe me, it doesn't change a damn thing, so why are they bothering to set up all these sham bodies that will achieve nothing? It's a sop to the terrorist is why, so STOP beating yourselves up good people, the only ones that care.....are you.

Those who signed up to the agreement, have handed us this legacy...get used to it & move on!

Posted by *Pixie* | 29.01.09, 10:29 GMT

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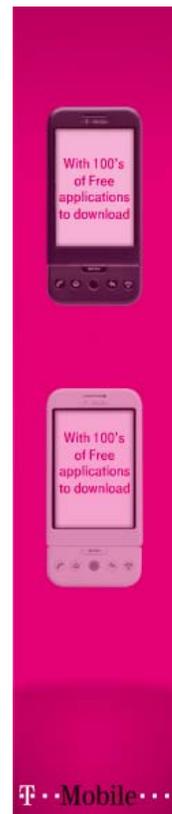
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