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Omagh relatives urge republicans to root out dissidents

Lesley-Anne Henry
Tuesday, 10 March 2009

Relatives of victims of the Omagh bombing — the Real IRA's single worst atrocity — last night urged the republican community to root out dissident terrorists.

The families called for people to co-operate with police on both sides of the border and bring Saturday's gunmen to justice.

Michael Gallagher, who lost his 21-year-old son Aiden in the Omagh explosion, said the onus was on ordinary people to come forward with information.

He said: "These people didn't come out of thin air. They came from a community some of whom knew what they were up to. There is a tremendous responsibility for people in the republican community to assist the police and Gardai and for the Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde, to use all of his resources not just to bring these people to justice, but to make sure there are no other further attacks."

Mr Gallagher, a spokesman for the victims' of Omagh, also apportioned some of the blame for the soldiers' deaths with the governments.

He added: "The British and Irish governments need to take a certain amount of responsibility because they did not successfully prosecute the people involved in the Omagh bomb. The message they have sent out is that you can murder 31 innocent people, including two unborn children, and get away with it. I think if they had put those people behind bars that would have sent a strong message and may have prevented some of those involved in the planning, preparation or the attack on Saturday itself."

Twenty-nine people and unborn twins were killed when the 500lb car bomb ripped through Omagh town centre on August 15, 1998. And 10 years on, no-one has been brought to justice.

Saturday's grim news that the RIRA had struck again re-opened old wounds.

Lawyer Victor Barker, whose 12-year-old son James was among the Omagh victims, said: "I think this has been boiling and brewing up under the surface for some time. It was only to be expected.



"My view on the Omagh investigation is well known and that is that the person in charge of the investigation, Ronnie Flanagan, did not conduct it properly and as a result of that botched investigation the people responsible got off scot free. I hope and expect there is now a better system in place to deal with the perpetrators, but going on past performance I wouldn't have too much confidence."

Meanwhile Stanley McComb, who lost his wife Ann, said he had little confidence the soldiers' killers would be caught.

"Omagh has never gone away for me and for the other families — we have never received any sort of justice.

"Nobody has been sent to jail for the murderous act they committed on August 15, 1998 and unfortunately I can't see anything happening in this case.

"They have promised everything to try and catch them but we have heard it all before. It is now 10-and-a-half years since Omagh and we have nothing, so I would say to the soldiers families 'don't hold your breath'."

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As an Irishman, 3 generations removed from Eire, I find what is happening reprehensible. I support the concept of a One Ireland as fiercely as anyone. But, there is an agreed upon cease fire on all sides. There is no patriotism, pride or courage in killing pizza delivery boys, unarmed officers (confined to garrison, while in uniform) or the shooting of a police officer during a recognized truce. My only prayer, as a Celt of both Catholic and Protestant ancestry, is When respected individuals on both sides of the issue, such as Gerry Adams, don't have any supportive arguments in favor of what happened, we can all understand this as mere treachery against Ireland, her people and civilization in general. What would any decent person desire? A return to yesterday, and the Troubles? In a world in which many would like to see us dead, simply because we profess Christianity, who are these cowards fighting for?

Posted by 1Eagle | 10.03.09, 05:22 GMT

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