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Protest over detention of 11 suspects

By Noel McAdam Friday, 20 March 2009

Relatives and supporters of people arrested in relation to the recent dissident republican killings staged a protest yesterday and warned 28-day detention is already in operation in Northern Ireland.

With lawyers for the PSNI expected to return to court today seeking a further extension of time to question suspects, the families and friends of the detained held an afternoon mini-rally at Antrim PSNI station demanding their immediate release.

Eleven people remain in custody as detectives continue their investigations into the murders of British soldiers Mark Quinsey and Patrick Azimkar outside the British army base in the town and of PSNI officer Stephen Carroll in Craigavon.

Seven are being questioned in connection with the policeman's death and the remainder in relation to the Antrim attack, claimed by the Real IRA and Continuity IRA respectively.

A spokesman for the protesters, who did not want to be named, said: "People seem to have forgotten that the 28-day detention measures contained in the last Terrorism Act apply just as much to Northern Ireland as England, Scotland and Wales and are obviously being used here, even though they have not expressly said so yet."

A group calling itself the Republican Network for Unity said in a statement: "Government, politicians and the press need to be mindful of the civil liberties of those detained, the presumption of innocence until proven guilty and the blatant disregard with which a number of the detainees have been named, blamed and had trial by media."

Extensions for two of those arrested have already been granted, and more are anticipated.

Meanwhile, the funeral of Sapper Azimkar will take place today.

The funeral of the young soldier, who was from Wood Green in London, will be held at the Guards Chapel at Wellington Barracks in London at 12pm.

He will then be buried at a cemetery close to his family home.

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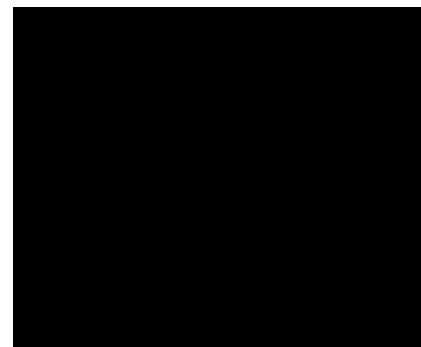
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