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Loyalists attack victims' protest

Andersonstown News Monday

By Ciarán Barnes

Relatives of victims of British army violence were attacked by loyalist thugs at yesterday's 'homecoming' parade through the city centre.

Fireworks and missiles were thrown at nationalist marchers as they demonstrated against the British army march at Fisherwick Place.

Thousands of loyalists had gathered in the city centre to cheer on British troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Republicans organised counter parades against the military march, involving relatives of people murdered by the British army.

When the Sinn Féin-organised demonstration reached Fisherwick Place, near the Grand Opera House, it was attacked by loyalists.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE OUR PICTURE GALLERY FROM SUNDAY'S PARADE](#)

Fireworks and missiles were thrown by a crowd of around 50 males who had climbed on to scaffolding at Fisherwick Place.

Among those injured was Relatives for Justice Director Mark Thompson whose brother, Peter Thompson, was shot dead by the British army.

"We were attacked with fireworks, bolts, coins, bottles and rocks. Several people were injured," he said.

"I was confronted by three loyalists who jumped a barrier. They screamed sectarian abuse at me, but I didn't react. In keeping with the demonstration I remained dignified.

"All the violence came from loyalists, and the people who have spent the past week condemning this community now need to ask questions about

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the behaviour of the loyalists who went along to this coat-trailing exercise," added Mark.

"Questions also need to be asked of the PSNI who did little to prevent the trouble."

Mr Thompson had earlier addressed a 3,000-strong rally in Dunville Park that made its way to Fisherwick Place.

Sinn Féin MLA Gerry Kelly, who also spoke at the event, praised the restraint of those involved in the peaceful demonstration.

He said: "The conduct of our families and protestors stands in marked contrast to the sectarian and violent reaction of those who claimed to be on the streets today to welcome home the British army.

"The onus is now on those public figures who called people out on to the streets in opposition to our protest to account for the unbridled sectarian behaviour that occurred."

PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Alistair Finlay said no arrests were made at yesterday's march.

He said it passed off "without major incident", and praised the efforts of parade and protest organisers.

You can also see a YouTube video by [clicking here](#) (this is an external video, not taken by the Belfast Media Group).

final four. [Click here](#) to vote for your favourite, or [here](#) to see the Aisling Awards website.



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