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## Cross-border inquiry 'only proper Omagh memorial'

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By Michael McHugh  
Monday August 18 2008

A cross-border public inquiry is the only proper tribute to relatives bereaved by the [Omagh](#) bomb blast, a memorial service heard yesterday.

The system has failed everyone and its leaders should hang their heads in shame because of the lack of progress, grieving father [Michael Gallagher](#) told mourners in the [Co Tyrone](#) town.

They had gathered to mark the 10 years since the [Real IRA](#)

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bombing which killed 29 people, including a woman expecting twins, in the single greatest atrocity of the conflict.

Mr Gallagher, whose 21-year-old son Aidan was one of the victims, said: "The only proper tribute to Omagh's dead, 10 years on, must be that full cross-border public inquiry.

"We call on public figures to back our call, otherwise the system continues to fail everyone and should hold its head in shame.

"They will be judged not on their token gestures but on what they have or have not done to actually bring justice to Omagh, not wreathes."

At a separate gathering in the Co Tyrone town on Friday, boycotted by some of the families present yesterday, Taoiseach [Brian Cowen](#), [Northern Secretary Shaun Woodward](#) and [Stormont Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness](#) remembered the dead alongside thousands of others.

Mr McGuinness joined other political representatives in demanding an independent probe on Friday.

There are concerns about the alleged failure to follow up on warnings given before the deadly car bomb blast and the police's handling of forensic evidence.

A civil legal case taken by the families and other legal matters are still active.

Families, including Mr Gallagher, were engaged in a dispute with [Omagh District Council](#) over the wording on memorials in the town unveiled on Friday.

This was the first ceremony in the new garden of remembrance close to the blast site and included several hundred people.

Mr Gallagher added: "Over the past 10 years we have taken control of our own lives, we could not allow terrorists to dictate to us, we will continue to do what is right for us."

Former Northern Police [Ombudsman Dame Nuala O'Loan](#) was among those present. She penned a critical report on the police handling of the investigation.

There was an interdenominational service lasting around 30 minutes, which included prayers in Hebrew, Spanish and Irish.

Among the dead were schoolchildren from Buncrana, [Co Donegal](#), and Spanish exchange students shopping in the busy market town.

### Bombing

A minute's silence in remembrance was held as well as a moving reading from [Carol Radford](#), whose 16-year-old brother Alan was killed in the bombing.

Relatives and well-wishers laid flowers, some breaking down in tears as memories flooded back.

A message from [Terry Waite](#), the former [Lebanon](#) hostage, said they should consider creating a scholarship for students wanting to undertake peace studies or work with the [UN](#).

He could not be present because he was meeting former Japanese prisoners of war.

"If I was with you today I would ask you to do one thing and that is to look to the future, a new generation is growing up in Omagh and it is to them that we should be looking," he added.

- *Michael McHugh*

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