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NIO: Ruling won't deter police

By Rebecca Black

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The PSNI remains "resolute and determined" to bring to justice the killers of two soldiers and a police officer,

NIO minister Paul Goggins said yesterday.

"Two people have already been charged with the murder of PC Stephen Carroll and the work by police to investigate this murder continues," the minister, who has responsibility for policing and justice, said.

Mr Goggins said yesterday's High Court ruling was "in relation to a technical issue around detention and the law has taken its course on this specific aspect of the legal process".

"Nonetheless, the police investigation into the murder of the soldiers at Massereene Barracks and the attempted murders of two other soldiers and two civilians are ongoing," he said.

"The determination of the police to carry out their investigation thoroughly, comprehensively and with the support of the whole community continues."

However, the family of prominent dissident republican Colin Duffy, who was freed as a result of the ruling only to be rearrested soon afterwards, accused police of conducting a "vendetta" against him.

"We call for his immediate release and are appealing to all those interested in justice to support us in our campaign to return Colin safely home to his wife, children and wider family," their statement read.

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams welcomed the court ruling.

"Detaining people for periods extending beyond human rights best practice is simply not acceptable and must not happen in the future," he said.

"If evidence does exist against an individual then that person should be charged and that evidence tested before the courts.

"If no such evidence exists then that person should be released."

DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson said he was disappointed that the suspects had been released due to a technicality.

"This development does not in any way reflect upon the police who have done their duty with professionalism and conducted themselves entirely appropriately," he said.

"Justice must be done. The Northern Ireland public demands it and will take a very dim view of anyone, elected politician or quangocrat, who tries to hinder that."

Breandan Mac Cionnaith from republican protest group Eirigi called for Duffy's release and said the PSNI was "now acting in defiance of even its own courts".

SDLP MLA Alban Maginness said the developments highlighted the reasons his party had opposed 28-day detention.

"Seven days is an adequate period within which to charge or release," he said.

The Republican Network for Unity, an umbrella group, called for anyone sitting on a district policing partnership to quit immediately.

It said Duffy's rearrest was "as much an assault upon the due process of law as it is upon the human rights of all who live within the six-county statelet".

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