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## Delay on collusion charges 'inexcusable'

(Barry McCaffrey, [Irish News](#))

A human rights group has criticised the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) for a four-year delay in deciding if 20 security force members should face charges of collusion in loyalist paramilitary murders.

It is now more than four years since Lord Stevens published his report into security force involvement in a series of UDA killings, including the murders of solicitor Pat Finucane and Protestant teenager Adam Lambert.

As Britain's most senior police officer Lord Stevens reported on April 18 2003 that he had uncovered evidence that security force agents and informants had been allowed to "operate without effective control and to participate in terrorist crimes".

However, despite four years having passed a PPS spokesman said that the files submitted by Lord Stevens were still "under review".

PPS sources speculate that some charges may come next month.

However, British Irish Rights Watch spokeswoman Jane Winters last night branded the four-year delay in bringing charges against the 20 security force members as "inexcusable".

"I think it is absolutely unbelievable that there has been such a protracted delay in the PPS deciding whether these people should be charged," she said.

"There are those who are sceptical as to whether any member of the security forces will ever face collusion charges."

She said that the failure to bring charges against security force members raised questions over the three inquiries carried out by Lord Stevens over a 15-year period.

"People are asking what the three Stevens inquiries were about if nothing has happened four years after Sir John clearly stated that he had found substantial evidence that members of the security forces had colluded with loyalist

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paramilitaries in murder."

Mrs Winters said that she had now written to British prime minister Tony Blair to raise her "serious concerns" over the issue.

"I have warned Tony Blair that unless he does something he will not be seen as the prime minister who brought the Troubles to an end, instead he will be seen as the man who denied justice to the Finucane family.

"I think it is an absolute scandal that security force members are still being protected from prosecution more than four years after Stevens delivered his report.

"There is speculation that some kind of charges will be brought in the near future but few people believe that they will ever get to court."

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