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## UVF statement 'worthless' says mother

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

The mother of one of the first victims of the Troubles last night (Tuesday) said an expected UVF statement that it is "standing down" will be worthless without decommissioning.

Mary Ward's 18-year-old son Peter was shot dead by UVF leader Gusty Spence while leaving a pub on the Shankill Road in Belfast on June 26 1966.

The Catholic teenager had recently returned home from England after buying himself out of the British army.

"Peter would not have been there that night if it hadn't been for a friend's birthday," his 85-year-old mother said.

"Once Gusty Spence found out Peter and the others were Catholics they didn't stand a chance. He shot Peter through the heart."

Speculation continues to grow that the UVF will soon announce it is "standing down" its organisation, although it will stop short of decommissioning.

However, Mrs Ward said nationalists would not believe that the UVF and UDA were committed to peace until their weapons had been destroyed.

"There was no IRA in existence when the UVF killed my Peter," she said.

"The only people who had guns was the UVF.

"All these years later with so many innocent people killed and the IRA having got rid of their weapons, the UVF still won't decommission.

"If they are seriously telling nationalists that their war is over then why do they need guns?"

Mrs Ward recalled the day she received a telephone call from Gusty Spence asking for her forgiveness.

"I told him he had broke my heart the day he killed my son

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and that I would have to live with that for the rest of my life.

"He said he wanted to bring peace about and I told him that if he was serious then I would forgive him, if it meant no-one else would be killed.

"That was years ago but the UVF have kept on killing people, despite what he promised me.

"If they are serious now then they should do the right thing and get rid of their guns.

"Anything less is an insult to the hundreds of families on both sides who have had their hearts broken by the UVF killing their loved ones."

She said her son was in her mind "from the moment I get up in the morning until I go to bed at night".

"I know Peter's in heaven," she said. "If Gusty Spence and the UVF want to stand any chance at getting into heaven then they should tell us that it is all over and that their guns have been destroyed.

"Anything else will be worthless."

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