


[HOME](#)
[History](#)
[NewsoftheIrish](#)
[Book Reviews
& Book Forum](#)
[Search / Archive](#)
[Back to 10/96](#)
[Papers](#)
[Reference](#)
[About](#)
[Contact](#)

Families of five UDA victims to take civil actions against police

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

The families of five men killed in a UDA gun attack are to launch civil actions after a decision that no police officer will face prosecution despite the RUC having provided the murder gang with its weapons.

Maria Sykes, whose 18-year-old brother Peter was among those killed at Sean Graham bookmakers in south Belfast in 1992, said she was "sick with anger" at the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) decision.

The PPS also ruled-out prosecutions against policemen and soldiers suspected of involvement in the murders of solicitor Pat Finucane and Protestant teenager Adam Lambert, despite evidence from Britain's once most senior policeman Lord Stevens implicating them in both murders.

The PPS confirmed for the first time yesterday (Monday) that UDA 'quartermaster' Billy Stobie, who would later be implicated in the Finucane and Lambert murders, handed over five weapons to his Special Branch handlers in 1989.

However, weeks later the weapons were handed back to the UDA.

In December 1991 one weapon was used in an attack on the Devenish Bar in west Belfast, killing Catholic man Aidan Wallace.

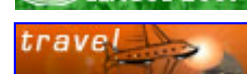
Three months later the same weapon was used in the UDA's gun attack on Sean Graham's bookmakers which killed three men and two teenage boys.

The PPS said no senior police officer should face prosecution over the handing over of weapons because they could not be identified.

Ms Sykes said the victims' families were "outraged" by the decision and would now take civil actions.

"We are so angry that the RUC is just allowed to get away with handing guns to loyalists who go out and kill six people

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and the RUC officers who allowed it don't even get as much as a slap on the wrist," she said.

"It's as if my brother's life or the lives of the other men killed don't matter.

"If this was anywhere else in the world the chief constable of the day would have gone to jail and the government would have resigned in disgrace.

"But here just because it's a few Catholics they think it doesn't count.

"Well I'm telling them my brother and those other men did count and if we have to go to the ends of the earth we will get proper justice for them."

Pat Finucane's son John described the PPS decisions as "weak" and "cowardly".

"This is an insult to my family and proves that we were right all along in refusing to have anything to do with what has been proven to be a charade from start to finish," he said.

"It is notable that the DPP feels himself unable to use certain intelligence records as evidence, a clear indication that the interests of national security remain more important than the human lives.

"We have fought for nearly 20 years for a proper independent, judicial inquiry into my father's murder and we will not accept anything less now."

There was also criticism of the timing of the announcement, with allegations that such controversial decisions were deliberately made public before Gordon Brown and his new secretary of state took up office.

The PPS decision was also criticised by Human Rights Commissioner Monica McWilliams, Amnesty International, British/Irish Rights Watch, Relatives For Justice and the Pat Finucane Centre.

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[BACK TO TOP](#)

[About](#)

[Home](#)

[History](#)

[NewsoftheIrish](#)

[Books](#)

[Bookstore](#)

[Contact](#)