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SF accuses SDLP of manipulating Quinn campaign

(Suzanne McGonagle, [Irish News](#))

Sinn Féin last night (Friday) accused the SDLP of using the family of murdered south Armagh man Paul Quinn for "electoral advantage".

Crossmaglen councillor Terry Hearty said he believed the campaign for justice for the Quinn family was being manipulated for political reasons.

The SDLP responded that the Sinn Féin comments were a "pathetic attempt to try and fill the vacuum of their own inactions".

The claims came after more than 300 people attended a meeting in Crossmaglen in support of the Quinns following their son's death in October.

The 21-year-old was beaten to death by a group of men in a shed in Co Monaghan.

His family have blamed members of the IRA for his killing. Nobody has been arrested or charged in connection with his murder.

The Quinn Support Group, which was set up following the murder to campaign for truth and justice, held its second meeting on Thursday.

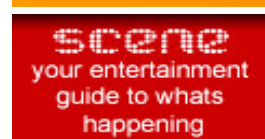
SDLP councillor Geraldine Donnelly, a family friend of the Quinns, is involved in the group.

It said it planned to bring its case to Stormont, Westminster and Leinster House. They are due to meet the Republic's minister for foreign affairs Dermot Ahern on Monday.

Three TDs and several councillors from the Republic attended the meeting, while a number of Sinn Féin councillors were also among the crowd.

Speaking after the meeting, Mr Hearty claimed there was a "political agenda behind the group", which was doing "a disservice to both the Quinn family and the search for justice".

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He said the meeting allowed him the opportunity to publicly challenge "false statements" made about him and other councillors.

"It emerged during the course of the proceedings that the SDLP have assumed control of the campaign, their motivation being electoral advantage rather than the truth or justice," he claimed.

"This was very clearly the reason behind the false statements and personal attacks which have been issued by the group against individual Sinn Féin representatives. It also does a great disservice to the Quinn family.

"What people here will have no part of is anyone with a clear political and anti-community agenda. This sort of motivation should have no place in a genuine justice campaign."

However, SDLP assembly member Dominic Bradley said the comments by Sinn Féin were a "pathetic attempt to try and fill the vacuum of their own inactions".

Mr Bradley said Ms Donnelly had been contacted by the Quinns for assistance on the night of their son's murder.

"There has been no secret of the SDLP search for justice and the support for the Quinn family," he said.

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