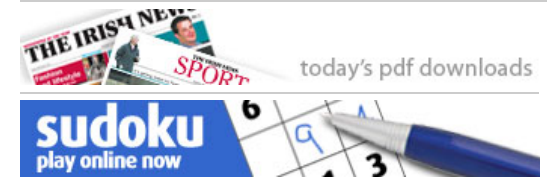


Most PopularMost Emailed

BreakingSportBusinessWorldGossip



Issue Changer:



[NEWS](#) | [COLUMNISTS](#) >

## Inquiry is not about victim's morals. It's about her murder

**Susan McKay**

By Susan McKay

09/12/08

So a senIOR RUC officer allegedly told a senior civil servant that Rosemary Nelson was an 'immoral woman'.

How interesting. How outrageous. I imagine Rosemary would have laughed if she'd heard at the time that this

was the police opinion of her, as she'd have laughed if I'd had the chance to tell her I'd heard young unionist barrister types calling Mo Mowlam

a Jezebel.

But it is far from funny now. Because the violence done to Rosemary's good name preceded and precipitated the ultimate violence done to her when she was murdered. The poison was laid before the bomb was planted.

It is hard to know what is worse – the nature of the evidence given to the Rosemary Nelson Inquiry last week, or the media coverage of it. Both must have caused pain and anger to Rosemary's family and friends, to whom she was loving and generous, as well as to all who knew her as a solicitor of the highest integrity.

Having been called, I gave evidence at the inquiry a few months ago. I believe it is to the good that it is taking place. Judge Peter Cory called for it, having found sufficient grounds for concern that there may have been security force collusion with the loyalist killers.

But entering the maze of windowless blue rooms and noting the rows of empty chairs set out for the public and for journalists, was depressing.

There was no-one at the Rosemary Nelson Inquiry except the inquiry team, a large number of lawyers, some security guards and the day's quota of witnesses – in this case a journalist, a priest and a policeman.

Transcripts of the evidence are put up on the inquiry's website – though last week's have been deemed too 'sensitive' as yet – but how many reports have been published or broadcast since proceedings began six months ago?

Hardly any.

Yet interesting evidence has been given. Distinguished solicitors have claimed they had their own experience of hostility from the RUC. Respected non-governmental organisations have described failed efforts to get the NIO and the RUC to take seriously their warnings that Rosemary was at risk. And much else besides.

So why did most editors only decide to give time and space to salacious and unsubstantiated claims made last week by a screened and unidentified former head of Special Branch? And who tipped them off that such evidence was to be given?

I referred in my evidence to having heard, during long hours on that bleak hill at Drumcree, claims from loyalists and Orangemen that Rosemary Nelson was having an affair with her most prominent IRA client and indeed other prominent clients. I regarded these rumours as being like the rumour that her face had been damaged when a bomb she was planting exploded, when in reality it was scarred by a childhood operation.

They were indicative of hatred. These people hated Rosemary because she was clever and could outsmart them in the courts on behalf of the Garvaghy Road residents. Because she had successfully defended IRA men.

Because she was drawing international attention to their bullying ways. Because she was a Catholic and they hated Catholics, and killed quite a few during the events known as Drumcree.

But the misogyny underlying their attitude to Rosemary must be acknowledged as an additional factor in her murder.

They called her a Fenian bitch and a whore. No doubt some of these rumours were fed on to police informants and no doubt some of the police believed them, given the alleged 'immoral woman' slur.

The Special Branch man further claimed to have intelligence that Rosemary passed on information to her IRA lover.

This, too, has a sexist slant. Not only was she having an affair with a client, but her pillow talk was assisting the IRA. To twisted minds, this was a woman who did not deserve the protection of society, like the 'witches' who used to be burned.

The Taliban stone such women to death. Loyalists put a bomb under her family car. It could have killed her children, too.

Did the police warn her about what their sources were saying? If they did not, isn't it immoral to fail to act on information to try to save lives? These questions have been raised before in relation to the RUC and its Special Branch.

This inquiry is not about Rosemary Nelson's morals. It is about her murder.


s.mckay@irishnews.com

## Related Stories

- [Obama sounds like someone who really can save America](#)
- [Forgiveness is a gift only bestowed on chosen few](#)
- [Fair's games won't include hideous truth of Glenanne](#)
- [Still much to be done in campaign against abuse](#)

 Print  back to top

Bookmark:  Delicious  Digg  Reddit  Facebook  StumbleUpon

 Email this story

[print advertising](#) | [media pack](#) | [online advertising](#) | [privacy statement](#) | [about us](#) | [contact us](#) | [subscribe](#) | [login](#) | [archives](#) | [sitemap](#) | [careers](#) | [home](#)