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MP accused over Quinn details



The family of the late Paul Quinn, including (from left) his father, Stephen, and mother, Briege, protest outside the Europa Hotel in Belfast. Quinn (21) was beaten to death at a farm near Castleblayney, Co Monaghan, in October 2007.
Photograph: Justin Kernaghan

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DAN KEENAN

NEWRY AND Armagh MP Conor Murphy has been accused of failing to pass on to the PSNI and Garda officers investigating the murder of south Armagh man Paul Quinn details that may be relevant to the case.

Members of the Paul Quinn Support Group picketed an event in Belfast yesterday to mark the formal opening of the M1-Westlink motorway improvement project in the city which was attended by Mr Murphy.

They distributed handbills criticising "Conor Murphy's continuing refusal to name to gardaí those whom he claimed assured him that the IRA did not kill [Mr Quinn]".

Quinn (21) was beaten to death in October 2007 by a group of about 10 people in an isolated farm building outside Castleblayney, Co Monaghan, not far from his home in south Armagh. His family believes the IRA killed him but this has been denied.

Mr Murphy, who is Minister for Regional Development with responsibility for roads, did not pass the protesters, who carried placards which asked, "Is Paul Quinn's murder on your conscience?"

However, Sinn Féin Lord Mayor of Belfast Tom Hartley did stop at the picket, which included Stephen Quinn, father of the murder victim, and accepted a handbill from them.

The handouts claimed Mr Murphy had told the BBC's Newsnight programme that he was told by the IRA it was not involved in the killing.

The support group alleges Mr Murphy said: "I have spoken to the IRA in his area and I am satisfied with the assurances they gave me, very solid assurances, that they weren't involved in his death. ... when people allege it was the IRA and I go and talk to the IRA and receive assurances from them as I expected to do, then you have to assume it's other people involved in this area ..."

The group further claimed Mr Murphy's pledge of office required him to "... uphold the rule of law based as it is on the fundamental principles of fairness, impartiality and democratic accountability, including support for policing and the courts ..." and that the St Andrews Agreement required him to give "support for law and order including endorsing fully the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the criminal justice system ..."

It does not provide for ministerial consultation with suspects in a murder inquiry, the group noted. They called on him "to identify all those with whom he consulted to the PSNI and Garda".

Sinn Féin said last night Mr Murphy did not deliberately avoid any protest mounted by the Quinn family or their supporters. The party said the Minister was happy to meet the Quinn family, which is demanding an apology from him over allegations that the murder victim was involved in crime.

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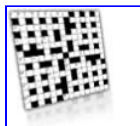
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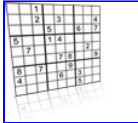
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