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## Omagh bomb trial described as a 'farce' by victim's husband

12 August 2007 By Colm Heatley in Belfast

The husband of a victim of the Omagh bomb says the only man in the North to stand trial in connection with the attack, which killed 31 people in August 1998, should be acquitted.

Kevin Skelton, a father of four, whose wife, Philomena, was killed in the Real IRA bombing, described the trial of Sean Hoey, a electrician from south Armagh, as a "farce" and a "show trial".

Hoey, 37, who has been in custody since 2003, is charged with 58 offences related to ten Real IRA bombings, including 29 murders as a result of the Omagh bomb. His trial ended earlier this year and a verdict is expected in late September.

Skelton, who is involved in a self-help group for victims of the bomb, said he didn't believe Hoey should be convicted and that the trial should never have come to court.

"I watched the first two weeks of it through a video link in Omagh and I had to stop- it was a shambles," said Skelton.

"It's a show trial, it never should have went to court I wouldn't convict him [Hoey] on the evidence that was presented to the court.

"The police witnesses were a disaster, it was all over the place. There was too many lies told in the court. The people who should be in court are the government."

Other victims of the Omagh bomb have privately described the case as "shambolic" and say they have doubts about Hoey's alleged involvement in Omagh.

Skelton said that, since the bombing, the British and Irish governments had been more concerned about "covering up what took place, rather than trying to solve it".

"I've been told by senior security people, in private that, if the truth ever came out, it could end political careers for a lot of people, north and south. We know no one will ever be convicted of the

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bombing and the governments have no real interest in pursuing the case," said Skelton.

"It has taken the people in the Bloody Sunday case all this time to get a public inquiry into that. I know that, if the truth ever comes out about Omagh, I won't be around to see it."

Skelton's comments reflect a growing resentment and anger among many of the Omagh bomb victims' families that the British and Irish governments have done too little to uncover the truth behind the bomb.

Skelton said he also believed that the intelligence services of both states had prior knowledge of the attack, but a political decision was taken to allow the attack to go ahead. Hoey's trial has been dogged by controversy since it began last year.

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Crucial prosecution evidence, such as DNA testing, was discredited last November when it emerged that the 'low copy' DNA used against Hoey had actually identified an English schoolboy as part of the Real IRA attack team.

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Earlier in the trial, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) admitted that key forensic evidence wasn't properly protected, and a British Army bomb expert admitted that some evidence may have been "altered".

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The PSNI also admitted that some statements had been "rewritten" and "beefed-up". It is understood that the Police Ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan, has been asked to probe the police handling of the investigation into Hoey.

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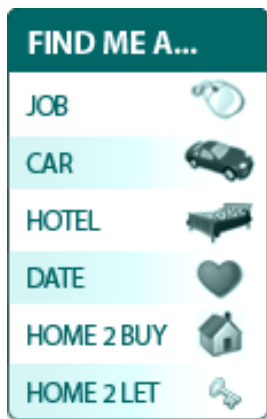
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