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News

Government HET funding 'is essential'

Sunday, September 16, 2007

By Stephen Breen

The campaigning father of a loyalist murder victim has hit out at the Government's failure to fund the police unit formed to probe murders during the Troubles.

Raymond McCord whose son, Raymond jnr, was butchered by UVF informers in 1997, said it was "essential" for the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) to receive financial assistance from Gordon Brown's office.

Mr McCord, who plans to raise the issue during his trip to the United States next month, told how he has met a number of victims' families after it emerged the unit received £4m from Sir Hugh Orde's policing budget.

Among the families the north Belfast man has spoken to in his fight for justice is Eugene Reavey, who lost his three brothers to loyalist gunmen in 1976.

Although HET chief Dave Cox has vowed to continue investigating the unsolved murders of the Troubles, Mr McCord called for more funding to be allocated to the unit.

Said the crusading dad: "The HET should not have had to take funding from the policing budget because the Government has always promised to support the unit.

"They play a very important role in this society and if they have to fold because of a lack of funding hundreds of victims will be furious.

"Their work is continuing on a daily basis and it's disgraceful the way victims from both sides of the political divide have been treated by politicians"

Mr McCord, who is willing to meet with any victim to discuss their views of the conflict, also urged the Assembly to address the issue.

He added: "I just think the First and Deputy First Ministers have been very silent on this issue and they need to do something.

"I know of people who have written many times to our top politicians about their cases, but they just keep getting ignored.

"I intend to make the US public aware of the funding problems for the HET and also on the issue of collusion from republicans and loyalists during my trip.

"The Assembly needs to be more pro-active on this issue and they should know that victims from all backgrounds are not going to go-away."

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