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OFMDFM has failed victims - Allister

09 October 2007

Statement by Jim Allister MEP:

"OFMDFM has failed victims. Today's announcement of yet further months of delay in appointing a Victims' Commissioner, after several promises of early progress and broken deadlines, shows just how inefficient and poor OFMDFM is in delivering on important issues. The pretence that it has nothing to do with their inability to agree is as convincing as Gordon Brown's explanation for running away from an election.

If the process was tainted by its Direct Rule genesis, then why did it take the First Minister and deputy First Minister 6 months to realise this? There was no such talk when they were promising an appointment in July and then September. Now suddenly this excuse emerges; it lacks credibility. My own suspicion is that McGuinness has exercised his veto, underscoring how unworkable is the joint office of OFMDFM and how repulsive it is to many that someone with McGuinness' antecedents should have any say on victims issues, never mind a veto on the appointment of a Commissioner.

There are huge issues awaiting action for victims, arising from Bertha McDougall's report, but at least a year will be lost, most of it because of **dithering and dispute** under supposedly effective and transparent devolution.

Ian Paisley tells us that people “*may have been deterred from putting themselves forward*” when the process started under direct rule. Does he seriously believe that those who suffered at the hands of the Provisional IRA will be more likely to put themselves forward knowing that the final stage of the appointment process will involve an interview with none other than Martin McGuinness and himself? Ian Paisley once described McGuinness as being stained by the blood of innocents (8/5/2001), now McGuinness is to have equal say in picking a Victim's Commissioner. What an obscenity!"

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