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Audio/Video

Podcast

Campaign
Literature

RSS Feed



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Peace Process

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Wear a Black Ribbon for Truth - Adams

Published: 7 August, 2007

This Sunday's annual August national march in Belfast has as its theme 'March for Truth'.

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams this morning held a press conference which was also attended by representatives of all of the victims groups who have endorsed the march, and by victims and relatives of victims.

He appealed for everyone to wear a Black Ribbon on the day of the march in solidarity with the families of victims and as an expression of support for the campaign for Truth.

Mr. Adams said:

"The objective of the march is to draw attention to the major issue of collusion and British state violence, and the administrative and institutional cover-up by the British government and its state agencies, of a policy which resulted in many thousands of victims who were killed or injured or bereaved."

The Sinn Fein President said that "there must be no hierarchy of victims. The relative of an IRA Volunteer is as entitled to compassion and respect as is the relative of someone killed from within the British state agencies. And the relatives of those victims whose deaths have not been acknowledged by the state have a right to the truth and to have their loss acknowledged by the state."

Mr. Adams said that the imperative for truth was self evident from the recent decision of the Public Prosecution Service not to prosecute anyone in the Pat Finucane case. "This is just one of many hundreds of examples of a cover-up by the state."

Mr. Adams was also critical of the British government's recent establishment of a consultative group to examine the past and to deal with the legacy of conflict. While acknowledging the honourable intentions of its members Mr. Adams said:

"We will not deal with the issue of truth by a British Secretary of State in the last two days of his tenure bringing in the type

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of study group that he did. I have problems in relation to its remit and my strong suspicion is that this is really about stringing out this issue and wasting time."

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Mr. Adams added:

"Some of the victims groups are looking at the creation of an international based, independent Truth Commission and that is something that Sinn Fein will look carefully at.

However, what is clear is that any process of truth and reconciliation must be victim centred. Victims have a right both to acknowledgement of their pain and to contribute to a changing society. And full co-operation and disclosure by all relevant parties is essential to the success of any truth process. An objective of any process should be healing - both for victims and for society in general and crucially a truth process needs to examine 'the causes, nature and extent' of the conflict and that all processes should be informed by a desire to learn the lessons of the past so that mistakes will not be repeated." ENDS

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