

**Pascal Donohoe T.D. Minister for European Affairs**  
**Seanad Adjournment Debate 10 July 2014**

The legacy of the past continues to seriously disrupt political and community life in Northern Ireland. The Government is committed to playing an active and constructive role in dealing with the issues, including through raising relevant matters with counterparts in the British Government.

The Government continues to support the all-party Dáil motions of July 2008 and May 2011 urging the British Government to allow access by an independent international judicial figure to all original documents in its possession relating to the Dublin-Monaghan bombings. In May 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade raised this matter with Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers, who undertook to reflect afresh on the Government's request to grant access to the relevant documents. The Government has expressed its solidarity with the victims and survivors of the Dublin-Monaghan bombings and their families. The Taoiseach, the Minister of State with responsibility for development and I participated in memorial events on the 40th anniversary of the bombings and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade recently announced renewed funding for Justice for the Forgotten, a group which works with the families affected by the bombings, through that Department's Reconciliation Fund.

Both the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade expressed their disappointment at the decision of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 29 April 2014 not to appoint a Hillsborough-style panel to review the Ballymurphy cases the Senator raised. They have since raised the matter with Prime Minister Cameron and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, respectively. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade informed the Secretary of State that, lacking agreement on a new model for contending with the past, a poorly functioning historical inquiries team and a severely backlogged coroner's court, the British Government should support reasonable and considered requests such as that made by the Ballymurphy families. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade has stressed strongly to his counterpart our view that the British Government should support these reasonable and considered requests from the families that have suffered in respect of this terrible incident.

The House will be aware of the RTE Prime Time special programme on the "hooded men" case, which alleged that the British Government may have misled the European Court of Human Rights in the case taken by Ireland against the UK on the hooded men and other matters. In that case, the European Court of Human Rights considered an earlier report by the European Commission on Human Rights that the in-depth interrogation methods used by the British authorities in Northern Ireland amounted to torture. The court found that, while the interrogation methods were "inhuman and degrading", they did not amount to torture. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been in contact with RTE and with the Pat Finucane Centre, on whose work much of the programme was based, and is currently reviewing archival records in order to fully assess the claims made by the "Prime Time" programme.

The House will also be aware of the issues raised in a BBC "Panorama" documentary in November 2013 concerning the alleged activities of an undercover British army unit, the military reaction force, MRF. The Northern Ireland Director of Public Prosecutions, Barra McGrory, has asked the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to investigate these allegations. The DPP has been provided with a detailed analysis by the PSNI of the comments made by three former soldiers in the course of the programme. In respect of the serious allegations surrounding the activities of the MRF, the PSNI is seeking to identify those who appeared on the programme and those who provided information to it.

Cases like Ballymurphy, the military reaction force and the Dublin-Monaghan bombings, the hooded men and other legacy cases, underline the need to find a comprehensive, fair and balanced framework for dealing with the past. If not dealt with, the past will continue to have a deeply corrosive effect on politics. In this regard, it is disappointing that Unionist parties withdrew last week from talks in Belfast on parades, flags and dealing with the legacy of the past. It is hoped that this is only a temporary setback and that all the parties will return to the talks as early as possible.

**End**