



*Towards Human Rights
and Truth Recovery*

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 1, September 2009

WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter, which will be produced every three months. We will bring you up-to-date with all the latest developments at The PFC such as upcoming events and keep you informed about general developments that impact on issues of importance to victims' families.

PATRICK FINUCANE

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the murder of Pat Finucane. In Dublin, earlier this year, the Finucane family celebrated Pat's life and his legacy with a conference and dinner in Trinity College, where Pat studied law. Speaking at the conference his widow, Geraldine, said:

"This year, 12th February, 2009 passed as an unremarkable, unnoticed date on the calendar for most people. For my family and me, however, it marks the twentieth anniversary of an event that resonates in our daily lives. In this regard, we are no different from many people who lost relatives and friends during four decades of conflict."

THE CASE OF AIDAN MCANESPIE SECRETARY OF STATE EXPRESSES REGRET

Following the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) report completed in 2008 into the death of Aidan McAnespie, who was shot dead by a British soldier at Achnacloy checkpoint 21 years ago, his family met with the Secretary of State, Shaun Woodward, at Hillsborough, accompanied by Michelle Gildernew of Sinn Féin, Senator Mary White of Fianna Fáil and Paul O'Connor of The Pat Finucane Centre. Mr Woodward later released a statement to the press co-signed by the British Defence Secretary, Bob Ainsworth stating:

"It is a matter of deep regret that Aidan was killed by a bullet fired by a soldier which ricocheted from the road".

Speaking for the family, niece, Una McCabe said:

"The HET report, in our view, represents the closest that we as a family have got to the truth of what occurred that day. The meeting with Shaun Woodward is the acknowledgement at the official level that was missing".

THE CASE OF HENRY CUNNINGHAM FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER MEETS FAMILY

In June the family of Henry Cunningham of Donegal, who was murdered by the UVF in 1973, met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin TD in Dail Éireann to formally present the Irish Government with a copy of the HET report on the investigation into the murder. Henry was 16 years old when he was shot dead by the UVF who opened fire on a workman's minibus as it drove along the M2 en route to Donegal. Henry's brothers, Robert and Herbert were also in the van.

During the families journey to discover the truth surrounding the death of their brother it was revealed that there was not one single scrap of paper held within Irish official documents about Henry's case. The family felt that the HET report should therefore be presented to a representative of the Government so that there would be an official record of the circumstances of the murder of one of its citizens. At the meeting, Mr. Martin apologised for the lack of acknowledgement given to the family by the Irish Government over the years.



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SOME HIGHLIGHTS THIS YEAR SO FAR

FUNDING

In February the Centre was successful in securing a three year funding package for our Legacy Project from the European Union PEACE III Programme. This funding enables us to continue providing our advocacy and support service for victims' families. Furthermore, we are now in a position to recruit another caseworker for our Newry Office.

NEW PREMISES

On the 29 May our new premises were opened at the Ráth Mór Centre in Derry by Geraldine Finucane. The day was a great success. Thanks to all the families who attended the launch and especially to those of you who traveled to be there. Thanks again to the families who helped us with the move and to prepare the office for opening!

Our new office is more accessible and has a 'family room' where meetings with families can be held in a more private space or where you can drop in for a splash of tea and a chat.

BENEFITS AND MEMORIAL FUND ADVICE DAYS

We are holding two advice days each in our Derry and Newry offices about access to benefits and memorial fund applications. Two members of staff from Relatives for Justice (RFJ), who specialise in these areas, have agreed to each spend a day at both our offices, where families can come to speak to the advice workers, in private, about benefits issues and the memorial fund. The staff from RFJ work exclusively with victims families and are aware of the range of benefits and grants that are available.

We can only run the advice days if we get interest from a certain number of participants. If you are interested in attending either or both of the advice days; please call Stephanie at our Derry office and Alan at our Newry office. Contact details below

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS DOCUMENT

We have just completed work on a pamphlet entitled: ***The Historical Enquiries Team and the Police Ombudsmans Office - 'Questions & Answers'***.

The purpose of this document is to provide information for families whose loved ones cases are being reviewed and investigated by the Historical Enquiries Team or The Police Ombudsmans Office. It is essentially an 'all you need to know guide'. We hope

that it will be of use to families who we provide advocate support to and also to families who are engaging with these statutory bodies without the help of an organisation such as ours.

The pamphlet will be distributed this month and will also be available on our website.

BRADLEY EAMES CONSULTATION

The Northern Ireland Office is currently carrying out a consultation on the Bradley/Eames Report, which was published in January this year. In response to this consultation, the PFC and RFJ are joining together to hold a number of meetings across the country to discuss the merits of the Bradley/Eames proposals and provide feedback from these meetings to the consultation body.

There are some areas of the Report that we would take issue with but we believe that the opportunity of the Legacy Commission should not be missed and we hope to make a positive representation to the Consultation body to this effect.

We will write to you in due course with dates, times and venues for these meetings.

BRIEF SUMMARY BRADLEY/EAMES PROPOSALS

Among the recommendations was a proposal for a Legacy Commission to deal with the legacy of the past. The Report recommends that the Legacy Commission should be responsible for the review and investigation of all conflict related deaths. The Commission would:

- Review and Investigate historic cases
- Conduct a process of information recovery
- Examine linked or thematic cases.

A further recommendation was for a £12,000 acknowledgement payment for each family who lost a loved one during the conflict.

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