

CAJ's response to the government consultation on: The report of the Consultative Group on the Past

In September 2009, CAJ submitted its response to the NIO consultation on the report of the Consultative Group on the Past. In the response, we outline that CAJ's members, like the rest of the community in Northern Ireland, have very different views on the Eames/Bradley proposals. Some believe that without public scrutiny, legal representation for all sides, the full cross-examination of witnesses, and the power to compel both witness statements and documents, no honest process of truth recovery can possibly succeed. Those with this view do not believe the current proposals have any real chance of providing bereaved families or society as a whole with the truth. They believe that the state and its agents, in particular, will do all they can to prevent the truth being told and will frustrate the legitimate rights of families to hear the truth.

Others, however, believe that these proposals are a start and can be built upon. The submission focussed on setting out the way in which the positives could be built upon and maximised. We indicated that, in the absence of a series of confidence building measures, it was unlikely that the political atmosphere would allow forward movement.

The key to moving forward depends to a large degree on the extent to which the relevant protagonists trust each other and the degree to which such processes conform to the requirements of international law. Whether an atmosphere of political generosity can be inculcated in the process rests significantly on the willingness of the UK government and the Northern Ireland Office to allow the requisite levels of scrutiny of and accountability for their own actions to operate in any mechanisms that are established.

The temptation arising from the controversy that greeted the report's launch will be to develop a process that selects the easy proposals which have most support, such as story-telling and discussion *fora* of various kinds. In fact, the process must deal with the hard issues. As the government with ultimate responsibility for this jurisdiction throughout the conflict, the UK government – with the Irish government – needs to address the difficult issues as well as the easy ones, not least by establishing an independent commission with sufficient powers and clear mandate.

There are real and significant human rights arguments which can be deployed in order to make the legal compromises in the report impossible to agree. The only

way in which these hurdles may be overcome is if the UK government, as a state with obligations under international human rights law, and as the key decision-maker and a powerful participant in the conflict, maximises its willingness to give a full accounting for its role and the role of its agents during the conflict. In CAJ's view, this is the surest way to bring about the atmosphere of political generosity required for initiatives such as those envisaged by the Consultative Group on the Past.

In general, CAJ is of the view that there is too little acknowledgement of the centrality of human rights in the report overall and there appears to have been little consideration of anything other than European human rights law. While compliance with Article 2 (of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms) is identified in the report as necessary, CAJ believes this is a minimalistic and overly narrow approach to the human rights obligations that pertain. We would point out that even within the European system, for example, other Articles of the ECHR (such as Article 3 on the prohibition of torture) are applicable.

While it is entirely appropriate that deaths arising from the conflict should be a major feature of any investigative and information recovery elements of a Legacy Commission, the learning from other transitional settings is that a wider lens is needed. In particular, we would point to the following:

1. The scale of injuries in number and seriousness can give a truer impression of the impact of the conflict. Many of those injured have had their lives impacted hugely in terms of the ongoing suffering and economic hardship. A true

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accounting would seek to address this aspect of the conflict.

2. The report is a missed opportunity in terms of assessing the gendered impact of the conflict.

3. Torture and ill-treatment were recurring aspects of the conflict, including allegations of ill-treatment during internment and persistently during police custody. The prohibition against torture is the simplest piece of international human rights law in terms of its obligation on states.

4. Though there is reference (on p79) to the socio-economic impact of the conflict, there is little assessment of how exactly this should be addressed. The impact of conflict was felt most keenly in areas of highest deprivation. A genuine effort to deal with the legacy of conflict will seek to ensure that there is a real attempt to address the inequality that was associated with the conflict.

In respect of particular recommendations, CAJ made a number of detailed comments, including:

- In relation to the **£12,000 recognition payment** (Recommendation 4), we believe that by saying very clearly that there should be no hierarchy of victims, the Consultative Group has done a service to the community. They have decided that the only way forward is to recognise (rather than accept or condone) the suffering that has affected all sides.

- CAJ agrees with the idea of involving **international figures** (Recommendation 7). Those tasked with overseeing the various units and, particularly, the Thematic Investigation Unit should also be independent. The mandate and remit of the Legacy Commission will be key. Operating investigations that conform to the highest human rights requirements and working towards a widely-agreed definition of reconciliation will be fundamental if an international figure is to be able to operate independently.

- In relation to the **functions of the Commission** (Recommendation 8), the important issues are whether the Commission is given sufficient powers; has a wide enough mandate; and can carry out its functions in a comprehensive and independent manner. Fundamentally, it needs to be able to promote human rights, equality and respect for the rule of law.

- There is a responsibility on the UK and Irish governments to set the tone for the work of the units carrying out **Review and Investigation** (Recommendation 17). They should indicate their willingness to co-operate fully with any mechanisms established, establish them with requisite powers and resources to enable them to carry out their functions effectively and independently, ensure equality of arms in relation to victims' access to the mechanisms, and ensure recourse to independent and judicial oversight of their decision-making.

- We understand the logic of consecutive stages from investigation through to **information recovery** (Recommendation 19). However, information could be withheld or covered up at investigation stage, only to be revealed in the latter, more legally lenient, information recovery process. This could be an easy way for the government, in particular, to manage the process and avoid its obligations to disclose information of relevance to families in cases where its agents were involved in deaths. Human rights standards require transparency, accountability, judicial involvement and testing of evidence. The process envisaged for this unit avoids all of these. We cannot see why it should be impossible for families to have their interests represented in the discussions.

- There may be a view that keeping legal representation out of this unit will be a way of avoiding the **expense of legal fees**. However, it is likely that government agents who assist this unit will have been legally advised at public expense. An equality of arms approach requires that those affected by the actions of the government agents should also have access to legal advisors at no additional cost to themselves, should they wish to.

- With regard to the **use of protected statements**, this approach is not out of line with that used by other inquiries. However, unlike inquiries, CAJ is concerned that the only people who will test the evidence are the Commissioner responsible for information recovery and her/his staff. It is important that this individual and his/her staff have a judicial/legal background.

- We believe the **Thematic Investigation Unit** (Recommendation 20) has the capacity to be a powerful tool to provide reliable and realistic accounts of what took place during the conflict. However, we are concerned about whether the issue of collusion will be adequately dealt with this by this unit as currently proposed. Collusion concerns the state colluding to kill its own citizens. There can be no graver issue and in our view it is not acceptable under international law that issues be discussed in private and covered up.

- We are completely opposed to the notion that the **inquiry into the Pat Finucane case** should be dropped (Recommendation 21). This case goes to the heart of issues around collusion and must therefore be dealt with transparently. The approach of the UK government to date has been characterised by prevarication, obfuscation and avoidance. This approach has contributed greatly to a poisoning of the atmosphere in relation to the government's motives. Rather than seeking to avoid its responsibilities with regard to this inquiry, in our view the UK government should proceed as quickly as possible to agreeing an inquiry with the family of Pat Finucane. A good faith effort in this regard will contribute to the atmosphere of political generosity to which we have alluded elsewhere.

New Appointments Give Food For Thought....

Last month saw the appointment by Shaun Woodward of four new Equality Commissioners to replace the outgoing services of Tony Carlin, Una Gillespie, Tom McGrath, and Paul Yam. Certainly his appointments provide food for thought, particularly in light of those who are currently serving on the Commission.

Looking at the recent appointments of new Commissioners to the Equality Commission, by far the most familiar name to equality campaigners will be Dermot Nesbitt, the former Ulster Unionist Party MLA and Minister for the Environment. Dermot's contribution and commitment to advancing the cause of the Ulster Unionist Party is commendable, as has been the tenacity with which he engaged in discussions around equality. As a member of the then Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR), Dermot wrote a dissenting note for the Employment Equality Review of 1997 in which he challenged the use of the Unemployment Differential as a measure for determining fairness in the labour market.

While CAJ disagree with much of what Dermot says about the impact of equality legislation and the measures necessary to achieve equality, we would defend to the hilt his right to say what he does. Moreover, we would fully respect the skill, rigour, and indeed good humour which Dermot brings to any discussions. What is significant about the current Commission however is that there is no obvious political equivalent to Dermot from the Nationalist/Republican community. In fact, the only other Commissioner with any political pedigree is Jane Morrice, former MLA for the Women's Coalition, who take an unashamedly "neither Unionist nor Nationalist" approach to their politics.

Other female Commissioners include Stella Burnside, (OBE), and Elaine Waterson (MBE), who, in addition to possessing British Empire medals, have something else in common in that they are also both former nurses – something which should be of relief to anyone concerned about taking ill during the course of a Commission meeting. Nurses are however outnumbered by broadcasters in the current Commission. Jane Morrice, (Deputy Chief Commissioner) in her earlier career was a journalist and reporter for the BBC, so she clearly has much in common with recently appointed Commissioner Anna Carragher (recently Head of Programmes for BBC NI). Given that Chief Commissioner Bob Collins worked for RTÉ for almost 30 years (including a spell as Director General), there is no shortage of expertise when it comes to discussing the Commission's media profile.

Business interests are also well represented on the Equality Commission as it currently stands with a former Chief Executive of TSB (Bryan Johnston OBE) who also is a member of the CBI (NI) Council. Also included within the current Commission is Norman Trotter, recently commercial head of C&C Group operations in NI and a former Chairman of the NI Drinks Industry Group. Elaine

Waterson (MBE), in addition to being a state registered nurse, is also a retired hotelier. Another recent appointment, Lyn McBriar, is a former Regional Head of Human Resources with Marks and Spencer.

Other current Commissioners include Dr David Stevens, currently leader of the Corrymeela Community and former Secretary of the Irish Council of Churches; and Kit Chivers who, in addition to being the former Chief Inspector for Criminal Justice NI, also served for 20 years as Secretary of the Brixton Council of Churches. Also included in the current line-up is Peter Sheridan (former Assistant Chief Constable with the PSNI); Patricia Feeney, a former teacher; James Knox, formerly with COSO; Murray Watt, who has a career in community development/community participation; and Charo Lanao-Madden, who grew up in Peru and has worked with the migrant worker communities in Northern Ireland.

The most obvious gap in the current line-up is anyone with specific expertise in equality law from either a practitioner or academic perspective. That is not to query the knowledge or capacity of existing Commissioners to grasp the key issues, but rather to point out the obvious. The Paris Principles on National Human Rights Institutions which are applicable to the Equality Commission evidently encourage governments to ensure appropriate human rights expertise on independent bodies established to advance such norms. It also seems evident that in an organisation tasked with upholding and implementing law, it would seem prudent to at least have a number of lawyers (whether academic or practitioners) appointed as Commissioners.

Clearly, organisations like the Equality Commission work best when they have a range of individuals bringing a breath of expertise to the Commission table. Undoubtedly, there is a range of talent and expertise among those currently serving as Commissioners. Collectively however, there are some obvious gaps in the current composition. Not least given the discussions about political composition above there is an evident lack of any representation from Nationalist/Republican politics for example there is no representation from the trade union movement – all the more surprising given the range of heavyweight input from the business sector.

Government ministers tend to argue that they appoint the best candidates to organisations like the Equality Commission from the pool of candidates who apply. The problem however is that Shaun Woodward is to date the only person who has seen the full list of applicants. In the interests of open government, CAJ, would be keen on seeing the full list of those who threw their hat in the ring, and there seems little reason for not publishing such information. Such an act would certainly constitute a "confidence building measure" for the equality and human rights community.

20th Anniversary of CRC

The approaching twentieth anniversary of the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) constitutes a timely opportunity to reflect on this ground-breaking and challenging international human rights treaty. On a day to day basis, with our collective efforts focused on securing the meaningful implementation of its provisions, the vision and intent underpinning its development can easily be lost sight of. Among the core values and themes underpinning its conceptualisation were those of 'dignity' 'non-discrimination' 'best interests' 'participation' 'respect' and most fundamentally of all, 'rights holders.'

At the heart of the UNCRC was a profound paradigmatic shift in how society views children, not as the property of their parents or as helpless objects of charity, but as rights holders and active agents in their own lives. While the UNCRC is primarily a legal document, an international human rights treaty which imposes legal obligations on governments, it also functions as an ethical statement of how children should be viewed and treated within society. It provides a yardstick against which to measure our treatment of the youngest and most vulnerable members of our population. Marking the 20th anniversary of its ratification should provide government and all others concerned with improving children's lives with an opportunity to both evaluate progress made in achieving implementation of its provisions but also in embedding a different and more respectful relationship with children and young people in our society, one which is based on dignity, equality and the promotion and protection of their rights.

At an international level the UN plans to mark the anniversary of the ratification of the UNCRC by organising a two day celebration on the 8th and 9th October 2009 in Geneva. The celebration will focus on the theme 'Dignity, Development and Dialogue' and will bring together, amongst others, State parties, UN bodies and other intergovernmental organisations, national human rights institutions, NGOs and children's groups. In addition to its celebratory dimension, the two day event will provide an opportunity to evaluate the status and implementation of the CRC, after 193 ratifications worldwide and 17 years of reporting.

The Children's Law Centre and Save the Children are hosting a UNCRC anniversary event in the Long Gallery, Stormont on 26th November 2009. The title of this event is '*The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - 20 Years A Growing*'.¹ The focus will be on celebrating achievements and highlighting the challenges ahead. Among those attending will be politicians and key decision makers within government. As with the UN, we are keen to strike a balance between celebrating the positive advances brought

about by 20 years of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child but also to explore the challenges for government and others in relation to implementation of the UN Convention and giving effect to the 2008 Concluding Observations issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child². Dr. Maria Herczog who is a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child will be the keynote speaker at this event and we will be using the opportunity presented by her visit to hold a number of high level meetings both within and outside of government.

One year on from the publication of their 2008 Concluding Observations³, it is a reasonable and legitimate expectation that a definite plan of action for implementing the 2008 Concluding Observations be in place. Such a plan should command the highest level of authority and support across government and the Assembly, should be in place and being progressed. Instead, one year on the response of government here has been deeply disappointing and wholly inadequate, falling far short of the requirements of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. One of the few positive actions which can be identified in response to the 2008 Concluding Observations was the production, in conjunction with NICCY, of a booklet version of the Concluding Observations for children and young people. However, unlike in Scotland and Wales, where parliamentary debates were held during November 2008, there has been no Assembly debate on the 2008 Concluding Observations. Following a timely and participatory consultation process, the Scottish Government launched its plan of action on 1st September 2009, while the Welsh Government, having held a major conference on the 2008 Concluding Observations in March 2009 plans to launch its action plan on International Children's Rights Day on 20th November 2009. In contrast, and despite encouragement from NGOs to do so, the Northern Ireland Executive has not as yet provided any official response to the 2008 Concluding Observations.

The four Administrations now plan to produce a Four (4) Jurisdictional action plan, to be launched on the 20th anniversary of the UNCRC this joint action plan will include a section covering 'common areas for co-operation' and four annexes outlining priorities areas for the four jurisdictions, including Northern Ireland. OFMDFM has indicated that the action plans for the ten year inter-departmental Children's Strategy will be the main vehicle for taking forward the 2008 Concluding Observations. On 8th September 2009 it issued a consultation document on the UNCRC Draft Priorities for Northern Ireland, giving NGOs 12 working days in which to respond. In addition to other fundamental breaches of s75, the "consultation process" and the length of time given for response was substantially short of the two month period recommended by the Equality Commission. These significant breaches of s75

are all the more concerning given that OFMDFM is the sponsor department for the Equality Commission.

There is no obvious correlation between the draft priorities in OFMDFM's consultation document and the 2008 Concluding Observations and they do not appear to have been informed by any level of analysis of the 2008 Concluding Observations. This is exemplified by the fact that while a number of draft priorities listed, such as early years and early intervention and bullying are very important children's rights issues, they are not specifically addressed in the 2008 Concluding Observations. Equally striking is the fact that a number of jurisdictional specific issues, including those where the child's right to life is engaged, and which were addressed by the UN Committee, are not included in OFMDFM's list of draft priorities. These include the use of tasers and plastic bullets against children, the lack of resourcing for child and adolescent mental health services and the continued existence of the defence of reasonable chastisement in relation to the use of physical punishment. Other significant jurisdictional specific issues which are not included in OFMDFM's draft list of priorities include the need for immediate implementation, following the UK government's withdrawal of its reservation to Article 37(c), of the separation of children from adults in all places of detention and the recommendation that the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland include a special section devoted to children's rights.

The current economic recession has created a significantly more challenging environment for human rights work generally and children's rights work in particular. Pressure on resources has already been highlighted by government as a constraint on its capacity to progress the implementation of the 2008 Concluding Observations.

There is a real and well founded concern that the current financial situation will be proffered as a reason not to give effect to the UN Committee's Concluding Observations. This cannot be allowed to happen for two reasons : firstly, while the UN Committee does recognise that a lack of resources can hamper the full implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, and for this reason accepts the need for 'progressive realisation,' it nonetheless makes it explicitly clear that "...whatever their economic circumstances, States are required to undertake all possible measures towards the realisation of the rights of the child, paying special attention to the most disadvantaged groups."⁴ There is thus a clear onus on the government, even under the prevailing economic circumstances, to demonstrate it has undertaken all possible efforts to ensure the implementation of both the 2008 Concluding Observations and UNCRC rights generally, and the consequent widest possible enjoyment of rights by all children and young people, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable amongst them.

The second reason why children's rights cannot be put' on the back burner' is that a failure to address the serious and widespread violations of children's rights, as highlighted by the UN Committee, will, in addition to blighting these children's lives, inevitably result in an ever more unequal and divided society. Some of the most serious of these violations require urgent, immediate action and a number of them are resource neutral or could actually save money including the threat to the child's right to life posed by plastic bullets and Tasers, the failure to outlaw physical punishment within the home and the continued detention of children with adults in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre.

We are hopeful that the 20th Anniversary of the UNCRC and the surrounding events⁵ can act as a catalyst for government to renew the commitments it undertook on ratification on the Convention in 1991 and can lead to much greater focus on and prioritisation of children's rights. It is our firm belief that in this instance, and despite all of the very real challenges and constraints facing government, the old adage applies 'where there's a will there's a way.'

Sara Boyce
Children's Human Rights Advisor
Children's Law Centre/Save the Children

¹Please note that this is an invite only event.

²See *Just News* October 2008 for an analysis of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2008 Concluding Observations. Boyce, S. 'UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticises Government's record on children's rights'. Pages 5-6.

³The UN Committee previously issued concluding observations in respect of the UK Government in 1995 and 2002. Many of these earlier recommendations have still not been given effect.

⁴[http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(symbol\)/CRC.GC.2003.5.EN?OpenDocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(symbol)/CRC.GC.2003.5.EN?OpenDocument) paragraph 8

⁵NICCY is co-ordinating a calendar of events in connection with the UNCRC 20th Anniversary. Click on the following link to view the calendar <http://www.niccy.org/ChildrensRights/UNCRC20thAnniversary>

Conference

CAJ will host a 2 day conference in the Radisson Hotel, 3 Cromac Place, Belfast on **18th & 19th November**, entitled *'Policing with the Community? Patten's 'New Beginning' 10 Years On.'*

In September 1999 the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland produced its report, *'A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland.'* Known as the Patten Report, it recommended that policing with the community be the core function of the proposed new police service (Police Service of Northern Ireland) as well as every police station. The ongoing process of police reform has had radical implications for the structure and management of the police, but also for human rights, accountability, equality and community safety.

The Agreement of 1998 and the Patten Report should together provide a unique opportunity to deliver truly effective locally-based and rights-based policing. Where are we in the process of reform? What do human rights say about policing with the community? What are the implications for communities and their grassroots organisations? And what are our collective visions for the future of policing?

If you are interested in attending this conference, please email louise@caj.org.uk or call 028 9096 1122. The deadline for registration is 10th November.

Culture Night

CAJ's work is rooted in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** that spans the whole range of rights - civil, political, economic and social and last but not least, **cultural rights!** Article 27 of the Declaration states: *'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.'* We were therefore delighted to welcome the first Culture Night to Belfast's Cathedral Quarter and to participate in the evening.

CAJ used the evening to raise-awareness of the UDHR by giving out copies of the full text as an easy to use booklet (available free from the CAJ office) contributing to our overall work towards building a culture of rights in Northern Ireland. We also gave out information on the recent Concluding Observations from the International

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that stated that the UK government must implement a plan to ensure the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and to ensure their full legal effect in domestic law. The Committee also recommended that an Irish Language Act was adopted, 'with a view to preserving and promoting minority languages and cultural heritage.' The event was an opportunity for CAJ to distribute information on the Bill of Rights for NI. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's advice rightly points out that the European Convention on Human Rights does not protect the right to identity and culture and rightly therefore includes it in their strong advice for a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights (see www.nihrc.org for a copy).

CAJ's volunteers did a fantastic job of staffing the event and took photos of people holding a CAJ board supporting Cultural Rights. Thanks to Jakob, Sarah, Ross and Katie for a job well done.

Culture Night



Jakob said of the evening:

After two months of being at CAJ, Culture Night was a very good opportunity to experience the work of CAJ outside of the office. Being in contact with interested people and discussing topics they didn't expect to find at Culture Night were inspirational moments added to the atmosphere of the night.

We really enjoyed organising the CAJ stand and additionally getting a chance to get involved in the lively cultural life of Belfast.

I think we motivated many people on that evening to think about human rights and culture as a right. Many younger visitors, who may have not known CAJ before, were especially enthusiastic. They were interested in our stand and in particular our interactive photo action.



You can see some of the results of this action on this page and many more on our website www.caj.org.uk

Furthermore we got the opportunity to walk around with our cameras to capture photographs of other artists, musicians and masked performers for our photo campaign.

All in all, our attendance at the first Culture Night in Belfast was a real success and a good opportunity for CAJ's volunteers to do some proactive and exciting work.

For more information about Culture Night visit <http://www.culturenightbelfast.com>



Bill of Rights Training

As the public consultation on a Bill of Rights draws nearer, CAJ has organised two Bill of Rights training sessions:

Wednesday 4th November
Friday 27th November

Both will be held in Belfast.

Agenda

- 10am – 1pm – Introduction to a Bill of Rights. What is a Bill of Rights, why is it important?
- 1pm – 2pm – Lunch
- 2pm – 4pm – Bill of Rights public consultation: how to get involved.

Attendees can choose which parts of the day to attend, or can be present for the full session.

For more information or to register, contact Fiona Murphy, Human Rights Programme Officer on 028 9096 1122 or email fiona@caj.org.uk.

Civil Liberties Diary - September

2nd

A witness tells the Robert Hamill Inquiry that she lied in her original statement incriminating people allegedly involved in the attack. She says she was motivated by vindictiveness against her former boyfriend.

4th

The Robert Hamill Inquiry hears from a police witness that a cash machine transaction he discovered could have disproved a suspect's alibi at the time of the murder. He says he does not know why his predecessors failed to spot it.

A multi-agency campaign against hate crime in Northern Ireland is criticised by Basil McCrea as being a waste of tax payer's money in relation to the small number of actual offences recorded.

A Forum for Victims and Survivors of the Troubles is announced. The thirty-nine members will first meet in Belfast on September 22.

8th

The Robert Hamill Inquiry hears that a woman due to give evidence against a police officer for his role in the murder received threats from loyalist.

7th

Former Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan claims Special Branch officers knew of the threat against murdered Portadown woman Margaret Perry but did nothing to protect her. The IRA members who were alleged to have abducted and killed her were police agents.

14th

A preliminary hearing into the deaths of two unarmed IRA men shot dead by the SAS almost 20 years ago opens in Mays Chambers. Martin McGaughey and Dessie Grew were killed in Loughall in 1990. Their families have mounted a series of legal challenges to the RUC's failure

to conduct an investigation into the incident.

15th

Six people arrested in connection with dissident republican murders launch a challenge to the Terrorism Act 2000 Schedule 8. The applicants, one of which is Colin Duffy, have already won a legal case against a decision to extend their period in custody. They are now seeking a declaration that the relevant terrorism legislation is incompatible with the ECHR.

17th

Senior Coroner John Leckey instructs PSNI lawyers that they must deliver the reports into the deaths of six men shot dead in an alleged shoot to kill operation in Loughgall. He had previously been given only limited access to the reports but has now ordered that they be available so that inquests can finally get under way after two decades of delay.

18th

Victims Campaigner, Mark Thompson, announces he is launching legal proceedings against the Chief Constable and two loyalist band members over gathering information on Catholics from the police database. Aaron Hill and Darren Richardson were both convicted of collecting information likely to be useful to terrorists.

The British government announces that it has abandoned a promised extension of maternity pay from nine months to a year due to the cost implications. Labour's 2005 manifesto had made the move a goal of government policy.

22nd

A Northern Ireland jury is told to decide if the stroke which killed a US citizen was linked to an assault he alleged he suffered at the hands of the police six months earlier. John Hemsworth died in the RVH in January 1998, four days after taking ill. The jury is set to hear from expert witnesses.

Anthony Langdon, a former civil servant, wrote an official memorandum after

meeting Sir Ronnie Flanagan in 2000 regarding the murder of Robert Hamill. This was made public during the Robert Hamill Inquiry. It stated that Flanagan had said at the time that Mr. Hamill could have died from oxygen starvation due to the manner in which his head was cradled by a member of his family.

23rd

The head of the Independent Commission for Police Complaints at the time of Robert Hamill's killing tells the inquiry into his death that the ICPC "lacked moral fibre" and was "ineffective." He described the former organisation as "deferential" to the point of being sycophantic to the organisation it was supposed to hold to account.

24th

Secretary of State, Shaun Woodward, says that he is shocked that the report into the Bloody Sunday Inquiry will not be released until March of next year.

New guidelines are published in Northern Ireland to ease the risk of prosecution for people who assist a loved one to commit suicide. It is issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Alasdair Fraser, after consultation with his opposite number in England and Wales. The move comes after a House of Lords decision earlier this year.

Compiled by Mark Bassett from various newspapers

Just News

Just News welcomes readers' news, views and comments.

Just News is published by the Committee on the Administration of Justice Ltd.

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