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MONDAY
 08/10/2007
 11:46:25

Victims Commissioner post to be readvertised

Stormont duo make the call

The post of Victims Commissioner in Northern Ireland is to be readvertised, Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness announced today.

The Stormont First Minister and Deputy First Minister said they were encouraging new applicants to join the current field for the £65,000-a-year job because they believed it would strengthen the office if the selection process was carried out under devolution.

The DUP leader and Sinn Fein MP denied the failure to appoint a commissioner so far from a field drawn up during direct rule was as a result of in-fighting between them. And they also pledged their full support to whoever is eventually appointed before the end of the year to succeed Bertha McDougall who was the Interim Victims Commissioner.

"I know there has been a lot of ill-informed speculation that the Deputy First Minister and I have been at loggerheads over the appointment but that simply isn't true," Mr Paisley said.

"Yes, we have taken time to consider the best way forward but that is just as it should be.

"This is an important appointment impacting on some of the most vulnerable people in our society and we need to know that victims and survivors, who have suffered so much for so long, are represented by the very best person for the job."

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Mr Paisley vowed that, as Northern Ireland society moved forward, no-one bereaved or injured during the Troubles would be left behind.

However, he said, because of the massive political strides that had been taken in Northern Ireland in recent months, they believed it was essential that the person appointed had the full democratic endorsement of all sides at Stormont.

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DETAILS: US / 95mins (16)

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