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Belfast's High Court

WEDNESDAY
14/11/2007
18:19:23

NI murder inquest suspended

An inquest into the sectarian murder of a Catholic in North Belfast was dramatically halted on the orders of a High Court judge today.

Senior Northern Ireland coroner John Leckey had nearly completed hearing witnesses about the murder when a solicitor rushed in telling him the inquest had to be suspended on the judge's orders.

Lawyers representing the family of murder victim Gerard Lawlor had gone to the High Court after Mr Leckey refused to postpone the inquest until after the completion of an investigation into allegations of collusion between police and Loyalist gunmen over the murder had been completed. Solicitor Niall Murphy said outside the court the family wanted a wider inquest than that which had been arranged.

He said: "The police ombudsman and the police had been provided with a witness statement from a member of the public outlining these concerns and that witness was not called to the coroner's court nor were the concerns addressed that Mr Lawlor and his family have

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in relation to the suspects being police informers."

He said the judge had ordered the suspension of the inquest until after he heard full evidence and decided whether additional witnesses should be called before Mr Leckey.

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