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WEDNESDAY  
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16:52:34

**Funding threat to collusion murders probe**

Allegations of police involvement in murders during decades of violence in Northern Ireland will not be probed unless the Government provides the money, the Police Ombudsman has warned.

Ombudsman Nuala O' Loan said she had yet to be given any assurance she would have the money necessary to carry out historic investigations.

In her final annual report before standing down, she called on the Government to ensure her office has the funds it needs to carry out its statutory duty of investigating murders from the past.

Mrs O' Loan said that while the Government provides a budget to the PSNI, the Public Prosecution Service and the Forensic Science Service to look at all deaths of the Troubles, no funding was allocated initially for her office to do its share of the work.

Instead she has to negotiate each year for the necessary funds and, at present, no money has been made available for next year.

"The Historic Enquiries Team has notified me of more than 40 further cases which it needs to transfer to my office," she said.

Ms O' Loan added: "While I accept that in the future society may choose

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to develop alternative methods of dealing with the past, at the moment I am required by law to investigate these cases, yet I have not been assured I will have the money to do so."

She warned: "We have a situation where the police can investigate all the other murders of the Troubles but, unless my office is resourced properly, there will be no investigation of allegations of police involvement in murder."

The Ombudsman also expressed grave concerns about the transfer in October of primacy in national security matters in Northern Ireland from the PSNI to MI5.

She said while she has a legal right of access to all material held within the PSNI she will not have such a right when MI5 takes charge.

The Northern Ireland Office later moved to assure the Ombudsman that the money she needed would be made available.

However, it said the allocation could not be made yet.

The annual report revealed the Ombudsman received 3,249 complaints against the police during the year and dealt with an additional 1,060 associated matters.

The largest number of complaints against the police were made by members of Northern Ireland`s Protestant community.

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**DETAILS:** US / 96mins (16)

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