



Parents of James Barker

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 THURSDAY
 20/12/2007
 18:35:10

Not guilty verdict in Omagh trial

A Northern Ireland man has been found not guilty of murdering 29 people killed in the Omagh bomb.

Sean Hoey, 38, of Molly Road in Jonesborough, County Armagh, was also cleared of all other charges linked to a series of terrorist attacks in Northern Ireland in the run-up to the August 1998 atrocity.

Speaking at Belfast Crown Court, Mr Justice Weir said the evidence by the prosecution in the case did not meet the required standard.

Hoey had denied all 56 charges.

Reaction of Omagh families

English lawyer Victor Barker, whose son, James, died in the Omagh bomb attack, said he and his family were `very disappointed` at the judge`s decision.

He said that as a lawyer, he accepted the legal system was there to protect the human rights of people such as Sean Hoey and he had to stand by it.

He added that it was a great shame that his son and the 29 people who died in Omagh had `no human rights at all` .

Michael Gallagher, whose son, Aidan, was killed in the bombing, said the case had been a disaster for the Omagh families.

"I think there has to be real questions why this was allowed to go through the system," he added.

"The police recommended the prosecution and the DPP allowed it to move forward, then they brought us all here for Christmas to get this news."

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Lawrence Rush, whose wife Elizabeth died in the 1998 bombing, said: "I am tired, I am exhausted after 10 years of pain and hope."

He added: "I am not over-disappointed, I would not have wanted the wrong man to be convicted."

Evidence

Mr Hoey, who has been in custody for the last four years, will now be home before Christmas and his acquittal means that nobody in Northern Ireland has yet been convicted of carrying out the single worst terrorist atrocity in more than 30 years of violence.

Mr Justice Weir took just over an hour and a quarter to deliver his verdict today.

He was highly critical of the forensic evidence presented by the prosecution. He was not satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that fibres found in glue used to assemble power units could be linked to the accused or to establish, as the Crown had claimed, common authorship that one person was involved.

The judge was also highly critical of the process of bagging, labelling and recording exhibits.

He claimed there had been a `deliberate and calculated deception` by two police officers.

Prosecution reaction

The Public Prosecution Service later released a statement defending its decision to bring the case against Sean Hoey.

It said the decision was made following a careful analysis of the available evidence.

In a statement, the Police Service said it would study the judge`s verdict in detail and will work to ensure that any organisational or procedural shortcomings are addressed.

It also said it would await the outcome of a Police Ombudsman investigation into two officers who gave evidence during the trial.

Hoey reaction

Outside the court, Mr Hoey`s mother Rita said she wanted the world to know her son was innocent.

Mr Hoey`s solicitor, Peter Corrigan, added: "Sean Hoey has always denied

all the charges proffered against him.

"Today`s judgment completely vindicates him. Sean Hoey is an innocent man."

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On 20 Dec at 18:54 - sam millar from belfast said:

Once again, the PSNI have been caught out. Sinn Fein and the SDLP should hang their heads in shame, each time they call for support of this police farce... And where is the apology to Sean Hoey who was imprisoned for over four years??

On 21 Dec at 09:08 - Paul from Belfast said:

So much for the RUC being the best police force in the world!

On 21 Dec at 10:05 - allison from uk said:

To all the families this was terrible the atrocitcy and the justice (that you never had) keep up the fight the truth will out you are all in my prayers.

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DIRECTOR: Robert Ben Garant

STARRING: Dan Fogler, Christopher Walken, George Lopez

DETAILS: USA / 90mins (12A)

RATING: ★★☆☆☆

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