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### Durkan concern at collusion claims

Prime Minister Tony Blair faced more demands to look into claims by an Irish Parliamentary Committee that there was endemic collusion by members of the security forces in Northern Ireland in loyalist murders.

By: Press Association

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Nationalist SDLP leader Mark Durkan vowed to raise in the House of Commons the naming in the Joint Oireachtas Committee`s report of loyalists and members of the security forces involved in murders on both sides of the border.

The Foyle MP joined Bertie Ahern in calling on Downing Street to examine collusion as the Irish Prime Minister prepared to meet relatives of three members of the Miami Showband who were killed in 1975 in one of the most shocking incidents in the Troubles.

Mr Durkan said the Dublin Parliamentary committee had been clear and forthright in the way it itemised the nature and extent of collusion.

"The activities of the infamous Glennane gang were recently brought fully into the light thanks to the efforts of the Pat Finucane Centre, and now the considered view of a parliamentary committee is that collusion was endemic, there was extensive evidence of that collusion at the time, and elements in the British security forces were engaged in international terrorism," the SDLP leader noted.

"The British Government must heed the call of the Taoiseach and the Pat Finucane Centre to examine the findings of the committee and take appropriate action.

"We owe a debt to the families of the victims of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings who have pursued this case over the years to the point where the truth is at last beginning to emerge."

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The Miami Showband were one of Ireland`s most popular live bands in the 1970s.

They were returning from performing at a dance in Banbridge, Co Down, when their minibus was flagged down by men dressed in army uniforms on the road to the border town of Newry.

Band members were told to line up in a ditch while UVF members posing as Ulster Defence Regiment members tried to plant a bomb inside the minibus which they hoped would explode later on as the musicians headed home to Dublin.

As the gang loaded the bomb, the musicians were asked for their names and addresses but it exploded prematurely, killing two UVF members Harris Boyle and Wesley Sommerville.

After the explosion, the UVF gang opened fire on the band, killing lead singer Fran O` Toole, trumpet player Tony Geraghty and Brian McCoy.

Guitarist Stephen Travers and Des Lee survived.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee chaired by Fianna Fail TD Sean Ardagh focused on nine loyalist murders which killed 18 people during the 1970s on both sides of the border.

Among the other incidents they examined were the bombing of Kay`s Tavern in Dundalk, the murder of three members of the Reavey family in Markethill Co Armagh and the murders of three members of the O` Dowd family in Gilford Co Down.

The committee said: "We believe there is an abundance of information to suggest that there was reasonable if not significant, knowledge on this side of the border that British security personnel were working with, and as, loyalist paramilitaries.

"The fact that little or nothing was done to address this is, to put it mildly, alarming."

It was scathing about the British Government`s refusal to co-operate with investigations into allegations of collusion in the incidents.

Mr Ahern said the report`s findings were disturbing, deeply troubling and a matter of the most serious concern.

The Taoiseach said it was vital the British Government now co-operated with all investigations.

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