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 TUESDAY 31/10/2006 18:09:49  
**Paramilitaries 'could help with truth recovery'**  
 Republican and loyalist paramilitaries can aid the truth recovery process in Northern Ireland by revealing details of unsolved crimes, a new report has claimed.  
 By: Press Association

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They would take primary responsibility for helping relatives find out what exactly happened to victims.

Organisations voluntarily disclosing their involvement was one of five options suggested by a group which prepared the report aimed at heightening public debate on how all sides can deal with the past.

Healing Through Remembering (HTR) claimed the risk of not addressing unresolved issues, such as truth recovery, may prevent the development of a sustainable peace.

"Without an honest debate, the suffering and conflict cannot be acknowledged, still less resolved," the report said.

Making Peace With The Past, which was prepared by a sub-group of loyalists, republicans, former police and soldiers as well as victims, academics and community representatives, outlined the five possible options to move discussions forward.

A South African-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission is not necessarily the way ahead, according to the report's author, Professor Kieran McEvoy.

"We must remember that no international option can simply be imported into the local situation," he said.

One of the five options put forward is called internal organisational investigation, in which the IRA and other republican and loyalist terrorists would agree to meet victims' requests for information by providing the

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truth about what happened to their loved ones.

A statement issued with today`s report said: "This information and the victims` requests could be fed through a central body that may produce a report on the process and its outcomes."

The report, which is the first of its kind in Northern Ireland, offered four other options:

:: Drawing a line under the past, which would mean doing nothing to take forward the process of truth recovery;

:: Community-based truth recovery, which would mean communities devising and carrying out their own forms of truth recovery, largely through the collection and documentation of previously untold testimonies and stories;

:: The British and Irish Governments setting up an independent Truth Recovery Commission to explore the causes, context and consequence of violence, with the power to compel witnesses to give evidence and to grant amnesty as well as, potentially, recommending prosecution;

:: A commission of historical clarification, which would devise an independent, authoritative, historical narrative of the years of conflict and why they happened, aimed at limiting misrepresentations and disagreements and helping to prevent violence in the future based on grudges and manipulations.

The first of a series of public meetings and partnership seminars to stimulate debate will be held in Belfast next month.

Dr Brandon Hamber, an international conflict and transformation expert, claimed:

"Nowhere else in the world has civil society, never mind a group as diverse as this, taken such a substantial lead in developing options on issues of truth recovery and transitional justice for their specific context."

Report author Prof McEvoy said the issue of truth recovery in Northern Ireland often evoked strong and conflicting emotions and was immediately associated with South Africa`s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

But he insisted: "This report seeks to challenge this approach and expands the discussion beyond this example to other international experiences.

"We must remember that no international option can simply be imported into the local situation. Any decision on the issue of truth recovery should be made following consideration of home-grown options such as those presented here."



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On 31 Oct at 13:39 - damien from west belfast said:

and the police and army have a huge part to play, in getting at the truth.

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