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Relatives of 'Glenanne gang' victims demand DPP meeting

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By Lesley-Anne Henry

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The families of eight men murdered by a loyalist gang that included members of the security services yesterday demanded a meeting with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

During a press conference on Belfast's Falls Road to discuss their recent victory in the European Court of Human Rights relatives of people killed by the 'Glenanne gang' called for an explanation as to why charges were dropped against some of those accused of killing their loved ones.

The Mid-Ulster based murder gang, which included members of the RUC and UDR, killed two sets of Catholic brothers, the Reaveys and O'Dowds and attacked two bars in South Armagh in 1976.

John, Brian and Anthony Reavey were shot at their home in Whitecross, Co Armagh, on January 4, 1976. Joseph, Barry and Declan O'Dowd were murdered near Gilford the same night.

Colm McCartney was murdered at Altmackin in August 1975; Trevor Brecknell killed at Donnelly's Bar, Silverbridge in December 1975 and Michael McGrath was wounded in a gun attack at the Rock Bar, Keady in June 1976.

On Tuesday the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the families had their human rights violated because an investigation into new allegations about the 1976 killings was not sufficiently independent.

The families cases were based on a new investigation launched in 1999 after former RUC officer John Weir - once jailed for a loyalist murder - alleged that police officers and at least one UDR member were part of the killer gang.

Speaking on behalf of the families, Trevor Brecknell's son, Alan, said: " John Weir was and is the most significant whistleblower to have emerged in the past 37 years.

"Yet ongoing attempts were made to dismiss his allegations by dismissing John Weir...

"The facts, not the allegations, are that members of the RUC, UDR and security service agents were directly involved in murders and bombings. Not directing others but organising and participating... Gradually the truth is emerging."

Mr Brecknell branded it a "shame and a disgrace" that numerous letters he has written to the PPS have not been acknowledged.

The families said they were not seeking compensation but wanted the British Government to come clean.

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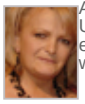

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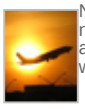

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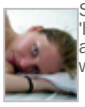

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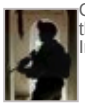
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