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Wednesday, 5 November 2008

DUP MLA Nelson McCausland was unrepentant yesterday after being suspended from the Assembly for refusing to withdraw detailed claims of Gerry Adams' alleged membership of the IRA.

The North Belfast MLA said his statement was based on Ed Maloney's book, A Secret History of the IRA.

Mr McCausland was applauded by party colleagues as he left the chamber having been given a one day ban for refusing to withdraw the remarks.

He became the second MLA to be suspended since devolution was restored, after Iris Robinson attacked Health Minister Michael McGimpsey.

Speaking afterwards, he said: "The Speaker was simply implementing the rules of the Assembly but I was not prepared to withdraw my

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statement.”

Mr Adams said he refuted the claims and Sinn Fein is thought to have complained to the Speaker William Hay.

Mr McCausland made the claims during a debate yesterday on victims of republican violence whose bodies have yet to be recovered, though Mr Adams refuted the allegations made against him.

While relatives of the ‘Disappeared’ looked on from the public gallery, Mr McCausland accused Mr Adams of setting up specialist units which killed and disposed of so-called informers.

But yesterday Assembly Speaker Willie Hay said: “I indicated during yesterday’s sitting on several occasions that I had some concerns about remarks that had been made during a debate on the Disappeared in this house yesterday.”

He said allegations of criminal behaviour had been made against another member.

The Speaker added: “These allegations were very clearly denied and refuted by the member concerned in the house here yesterday, Mr Adams.

“I regard the remarks as being unparliamentary and I would call on Mr McCausland to withdraw the remarks.”

But the DUP member responded: “The statements which I made about the member for West Belfast, were based on extracts from (journalist) Ed Moloney’s book A Secret History Of The IRA, which is available in bookshops and in the library of this Assembly.

“I will not therefore be withdrawing the statement.”

To cheers from DUP members, he added: “As Mr Adams keeps calling for truth recovery, I think it’s important that we get to the truth on these matters.”

Mr McCausland was then ordered to leave the chamber and banned from yesterday’s Assembly proceedings.

Mr Adams denied the claims made against him.

“I want to deny and refute the assertion made by the member for North Belfast (Mr McCausland),” he said.

“I want to commend and support all the families that have suffered a grievous injustice and who have campaigned with dignity for many years to locate the remains of their loved ones and I want to welcome them here today.

“I want to acknowledge once again the grave injustice inflicted on these families and to express my deep regret about this.”

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