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Wednesday, 8 October 2008

Barack Obama has backed calls for an inquiry into the murder of Northern Ireland solicitor Pat Finucane, campaigners said last night.

Two Irish-American lobby groups said they had secured the senator's support for the campaign to compel the British Government to allow an independent, international probe into the killing.

Mr Finucane was shot dead in front of his family by loyalist paramilitaries in 1989, but the security forces have repeatedly been implicated in the killing of the solicitor, who had

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represented republican suspects.

The Government has faced widespread criticism for its attempts to examine the case under new public inquiry legislation that critics say would allow ministers to intervene to obstruct the search for the truth.

Last night the Irish-American Unity Conference said it had secured Mr Obama's support for a fully independent inquiry, as recommended in a report compiled for the British Government by Canadian Judge Peter Cory.

"We are extremely grateful to Senator Obama for lending us his support," said the murdered solicitor's son, Michael Finucane.

"As Senator Obama points out, this was a recommendation of Judge Cory as a way to look at all the very serious circumstances arising out of the death of Pat Finucane."

In response to a questionnaire on establishing a truth process for Northern Ireland, Mr Obama's team said: "Senator Obama would support a reconciliation process that seeks the comprehensive truth about past violence. Senator Obama believes there should be an independent, public inquiry as Judge Cory recommended."

Michael Finucane said the 20th anniversary of his father's death was to be marked next year and added that the campaign to uncover the truth of what happened would continue.

"As Senator Obama himself points out, disclosure of information would increase community confidence in the security forces and ultimately the institutions responsible for shaping the new society," said Mr Finucane.

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