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## PM gives Omagh relatives hope of cross-border probe

Thursday, 12 February 2009

Gordon Brown has told the relatives of the Omagh bomb victims that he will consider their calls for a cross-border inquiry into the atrocity.

During an intensive private meeting with the Prime Minister at Downing Street yesterday the five families were told, however, there was no evidence that would help them pursue a prosecution.

In what will be viewed as an attempt to appease the families, Business Secretary Peter Mandelson, who donated £10,000 to a campaign to sue the alleged bombers, was brought in for the talks.

Michael Gallagher, whose son Aiden was one of the 29 people killed in the 1998 blast, said a resolution needed to be found that would help the families.

"The Prime Minister was very generous in the time he gave us," he added. "We were very frank in our views. For the families, there still remains many questions.

The Prime Minister said he would reflect on what he had heard

"We urged him to look again at assisting us in the civil action. The only way forward for the families is a full cross-border inquiry. He said he would consider that."

He added: "Lord Mandelson has always been someone who supported the civil action. It was good to see him there. He didn't have a great deal of input into the meat, but it was reassuring to see him."

The invitation was extended after an independent report dismissed claims made in a documentary that British intelligence officers had monitored the bombers' phone calls, but failed to pass information to detectives.

Sir Peter Gibson, Intelligence Services Commissioner, found that information had been shared with RUC Special Branch but it could not have stopped the 1998 attack.

The families have made it clear they are unhappy with the outcome of the report.

Speaking outside No 10, Victor Barker, who lost his 12-year-old son, James, said: "We had a very fair hearing from the Prime Minister. We have had a full and frank exchange of views .

"Sir Ronnie Flanagan is ultimately responsible and he has let down the families with his inquiry. I once again call for him to resign."

PSNI chief Sir Hugh Orde and Northern Ireland Secretary Shaun Woodward were also at the 90-minute meeting.

A spokesman for Mr Woodward said: "When the families requested a meeting with the Prime Minister, I was happy to arrange it. It was an open and candid meeting and the Prime Minister listened carefully and said he would reflect on what he had heard."

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