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## Robert Hamill: Family 'shattered' by murder

Wednesday, 14 January 2009

Robert Hamill was remembered as a loving father, brother and son who was killed simply because he was a Catholic.

Relatives of the murdered man and the family's legal representative said they demanded the truth over his killing.

Barra McGrory QC told the inquiry the family believed the police investigation into Mr Hamill's death was neglected because of his religion, while the people who killed him were bigots who considered attacking a Catholic a badge of honour.

Mr Hamill's sister said her family, and especially her mother Jessie, had been shattered by their loss.

"It has taken its toll on us. It has been very, very hard over 12 years," she said.

"My father died in 2000. My father died a sad and broken man. He was broken-hearted for the three years after he lost Robert, he never got over it.

"And it has traumatised the rest of us, especially my mummy.

"Unless you have been through it, you can't understand what it has been like."

Mr McGrory said Mr Hamill was a shy but popular and good-looking man who was well-liked and who was regarded as generous and considerate.

"He was utterly non-political," said Mr McGrory. "The family regarded themselves as nationalist, but politics was never discussed in the household."

Inquiry chairman Sir Edwin Jowitt interrupted Mr McGrory to question whether such information was pertinent to the inquiry.

But Mr McGrory said it was the family's belief that Mr Hamill was targeted by bigots who attacked him because he was a Catholic, while his religion also influenced the handling of the case, resulting in a second-class investigation.

But junior counsel for the PSNI Martin Woolfe denied that religion influenced investigators and insisted the police force and its predecessor, the RUC, operated in a difficult environment but were committed to protecting both communities.

He said the PSNI was offering the inquiry its full support, but firmly denied the allegations against officers.

"The PSNI will continue to work in a spirit of openness and transparency," Mr Woolfe added.

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