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## Local & National

### Family shocked by RUC 'apathy' over threats to lawyer

Thursday, September 20, 2007

Police failures in dealing with death threats against Rosemary Nelson have underlined the need for the upcoming public inquiry into her murder, her brother said last night.

Eunan Magee said his family was shocked by Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan's report that said the RUC failed Mrs Nelson.

The Ombudsman's investigators found that police did not bother trying to examine a written death threat made nine months before her murder.

But DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson claimed former RUC officers believe there is an attempt to "lay the full blame for the murder at the door of the RUC".

He said it should be remembered that the murder was "the work of paramilitaries" and he accused the Ombudsman of failing to "acknowledge the extreme circumstances within which the RUC were operating".

Mrs Nelson, a high-profile solicitor in Lurgan who represented the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition and some prominent republicans, was murdered by a booby trap car bomb in March 1999.

The mother of three had repeatedly complained about death threats, including some alleged to have been made by police officers.

In her report, Mrs O'Loan rejected suggestions that police were aware of specific threats against Mrs Nelson by the LVF and failed to warn her.

But she said the RUC should have made "more strenuous efforts" to establish the level of threat against Mrs Nelson.

Mr Magee said the report showed there was police "apathy" in dealing with the threats against his sister.

"While in some ways her report confirms our fears over what happened within the police, it also vindicates our family's stance in calling for a full public inquiry and we now look forward to it beginning public hearings," he said.

"The findings confirm our belief that the circumstances surrounding Rosemary's death could, at the very best, be described as highly dubious.






"Mrs O'Loan's report takes the police to task for their apathy in dealing with the threats made against Rosemary.

"Those responsible for this conduct must be taken to task - as they would be in any organisation - but particularly since in this case somebody lost their life."

The inquiry into Mrs Nelson's murder is due to begin public hearings next year.

The group which brought the complaint to the Ombudsman said the inquiry must examine Mrs O'Loan's findings.

Maggie Beirne, director of the Committee on the Administration of Justice, said the Ombudsman had confirmed that the threats against Mrs Nelson "were not treated with the gravity and urgency required."

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"Amongst the documents supplied to the police in advance of Rosemary's murder was material that, in our view, later proved of direct relevance to the murder inquiry," she added.

"If this information had been properly investigated, it may have led the police to the individuals responsible for her murder. These are issues which we hope will be fully, thoroughly and publicly explored by the Rosemary Nelson Inquiry."

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