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Tuesday, 21 October 2008

For John Allen any proposal that might help him find closure over the murder of his son, who was shot dead by the UVF five years ago, would be welcome.

Mr Allen said the recommendations by the consultative group on the past might help him achieve that longed for closure, but added that he is concerned that terrorists who are granted immunity to provide information on historical murders may use this for their own gain and not out of a genuine desire to help victims'

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His son, also named John, was shot in the head and legs by the UVF at his brother's flat at Rashee Park, Ballyclare, in November 2003. He was taken to Antrim Area Hospital but died a few hours later.

The 31 year-old's family believe he was murdered because he stood up to UVF thugs and because he was friends with a man on a witness protection scheme in a court case involving UVF members.

Although 10 people were quizzed about Mr Allen's killing, no has ever been charged.

"I am not really sure how I feel about these recommendations at the minute. The proposal to give terrorists immunity in exchange for private information — is that not just another form of informers? Does it mean they can carry out an act of terrorism, admit it and then walk away free?"

"I would have concerns as well about what they will get in return for this information. If they come forward and give information then there must be something in it for them?"

Mr Allen added that no matter what action is taken by the authorities to try and address the past, nothing will bring his son back.

"John is never coming back. If the perpetrators had been charged and brought before the courts I could maybe have moved on. But when those responsible are still walking about free in Ballyclare it is difficult.

"I would like to move on, so if someone admitted what they had done then that would help me," he said.

Mr Allen added however: "It would have to be out of genuine repentance, not just because they are getting something in return for this information. If they came forward out of genuine repentance I could accept that. I would even be prepared to meet them myself so they can tell me they murdered my son but are sorry.

"I do not want to be bitter. It eats you up. You have no idea over the past five years the number of people telling me to forgive. But you have to ask for forgiveness before it can be granted.

"So if this is about those responsible admitting what they have done and saying they are sorry then yes, I think it might bring me some closure. But if they are just doing it to get something in return then no."

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