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Murder charge Duffy in hunger strike vow

By Victoria O'Hara and Lesley-Anne Henry Friday, 27 March 2009

The family of leading republican Colin Duffy — due in court today charged with the murder of two British soldiers — have said he is prepared to fast to the death in protest at his arrest and detention.

Duffy (41) faces two counts of murder and five counts of attempted murder, as well as possession of a firearm and ammunition with intent to endanger life. He was appearing at Larne Magistrates Court.

Royal Engineers, Sappers Patrick Azimkar (21) and Mark Quinsey (23), were gunned down as they collected pizzas at the gates of Massereene Army Barracks on March 7.

Five others, including two pizza delivery men, were seriously wounded in the Real IRA attack.

The republican from Lurgan, Co Armagh, was arrested on March 14 and was questioned by detectives at Antrim police station but released after a legal challenge.

Duffy was dramatically re-arrested at Antrim serious crime suite on Wednesday, minutes after a High Court judge ruled that six suspects being detained over the soldiers' deaths and the shooting of police constable Stephen Carroll should be released.

Ahead of his court appearance today up to 200 people attended a protest meeting in Lurgan last night to demonstrate their anger at his re-arrest. It was organised by the Duffy family.

Spokesman for republican group Eirigi, Breandan Mac Cionnaith, also said there is concern for his health after it emerged the prominent republican is refusing food.

His brother Paul Duffy said his weight has dropped from 12st 2lbs to 11st since he was first arrested.

"He is determined to see it through, and if I know Colly, he will go all the way," he said.

He also described his brother as "an unashamed republican" who "has always stood up for the people in this community and he always will".

Mr Mac Cionnaith said of Duffy's hunger strike:

"That is a matter for Colin and his family. But there is a lot of concern from the family about his condition.

"There is support for him, and I think that was reflected in the turn out last night and it was called at very, very short notice, there was around 200 people at the meeting.

"There is a lot of anger at the whole detention, the supposed release and rearrest.

"Especially in view of the whole record of persecution against Colin," he claimed

Mr Mac Cionnaith said supporters would attend court today.



Colin Duffy is accused of murdering sappers Mark Quinsey and Patrick Azimkar

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"I would imagine some of the family will try and make their way to Larne today.

"There is still anger that the PSNI thought it more appropriate to tell the media rather than tell his wife and mother."

Earlier this week former Sinn Fein councillor Brendan McConville and a 17-year-old youth were remanded in custody charged with Constable Carroll's murder.

Another 21-year-old man, who cannot be named for legal reasons, also appeared in court in Lisburn yesterday accused of withholding information in relation to that murder.

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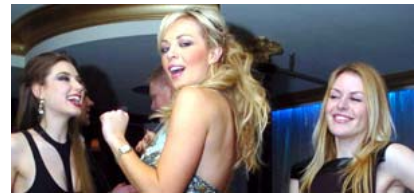
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