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By Adrian Rutherford
Monday, 18 August 2008

Former Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan has said the relatives of those who died in the Omagh bombing have a right to be told the truth.

Ms O'Loan was among hundreds of people who attended a service of remembrance organised by the victims' families to mark the 10th anniversary of the atrocity.

Some 29 men, women and children died in the Real IRA bombing, the single worst atrocity in 35 years of Northern Ireland's Troubles.

"Today we gather to remember all those who died in Omagh," Ms O'Loan said. "We gather to express our support and our ongoing sympathy for the relatives. It is a terribly difficult time for them.

"I think that the Omagh families have the right to know what happened that day. I did what I could as Police Ombudsman to attempt to establish that."

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Her comments were welcomed by the chairman of the Omagh Support and Self Help Group, Michael Gallagher, who said public pressure was now building for a cross-border public inquiry into the atrocity.

"The longer that we move away from the atrocity then I think the more likely it is we will have the truth," he said. "It is a pressure cooker and we can't keep the lid on this pressure cooker forever.

"We need some closure on Omagh. They have tried to give us some measure of that through the criminal justice system but that has failed.

"We will continue to press both governments and they cannot resist forever. What we need is for politicians to come, not as they did on Friday to lay wreaths, but to deliver justice and if not that then truth."

Among those at yesterday's service were people affected by the Enniskillen and Shankill Road bombings, and Mr Gallagher said victims could no longer be ignored.

"I think that is a wonderful show of unity and it's important that all victims come together," he added. "It sends a strong message out that when you murder people, those people will not disappear into the woodwork as they have done in the past. We will stand up and be counted."

But Kevin Skelton, whose wife Philomena died in the bombing, accused the British and Irish governments of blocking the truth.

"I don't think we'll get a public inquiry," he said. "There have been too many lies told and both governments don't want the truth to come out."

He also defended the decision by some families not to attend the official ceremony on Friday in protest at Omagh council's choice of wording on two memorials.

"Today is all about the families, nothing else and no-one else," he said. "There are people who were also there on Friday who I could not have coped with, but at least all the people who have helped me over the last 10 years are all here today."

The vice-chairman of Omagh council, Josephine Deehan, attended yesterday's service and said that while she respected the family's decisions, it was now time for a united front as the town looks to the future.

"The council has always respected the position of the bereaved families," she said. "It has been a time of enormous pain and we fully understand that they would want to have their separate service. I hope that we can now go forward in a fully united way to try and rebuild our community."

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