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Local & National

I will reveal Finucane death truth, vows Di inquest lawyer

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Wednesday, February 13, 2008

By Chris Thornton

Heavyweight London lawyers recently signed up by the family of Pat Finucane have vowed to hold the Government to account by the 20th anniversary of the solicitor's murder.

The Finucane family announced yesterday that international legal experts Michael Mansfield QC and Richard Harvey will represent them in the paralysed public inquiry into the murder.

They are now seeking a meeting with Prime Minister Gordon Brown to resolve a stand-off with the Government.

Mr Finucane was murdered in his north Belfast home by UDA members 19 years ago yesterday.

After investigating the killing, former Metropolitan Police Commissioner Lord Stevens concluded there was collusion between Mr Finucane's killers and members of the security forces.

A retired Canadian Supreme Court judge, Justice Peter Cory, recommended a public inquiry into the killing in 2003.

The Government agreed but passed special legislation in 2005 before setting one up.

The family have objected to the Inquiries Act - which gives Ministers greater powers over an inquiry - and have said they will not take part in proceeding set up under the legislation.

The Finucanes said their lawyers are requesting meetings with Mr Brown and Secretary of State Shaun Woodward.

Michael Finucane, Pat Finucane's eldest son, said the existing legislation "gives control of the inquiry to Government Ministers".

"Our legal team will be briefed to ensure that the inquiry will not become a Government vehicle for suppression," he said. "Secret justice is no justice at all."

Michael Mansfield and Richard Harvey are barristers with Toops Chambers, founded during the 1984 miners' strike.

Mr Mansfield has represented the family of Jean Charles de Menezes, who was shot by the Metropolitan Police in 2005, and Mohammed Al Fayed in the Princess Diana inquest.

Mr Mansfield said: "The significance of the murder of Pat Finucane cannot be underestimated.

"The extent to which collusion existed between Britain and loyalist paramilitaries is deeply shocking and all the more so when employed to murder an officer of the court merely for doing his job."

Richard Harvey, who worked on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, added: "There can be no whitewash and we will not allow another anniversary of this murder to pass without the government being called to account."

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