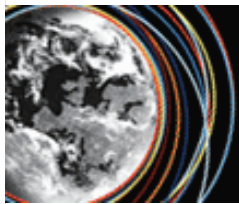


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Omagh families sue Real IRA suspects over massacre

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- [Henry McDonald](#)
[The Guardian](#), Monday April 7 2008

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This article appeared in [the Guardian](#) on [Monday April 07 2008](#) on p7 of the [UK news](#) section. It was last updated at 00:02 on April 07 2008.

Nineteen relatives of people killed in the Omagh bomb massacre today start a civil action against five Real IRA suspects whom they hold responsible for the attack. The Belfast case will be the first time families of terrorism victims anywhere in the world have taken legal action against an organisation directly responsible for the deaths of their loved ones.

The 19 plaintiffs will allege that the men, including the Real IRA's founder, Michael McKevitt, were central to the plot to bomb the County Tyrone market town in August 1998. Twenty-nine people, along with two unborn children, died in the atrocity, the single biggest act of terrorist carnage in the Northern Ireland Troubles.

Belfast high court will hear allegations that McKevitt, with Seamus Daly, Colm Murphy, Liam Campbell and Seamus McKenna, played a central role in planning and carrying out the attack. The families are also suing the Real IRA as a "corporate body" for being behind the attack. All five men will deny they had any part in the bombing.

Speaking before the case opened, Michael Gallagher, whose 21-year-old son, Aidan, was killed, said their case was unprecedented. "This will demonstrate that victims will no longer leave it up to governments to bring those allegedly responsible before courts, that they are capable of doing it themselves.

"This should be a message to terrorists everywhere in the world that you have now got to consider that families will come after you as well as governments."

Victor Barker, whose son James, 12, was killed in the explosion, said the civil action was "the last chapter of the Omagh tragedy". He added: "This is the final chance for justice, I really think so. After the collapse of the Hoey trial there is no way there will be any criminal prosecutions. At the very least, hopefully, this civil action will name and shame some of those involved in the Omagh bomb plot."




Although he is not joining the list of plaintiffs, because he is a lawyer, Barker said he fully supported the civil action. "Perhaps some good will come out of it: maybe we will get some new information on the plot."

Speaking over the weekend, he also expressed doubts that the Omagh families would have their calls for a cross-border public inquiry met.

"Because of the money involved, and after the cost of the Bloody Sunday inquiry, I very much doubt that the British or Irish governments would want another mega-public inquiry into Omagh. I don't think the republic's government want to have the Garda Síochána [Irish police force] dragged down into the mire of incompetence ... That is why I have suspected there would be no public inquiry."

The Omagh families are meanwhile awaiting judgment from the Irish

supreme court over access to the transcripts of the trials of the five men whom they are suing for damages at the Belfast high court today.

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