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## House calls for Finucane probe

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Coming hard on the heels of the Police Ombudsman's report on collusion, the U.S. House of Representatives called Tuesday for a full independent inquiry into the 1989 murder of Belfast lawyer Pat Finucane. Recently, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, chaired by Democratic Rep. Tom Lantos, took a bipartisan line in voting through a resolution authored by New Jersey Republican Rep. Chris Smith that renewed its call for an inquiry into the murder.

That vote took place a day after the publication of what Smith described as a "devastating report" detailing acts of collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and police in Northern Ireland.

The House resolution calls on the British government to now begin a full "independent public judicial" investigation of Finucane's murder.

"Pat Finucane was a courageous human rights activist and a loving father and husband. It is imperative that the questions surrounding Mr. Finucane's murder are answered in order to restore full confidence in the rule of law in the north of Ireland," Rep. Smith said in a statement

"Any agents of the government who may have colluded in the murder of a defense attorney must be held accountable," added Smith, who over the years has authored three separate congressional bills alleging human rights abuses by the police in Northern Ireland.

Finucane was gunned down in front of his wife and children and in the years since his death political figures and human rights groups have charged that the murder was carried out by loyalist gunmen with the aid of members of the security forces.

The resolution, formally entitled house Concurrent Resolution 20, calls on the British government to "reconsider its position" on the matter of an inquiry into the murder of Finucane, to amend the Inquiries Act of 2005, and to take fully into account objections raised by the Finucane family.

"For years, numerous international bodies and nongovernmental human rights organizations have raised allegations that Mr. Finucane's murder resulted from collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and British security forces," Smith said during the committee's pre-vote hearing on the resolution.

"In 2004, retired Canadian Supreme Court Judge Peter Cory, who was appointed by the governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom to examine these allegations under the Weston Park agreement, reported that sufficient evidence of collusion existed to warrant a full, independent and public



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judiciary inquiry without delay. Unfortunately, the British government has yet to comply."

While the British government, as part of the Weston Park agreement, committed itself to following Judge Cory's recommendation, the subsequent Inquiries Act placed strong limitations on the potential scope of any inquiry.

This in turn provoked sharp criticism from the Finucane family, human rights groups, Judge Cory and the Irish government.

"During congressional hearings, the one theme that kept recurring was the ongoing concern about human rights abuses by members of the police service in Northern Ireland. The concerns about collusion may never be put to rest without a full investigation into the possibility of collusion in the Finucane murder," said congressman Smith.

"A stumbling block to greater acceptance of the police by the community has been that the charges of official collusion in the murders of people such as Mr. Finucane remain unresolved.

"People are hesitant to move forward if they are not confident that those guilty of abuses will be held accountable. As I have emphasized in other areas of conflict, there can be no peace without justice," Smith said.

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