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Former churchmen set price of dying in Troubles at €13,000

Payment the same for civilians, soldiers and terrorists

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By David Sharrock
Saturday January 24 2009

THE price of dying as a direct result of the Troubles in the North has been fixed at Stg£12,000 (€13,000).

That is the figure two former churchmen believe the British government should give as recognition payments to the families of every victim of the Troubles, regardless of whether those who died were civilians, members of the security forces or terrorists.

[Lord Robin Eames](#), a former head of the Church of [Ireland](#), and [Denis Bradley](#), a former Catholic priest, were asked 18 months ago to find a way to lead [Northern Ireland](#) out of its conflict-driven past and have submitted their conclusions to [British Prime Minister Gordon Brown](#).

They believe that the payments, which could cost £40m (€42.5m), will bring to an end the "hierarchy of victims" and show that the pain of all those bereaved is equal.

If Mr Brown accepts the recommendations, it would mean that the family of [Thomas Begley](#), the 'Shankill Bomber' who blew himself up while planting a bomb inside a fishmongers in [Belfast](#) in 1993, would receive the same amount of money as the families of the nine people he murdered in the attack.

Recognition

It would also mean that the family of [Lenny Murphy](#), who ran a loyalist gang which tortured and murdered dozens of Catholics, would receive the same recognition as the families of his victims. Murphy was shot dead by the Provisional IRA in 1982.

The Democratic Unionists rejected the proposed payments, saying that they would betray innocent victims of terrorist violence.

[Jeffrey Donaldson](#) MP, a minister in the Stormont power-sharing government, said: "To suggest that a policeman or soldier is to be equated with terrorists is entirely unjustified and will send out the wrong message to others. It is the very antithesis of justice."

[Raymond McCord](#), whose son was murdered by the [Ulster Volunteer Force](#), described the proposed payment as "disgusting blood money. I would not touch it with a bargepole."

He said: "This is the equivalent of the US Government setting up a fund for the victims of 9/11 and making sure that the families of the hijackers got compensation as well."

Lord Eames and Mr Bradley announced the conclusions of the Consultative Group on the Past in Belfast yesterday.

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In addition to the payments scheme, they recommend that the British government sets up a legacy commission to investigate murders during the Troubles with a view to securing prosecutions. The commission would be chaired by an international figure, run for five years at a cost of £160m (€169.9m) and replace the work carried out by the Police Ombudsman and the historic inquiries team.

However, the group's recommendations could end up costing £300m (€318.5m). That is in addition to the £185m (€196.4m) already spent on the Bloody Sunday inquiry and hundreds of millions being spent on four other public inquiries into controversial killings linked to the Troubles.

Lord Eames and Mr Bradley argue that their scheme could be completed within five years and that savings would be made when the British government stands down the special police units examining the past.

The [Irish Government](#) would also play a key role in the scheme and would be expected to make a substantial contribution to the cost.

- David Sharrock

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