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Truth last big issue to be resolved in conflict

(Jim Gibney, [Irish News](#))

This Sunday thousands of people from all over Ireland will march to Belfast's City Hall in memory of the 10 hunger strikers behind a banner calling on the British government to tell the truth about its role in the conflict.

The march organisers – Sinn Féin and a number of relatives' organisations – are focusing on the word truth because they believe the truth is the last big issue to be resolved in the conflict.

By and large the truth is known about the role played by the IRA and loyalist organisations because they claimed responsibility for their actions which caused the deaths of hundreds of people.

Thousands of republicans and loyalists were also imprisoned for their part in the conflict.

It is also public knowledge that the crown forces killed hundreds of people, some of them in massacres in the early 1970s like Bloody Sunday in Derry and in areas of Belfast like Ballymurphy and the New Lodge Road, yet only a few members of the crown forces spent time in prison.

The fact that the public know the extent of the involvement in the deaths of thousands of people by the various armed groups of course does not make it any easier for the relatives of those killed to carry their burden of grief.

This was painfully obvious last Tuesday when the relatives of 11 people gunned down by the British army in Ballymurphy over a four-day period following the introduction of internment in August 1971 recalled the horror of the time.

As part of the Feile programme Relatives For Justice assisted the relatives of those killed in Ballymurphy to tell their frightening and heart-breaking tale.

The relatives of the dead have struggled for over three decades to force the British government to tell the truth about the circumstances in which the Paras, the same regiment responsible for Bloody Sunday, shot their loved ones dead

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and then lied to the world about it.

For many relatives the burden of grief is more difficult to deal with when the people charged with protecting life and upholding human rights, in this instance the British government, are in fact guilty of flagrantly violating both.

For relatives of those killed this violation is made much worse by the British government's refusal to acknowledge the part it played in the conflict and the cavalier manner in which it dismisses demands from relative's organisations for them to tell the truth.

Thirty-six years after the killings in Ballymurphy the British government has yet to say those killed were innocent; it has yet to apologise to the relatives.

The British government's refusal to face up to its part in the conflict stems from its belief that its actions in Ireland were morally superior to for example the IRA.

That its presence here is legitimate and on that basis whatever its armed forces do is in defence of democracy against terrorists.

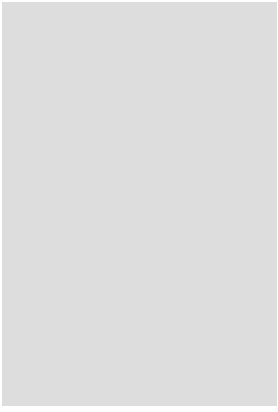
This is reflected in the myth peddled by the British government and its apologists that its military occupation here is in fact a peace mission; that it was not involved in a war.

The absurdity of this view has many consequences and is particularly felt by relatives seeking justice who lost a loved one at the hands of the crown forces.

It is also reflected for example in the production in July past of an equally absurd British army publication about 'Operation Banner' the British army's version of its occupation or as it likes to call it 'campaign on British soil' by the "armed forces of a developed nation against an irregular force".

This denial of the reality of what everyone else accepts also leads the British government to continue perpetrating yet another grave injustice: the cover-up of its involvement in the murder of hundreds of people, mainly Catholics through collusion with loyalists.

Despite overwhelming and documented evidence which proves hundreds of people were killed as a result of collusion with loyalists, the British government continues to refuse to admit it orchestrated this murder campaign through its crown forces – the British army and RUC.



The relatives' determination has the British government in
the dock of public opinion.

There it will remain until it cries truth.

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