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Irish government to raise demands of Ballymurphy group with Woodward

By Barry McCaffrey

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INDEPENDENT INQUIRY AND APOLOGY: A mural on the Whiterock Road in west Belfast commemorates the 11 victims of the Ballymurphy internment massacre, which left 46 children without a parent

THE Irish government is to raise the case of 11 people shot dead in Ballymurphy by the British army in controversial circumstances in 1971 with British secretary of state for Northern Ireland Shaun Woodward.

As part of their ongoing campaign, the Ballymurphy Massacre Group met with foreign affairs minister Micheal Martin on Saturday.

Yesterday they said he had now pledged to raise their demands for an independent investigation and a public acknowledgement of their innocence with the British government.

All victims were shot and killed by British parachute regiment soldiers in the days following the introduction of internment on August 9 1971 when widespread violence ensued.

Fr Hugh Mullan and Frank Quinn (19) were shot dead by soldiers as they went to help a wounded man shot by soldiers from the New Barnsley army base on the Springfield Road.

Mother-of-eight Joan Connolly (50) was shot dead by soldiers as she searched for her children outside the army base the same day.

Later that night Noel Philips (20) and father-of-10 Daniel Teggart (44) were shot dead by soldiers from the

Father-of-nine Joe Murphy died two weeks later after being shot outside the army base.

The following day 28-year-old Edward Doherty and John Lavery (20) were shot dead by soldiers in separate incidents in Ballymurphy.

Joseph Corr (43) died 16 days later after being shot by soldiers near his Divismore Crescent home.

On August 11 youth worker Paddy McCarthy (44) collapsed and died from a heart attack following a confrontation with soldiers.

Father-of-two John McKerr (49) was shot as he left Corpus Christi Church, which he had been repairing. He died nine days later.

All of the dead were unarmed and were not members of any paramilitary organisation.

A number of the killings were later referred to by the Irish government when it took the British government to the European Court of Human Rights.

In 2007 the Ballymurphy families began a campaign through the Relatives for Justice victims' group for the British government to apologise for the killings of their loved ones, which has received support from Sinn Fein, the SDLP, UUP, DUP and the Alliance Party.

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