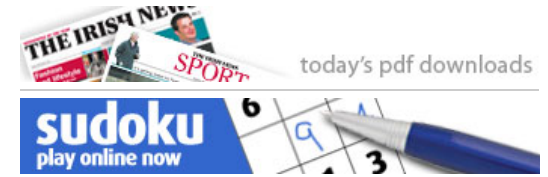


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Leading barrister to take up Finucane case

By Barry McCaffrey

12/02/2008

LEADING English barrister Michael Mansfield QC is to represent the family of Pat Finucane at any new public inquiry into the solicitor's murder.

Mr Mansfield, who has previously worked on high-profile cases including the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six and Stephen Lawrence inquiry, is representing Mohamed Al-Fayed at the inquest into the deaths of Princess Diana and Dodi Al-Fayed.

The Finucane family have now asked for a meeting with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Secretary of State Shaun Woodward over the four-year delay in establishing an inquiry into the solicitor's 1989 murder.

In April 2004 Canadian judge Peter Cory concluded there

was enough evidence of security force collusion in the solicitor's murder to compel the government to establish an independent inquiry.

However, in June 2005 the government rushed a new Inquiries Act into law to allow ministers to withhold evidence from hearings.

The act has been criticised by the Irish government, Sinn Fein and SDLP. In the US, presidential candidates Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and John McCain have supported congressional and senate motions criticising the act.

Judge Peter Cory has advised Canadian judges against taking part in any such inquiry.

Speaking ahead of the 19th anniversary of his father's death today, John Finucane said: "For nearly 20 years we were banging on the door to get into an independent inquiry but after Tony Blair moved the goal posts to ensure an inquiry couldn't get to the truth we found ourselves banging on the door to get out.

"Judge Cory accused the British government of creating an Alice In Wonderland situation and even said the Inquiries Act meant it was impossible to have any meaningful investigation."

Explaining that his family had asked for an urgent meeting with the prime minister, he said: "We're not going to stop our campaign for justice now just because the British government is trying to move the goal posts.

"We want to cooperate with an inquiry, but we can't work with something which has no chance of getting to the truth."

Reacting to criticism that public inquiries were an unnecessary burden on the public purse, he said: "The establishment is engaged in a subtle campaign to discredit families whose only means of getting to the truth of their loved ones' murders is through public inquiries.

"Millions of pounds were wasted because the British government used every tactic at its disposal to manipulate and distort the law to stop it from being exposed as being involved in the murder of its citizens."