


[HOME](#)
[History](#)
[NewsoftheIrish](#)
[Book Reviews  
& Book Forum](#)
[Search / Archive](#)
[Back to 10/96](#)
[Papers](#)
[Reference](#)
[About](#)
[Contact](#)

## Massacre families say police have treated them like mugs

(Barry McCaffrey, [Irish News](#))

The families of six men murdered in the Loughinisland massacre have spoken of their sense of "frustration" and "betrayal" at the lack of progress in catching their loved ones' killers.

It is 13 years to the day since two UVF men burst into the Heights Bar in the Co Down village of Loughinisland as customers prepared for the start of Ireland's World Cup match against Italy.

Father-of-two Adrian Rogan had just returned from a family holiday in Spain and had been looking forward to attending an Ulster Championship GAA game between Down and Armagh the following day.

His father, who was one of the first people on the scene after the attack, prayed over his son as he lay dying.

Dan McCreanor (59) and his 87-year-old uncle Barney Green regularly popped into the bar on a Saturday night as they collected cattle from a nearby field.

Because of his sense of occasion Barney Green had worn his best suit.

He was the oldest victim of the Troubles.

Eamon Byrne (39) and his brother-in-law Patsy O'Hare had gone to the bar because it had a large television screen showing the football match.

Eamon Byrne's wife was still in hospital after having given birth.

Patsy O'Hare's father William, who was also injured in the gun attack, cradled his son as he lay dying.

Father-of-three Malcolm Jenkinson died from bullet wounds to the abdomen.

His wife only learned he had been killed when she returned

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home from work as a nurse.

Pope John Paul II and Queen Elizabeth personally condemned the massacre.

Despite the killers' boilersuits, balaclavas, gloves, weapons and getaway car all being recovered within days, no-one has ever been convicted of the murders.

It is three years since the Loughinisland families asked Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan to investigate their concerns over "serious flaws" in the original murder investigation.

Among the families' main criticisms were the loss of potential forensic evidence when police destroyed the killers' getaway car; the failure to identify one of the killers despite a hair follicle being found on one of the balaclavas and the failure to question a potential eyewitness living just yards from the scene of the atrocity.

It also later emerged that a police informer had been in possession of the killers' getaway car days before the murder.

Terry Fairfield, codenamed 'Mechanic', insisted that he had sold the car on days before the attack.

He has since contacted the Loughinisland families' solicitor to deny involvement in the murders.

Fairfield was best friends with UVF leader Mark Haddock, who the ombudsman identified earlier this year as having been protected from prosecution despite involvement in up to 16 murders because he was a Special Branch agent.

It also emerged that one of the murder weapons had been smuggled into Northern Ireland from South Africa by British army agent Brian Nelson.

DNA tests on the killers' possessions were not carried out for 11 years.

Thirteen years on the Loughinisland families say they feel "frustrated" and "betrayed" at the continued failure to bring the UVF killers to justice.

"Until last year we said nothing because the police told us they knew who the killers were and they were close to catching them," Adrian Rogan's wife Clare explained.

"None of us are political in any way and believed the RUC and PSNI when they told us they would leave no stone

unturned to catch the killers.

"Very senior police officers asked us not to speak to the media. But in the last two years we have found out the RUC and PSNI were doing next to nothing to catch the killers and instead were actually destroying evidence."

Barney Green's niece Moira Casement said the families felt "deeply betrayed" by the failure to bring the killers to justice.

"We feel that the police treated us like mugs," she said.

"We are quiet people; none of us wants to have to go in front of the media.

"But the victims' haven't got a voice, we have to fight for the truth for them.

"Just last week we heard the great and the good telling victims' families that we should draw a line in the sand and we should forget that our loved ones were killed.

"They tell us there should be no investigation into the state colluding with loyalists to murder its own citizens because it will cost too much money.

"What they are saying is deeply insulting to the memories of our loved ones.

"There is incontrovertible evidence of collusion in the Loughinisland murders and that informers were protected.

"You can't build a house on a rocky foundation and a state can't claim to be truly democratic if it's killing its own citizens.

Recalling how the tiny rural community had been left devastated by the murders, she said: "For this community it was like John F Kennedy dying.

"People remember exactly where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news.

"Those murders completely devastated this community.

"We are still struggling to come to terms with it 13 years on."

Emma Rogan was just eight years old when her father was shot dead.

"If we are to get some kind of closure we need the state to finally admit that it was involved in the murders," she said.

"We need the world to know that these six innocent men were killed for no reason whatsoever. We need the police to admit that there was never a proper investigation of the murders.

"We have been waiting for the ombudsman's report for three years and are getting frustrated that we seem to be nowhere nearer the truth.

"But we won't go away.

"Our families deserve the truth. We will fight on until we get justice for the six innocent men who were killed for no reason other than they were Catholic."

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[BACK TO TOP](#)

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[About](#)

[Home](#)

[History](#)

[NewsoftheIrish](#)

[Books](#)

[Bookstore](#)

[Contact](#)