

Most PopularMost Emailed

BreakingSportBusinessWorldGossip



Issue Changer:



NEWS | POLITICS >

SF office 'crammed' for commemoration

By Allison Morris

08/03/08



MEMORIAL: Niall Farrel, brother of Mairead Farrell, pictured with her niece, also Mairead and MLA Jennifer McCann

PICTURE: Mal McCann

An event celebrating the life of IRA woman Mairead Farrell, shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar 20 years ago, went ahead at Parliament Buildings yesterday albeit in less opulent surroundings.

Sinn Fein had sought permission to hold the event in Stormont's Long Gallery to mark International Women's Day.

After a week of wrangling an assembly commission voted on Thursday to block the plan, putting in place interim rules requiring all functions to have cross-community backing from at least three MLAs.

In the end it went ahead in the less salubrious surroundings of the Sinn Fein members' rooms.

People crammed in in such numbers that Sinn Fein party president Gerry Adams had to call for the formalities to take place twice to allow all of those present to hear tributes paid to the west Belfast IRA woman.

Plans proposed by the DUP's Jeffrey Donaldson for a counter-event at the Long Gallery to pay tribute to the SAS have now been shelved following the commission decision.

The assembly group had also voted to ban camera or film crews at the Sinn Fein event in a bid to limit publicity. In the end many journalists filmed the speakers regardless.

A small handful of loyalist women, pictured, held a protest outside – just yards from the revolving doors where Michael Stone, who launched a gun and grenade attack at the funerals of the trio killed in Gibraltar, was

famously stopped while trying to storm the building.

While the schedule for the event contained only female speakers, a brother of 31-year-old Farrell, gunned down in Gibraltar on March 6 1988 alongside Sean Savage and Dan McCann, addressed the throng of people.

Niall Farrell said: "This is the first time I've ever been to Stormont.

"On the way here I passed the protesters outside and I thought it was good.

"Mairead was a feminist and a socialist and would have been sympathetic to their cause."

Sinn Fein assembly member Jennifer McCann, who spent time in Armagh jail in the 1980s along with Mairead Farrell, also said she had been an advocate for women's rights.

She added that if she had not been killed in Gibraltar, Ms Farrell could have been standing in Parliament buildings as an elected Sinn Fein politician.

However, North Antrim DUP assembly member Ian Paisley jnr last night claimed Sinn Fein's use of its party offices for the event was a "monument to failure".

TV coverage pulled

Assembly members have inadvertently pulled the plug on TV coverage of Stormont proceedings.

A decision taken by MLAs to restrict the filming of events within Parliament Buildings after a row about a republican commemoration means TV cameras can no longer film within the debating chamber.

As the rule stands, live TV coverage of assembly proceedings on Monday will not be screened as scheduled.

On Thursday, the assembly's governing body agreed criteria on future events at Stormont after it banned a memorial for IRA member Mairead Farrell shot dead by the SAS 20 years ago.


DUP member of the Assembly Commission, Stephen Moutray, proposed a restriction on filming outside the building's Great Hall amid concerns that if Sinn Fein switched its event to its private offices the press could still film it.

However, commission members did not realise this ban would include the assembly chamber.


The commission has now hastily arranged a meeting for Monday to see if the chamber can be exempted from the criteria.

Despite the ruling, television cameras filmed the Farrell event.

A BBC spokesman said: "We were invited into the event along with other television news crews".

 [back to top](#)

Bookmark: [Delicious](#) [Digg](#) [reddit](#) [Facebook](#) [StumbleUpon](#)

 [Email this story](#)

[print advertising](#) | [media pack](#) | [online advertising](#) | [privacy statement](#) | [about us](#) | [contact us](#) | [subscribe](#) | [login](#) | [archives](#) | [careers](#) | [home](#)