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Paisley called on to apologise to murdered brothers' family

(Allison Morris, [Irish News](#))

DUP leader Ian Paisley is coming under pressure to apologise to the family of three brothers murdered by the UVF in south Armagh 31 years ago.

It emerged this week that the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) has apologised to the elderly mother of the Reavey brothers for security force treatment of the family in the aftermath of the shootings.

David Cox, the head of the team looking into Troubles-related deaths, also confirmed the men were "innocent victims of senseless sectarian violence".

John Martin (24), Brian (22) and Anthony Reavey (17) were killed when up to six loyalist gunmen burst into their Whitecross home on January 4 1976 and opened up at close range.

Two of the brothers died at the scene, while Anthony – the youngest sibling and a promising footballer with St Killian's minor GAA team – lost his battle for life four weeks later.

Shortly afterwards what was believed to be the same gang murdered three members of the O'Dowd family 15 miles away in Gilford.

The following day around a dozen gunmen ambushed a minibus full of Protestant workmen at Kingsmill crossroads as they returned home from work, killing 10 and injuring one.

In 1999 Ian Paisley used parliamentary privilege to implicate a brother of the Reavey victims in the Kingsmill atrocity.

Speaking in the House of Commons – which prevented the comments being legally challenged – the DUP leader read out the names of 20 individuals he claimed were involved in various republican attacks, among them Eugene Reavey.

Mr Reavey said yesterday (Wednesday) it meant a lot to his family to receive the HET apology and have his brothers'

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names cleared.

"However, when Paisley read out my name in the Commons claiming I was an IRA man it was yet another blow for my family," he said.

"I was a father-of-seven myself at the time and it put my own family in grave danger. For over 25 years my entire family, including my mother, were victimised and mocked by members of the security forces.

"Five years and 14 heart attacks after my brothers' murders, my father died. He had to experience not only the loss of his sons but the whispering campaign that took place afterwards.

"There is a small window of opportunity here for past wrongs to be undone. Whether that happens or not remains to be seen."

SDLP assembly member Dominic Bradley also said the Reavey family's suffering was made worse by the "despicable whispering campaign and security force harassment" following the murders.

"Ian Paisley colluded in this whispering campaign under the protection of parliamentary privilege he too should do the right thing and withdraw his remarks and apologise to the family," he said.

When contacted yesterday a spokesman for the DUP leader declined to comment.

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