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Reasons needed for Saville delay

Pro fide et patria

Editorial

07/11/08

The fact that the final report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry has been delayed yet again is deeply frustrating for families who have been patiently waiting for the findings to be made public.

Eight years have passed since the tribunal, headed by Lord Saville, opened at the Guildhall in Derry.

The formal start of public proceedings began two years after Tony Blair announced there would be an independent inquiry.

The main body of witness evidence was completed in February 2004, with the closing speech by counsel to the inquiry, Christopher Clarke QC, delivered in November of that year.

It is fair to say that the inquiry itself took much longer than expected and certainly cost very much more than anticipated.

From the sheer volume of statements and detailed testimony it was clear that the tribunal was facing a monumental task.

Nevertheless, relatives had hoped they would finally read the outcome of the

tribunal's deliberations early next year – more than four years after the closing statement.

However, Lord Saville now expects the completed report will be delivered to the secretary of state in autumn next year, which means the families are unlikely to see the findings before 2010 at the earliest.


The disappointment of those who have waited so long is entirely understandable and it is particularly poignant that some relatives have died without hearing the outcome.

Even allowing for the size and complexity of the task it is difficult to understand why it is taking so long to finish the report, especially as earlier reassurances had been given that it was nearing completion.

There is a strong case for the families to be provided with further information on the reasons for the delay and an indication of what stage in the process the panel has reached.

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