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Groups need to prove worth

(Editorial, [Irish News](#))

Nationalists have always been convinced that a range of murders by loyalists during the height of the Troubles were never properly investigated either at the time or in the light of subsequent developments.

However, it still needed enormous courage and determination on the part of one group of families to take their case all the way to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Their campaign has now been completely vindicated with an official ruling that a 1999 inquiry into fresh allegations about killings in Co Armagh in the mid-1970s was not sufficiently independent and represented a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

It needs to be stressed that every paramilitary murder of the last 40 years and beyond has to be equally condemned and that throughout this terrible period republicans were responsible for more deaths than anyone else.

What sets the killings at the centre of the latest ECHR judgment apart is the fact, not the suspicion, that the gang involved had direct connections to the former RUC.

It has been accepted by the courts that a small number of officers who should have been protecting the entire community instead facilitated and on occasions actually became personally involved in acts of sectarian violence.

The equally sinister role of some elements within the British army in general and its Ulster Defence Regiment in particular has also been well documented.

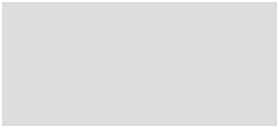
While we are now in a new era, dealing with grave and unresolved issues from the past, whether they are linked to loyalists, republicans or the state itself, remains a huge problem.

The new consultative body established earlier this year and other related initiatives cannot provide all the answers but they must be given every opportunity to prove their worth.

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