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## Nelson affair allegations 'outrageous'

By Claire Simpson

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ALLEGATIONS that murdered solicitor Rosemary Nelson had an affair with a prominent IRA man were described last night as "malicious" and "shameful and unjustified".

The inquiry into Mrs Nelson's death yesterday heard a police officer claim that Special Branch had information that the lawyer was having an affair with Lurgan republican Colin Duffy in the mid 1990s.

It was also alleged yesterday that Mrs Nelson (40) – who was murdered in a loyalist car-bomb attack in Lurgan in 1999 – passed on confidential case information to members of the IRA.

He told the inquiry that he would not have considered Mrs Nelson a terrorist but he believed she was passing sensitive information to others engaged in violence.

The officer, who worked for Special Branch in Lurgan, said he had received intelligence that Mrs Nelson had met Mr Duffy at a discreet location, namely Demesne Avenue in town.

Mr Duffy, now a leading figure in Eirigi, a group of republicans opposed to Sinn Fein's support for the PSNI, could not be contacted last night.

But the claims were

rubbished by fellow Eirigi activist Breandan MacCionnaith who branded them "shameful".

"The repetition and acceptance by some sections of the media of the unchallengeable and unsubstantiated statements being made to the inquiry by both former and serving members of the RUC/PSNI and members of British Intelligence is shameful and unjustified," he said.

He said US-based lawyer Edmund Lynch told the inquiry on November 20 he was disappointed "with the unjustified attacks by counsel and witnesses on the character of the deceased".

"It now appears that various elements are also taking that bait and are willing to repeat unfounded, unproven and unsubstantiated allegations," he said.

The Nelson family's solicitor, Barra McGrory also challenged the statements.


"There is no evidential basis for this belief which is apparently held on the strength of unnamed and unidentified sources who, for all we know, could have been from the loyalist community who were deliberately spreading these malicious rumours," Mr McGrory said.

Sinn Fein assembly member John O'Dowd described the allegations as "outrageous".

"The British state directly and through its pseudo gangs planned and carried out the murder of Rosemary Nelson. Having been widely exposed their defence at the inquiry now seems to be that not satisfied with murdering Rosemary they are now trying to assassinate her character," he said.

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