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British state acted outside law says Eames-Bradley group

[GERRY MORIARTY, Northern Editor](#)

ELEMENTS OF the British state acted outside the law during the Troubles and it could even be affirmed that the state allowed innocent people to die, the Eames-Bradley consultative group on the past has reported.

The group made clear at a Belfast press conference yesterday that not only must republicans and loyalists own up to the death, destruction and grief they caused during the conflict but that the British

security forces and its intelligence services must do likewise.

The heads of the group, the former Church of Ireland primate Lord (Robin) Eames and former policing board vice-chairman Denis Bradley, in a lengthy progress report, spoke of how many unionists blamed the Republic for "turning a blind eye" to the actions of the IRA and other republican groups.

In a passage delivered by Lord Eames, he said unionists had great difficulty coming to terms with the fact that the British state "not only sought to be an honest broker during the conflict but also played a combative role and, in this context, sometimes went beyond their own rules of engagement".

"This is one of the critical issues facing us as a group, difficult as it may be for some in our society to hear, that elements of the state, on some occasions, acted outside the law and through handling of intelligence it could even be said innocent people were allowed to die.

"We cannot ignore that, in fact, the state sometimes acted illegally. If we are to move out of the past in a healthy way, then the state itself needs to acknowledge its full and complex role in the last 40 years," said Lord Eames.

"Having to confront the state about acknowledging its wrongdoing must not take away from the majority of men and women in the RUC and UDR/RIR who did their duty and suffered appallingly and unjustly as a result."

Lord Eames and Mr Bradley later this year are due to issue their recommendations on how to address the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland.

At the press conference they were uncompromising in insisting that the British and Irish governments and the paramilitaries face difficult challenges in assisting this process.

Their work is being frustrated by the refusal so far of the IRA to deal with Eames-Bradley, notwithstanding that the British intelligence service and members of the Stevens teams, examining allegations of British state collusion with loyalist paramilitaries, have spoken to the group.

The consultative group, however, has not given up on the IRA agreeing to a meeting. The UVF had "open and frank" discussions with the Eames-Bradley group earlier this year but the UDA has not agreed to talk to group. The group nonetheless hopes for progress too in this area.

Lord Eames and Mr Bradley said one of the resonating themes they heard from unionists was that the Irish State "turned a blind eye when republicans carried out attacks in Border areas and fled back South", and that some unionists believed the Irish government "helped organise and arm the IRA in the early 1970s".

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