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Miami relatives 'happy' with meeting

[Piaras Murohy](#)

Relatives of murdered Miami Showband members said they were "happy" they would get answers following a meeting with the Taoiseach Mr Ahern about the band's massacre in 1975.

One of the survivors of the atrocity, Stephen Travers, 55, said he did not need an inquiry into it despite a report yesterday that found British collusion in loyalist paramilitary attacks, including the shooting of Miami Showband members near Newry. The attack at a fake army checkpoint near Newry left three band members dead and two injured.

"I'm no expert in all this inquiry stuff. All I know is I don't need an inquiry to tell me that that there was a British officer there on the night [three Miami Showband members were shot dead].

"I know that. I was there. But hopefully these inquiries will convince everybody else that what we have been saying for 30 years is absolutely correct," said Mr Travers.

He said the meeting with the Taoiseach was "very positive" and he found Mr Ahern to be very sincere.

"We're greatly encouraged," he said afterwards. "Basically he asked us to clarify what it was that we wanted and he's going to endeavour to get all the answers that we've been looking for for 30 years."

A spokesman for Mr Ahern said the Taoiseach listened carefully to the families outline how the tragedy had affected them.

"He expressed his sympathy to the families for the loss of their loved ones and for the terrible ordeal they endured 31 years ago," the spokesman said.

"At the meeting they also discussed the findings of the Joint Oireachtas Committees report regarding collusion. The families raised a number of specific questions with the Taoiseach in relation to the massacre which he has undertaken to follow up on," he added.

Also at the meeting with Mr Ahern was Margaret Urwin of Justice for the Forgotten, a group who are campaigning for an inquiry into the 1974 Dublin/Monaghan bombings.

"We have campaigned for years for a public inquiry into British collusion with loyalist paramilitaries. There is now huge pressure on the British Government from yesterday's report," said Ms Urwin.

"The evidence against the British government is getting to the stage where it is overwhelming and they cannot refuse to conduct inquiries much longer," she added.

Yesterday, a subcommittee of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice published a report that concluded there was widespread collusion between British security forces and terrorists was behind many, if not all, of a number of atrocities on both sides of the Border that resulted in 18 deaths in the mid-1970s, including the Miami Showband atrocity.

In July 1975, the Ulster Volunteer Force gunned down three members of the Miami Showband, killing two of their members, after a bomb attack the loyalist gang was planning backfired.

The showband, who were one of the country's most popular live bands in the 1970s, were returning from performing at a dance in Banbridge, Co Down, when their minibus was flagged down by men dressed in army uniforms on the road to border town of Newry.

Band members were told to line up in a ditch while UVF members posing as Ulster Defence Regiment members tried to plant a bomb inside the minibus that they hoped would explode later on as the musicians headed home to Dublin.

As the gang loaded the bomb, the musicians were asked for their names and addresses; the bomb then exploded prematurely, killing UVF members Harris Boyle and Wesley Sommerville.

After the explosion, the UVF gang opened fire on the band, killing lead singer Fran O'Toole, trumpet player Tony Geraghty and Brian McCoy. Guitarist Stephen Travers and Des Lee survived.

Additional reporting PA

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