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Friday, August 8, 2008

British government denies inaction over North killings

CRITICAL EUROPEAN court judgments on British security force killings and alleged collusion with loyalists have been ignored, human rights campaigners claimed yesterday.

Insufficient action on European Court of Human Rights rulings sets a bad example for other countries, British Irish Rights Watch (BIRW) added.

The European court accused UK authorities of violating the right to life of IRA men shot dead in controversial circumstances during the Troubles.

The police investigation into Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane's 1989 death at the hands of loyalists was also investigated by the court.

The British government denies inaction on the rulings.

BIRW director Jane Winter said: "If the British government says we are going to ignore the judgments, then we are going around the world telling other people how to run their countries and telling them they must be human rights compliant while setting an extremely bad example.

"The only way that the UK can be forced to enforce decisions by the court is if other countries insist [it does] and because they also have very bad records, some much worse than the UK, they are not going to put the pressure on."

She said the Republic of Ireland was an exception and had raised the matter repeatedly.

The court accused the British authorities of violating the human rights of the victims.

The six killings in question are:

* the 1989 death of north Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane, shot dead by the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) at his home. The court said the

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investigation into his murder failed to examine effectively security force collusion allegations;

* the shooting dead of Pearse Jordan (23) in west Belfast in 1992 by police after he breached a security checkpoint;

* Gervaise McKerr (31), who died alongside two other IRA men in Co Armagh in 1982, unarmed when police shot them;

* Patrick Shanaghan (31) murdered by loyalist paramilitaries. His family also alleged the RUC colluded with those involved in the shooting;

* eight IRA men killed by the SAS at Loughgall, Co Armagh, in 1987, ambushed when they attempted to attack a police station. The court ruled they had their human rights violated after authorities failed to conduct proper investigations into the deaths. Those who died were: the east Tyrone IRA commander Patrick Kelly (32), Declan Arthurs (21), Seamus Donnelly (19), Michael Gormley (25), Eugene Kelly (25), James Lynagh (31), Patrick McKearney (32) and Gerard O'Callaghan (29);

* Dermot McShane (36), who died after an armoured British army vehicle drove into hoardings he was sheltering behind during disturbances in Derry in 1996.

A Northern Ireland office spokeswoman said: "The government has not ignored these judgments and has put together a very detailed package of measures to implement the findings of the court.

"The committee of ministers in Strasbourg has made clear in its assessment that the UK has now met many of the requirements of the judgments.

"We are continuing to work with the committee to resolve the outstanding issues."

- (PA)

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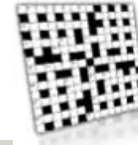
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