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Flanagan 'rejected report fearful for lawyer's life'

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Former Northern Ireland Chief Constable Sir Ronnie Flanagan rejected a human rights report raising fears for the solicitor Rosemary Nelson's life just five months before her murder, a public inquiry heard today.

The former Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) police chief today began his second day of evidence at the inquiry into the murder of the lawyer killed in a loyalist bombing in March 1999 amid allegations of security force collusion.

Sir Ronnie was shown a series of documentation raising concerns for Mrs Nelson, which he said he had no recollection of seeing, but he was also presented with a letter he sent months before the murder dismissing a report highlighting fears for the lawyer.

Inquiry counsel Rory Phillips showed the former police officer, who now works as a security consultant, a document compiled by the British Irish Rights Watch group sent to Sir Ronnie on November 5, 1998.

The report cited fears for the safety of lawyers and said there was a "campaign of death threats and vile abuse, some of it sexual in character" by RUC officers directed against Mrs Nelson.

But in a reply sent to the group's director, Jane Winter, six days later, Sir Ronnie wrote: "I suppose by now I should really have learned to expect, and not be surprised, by the total absence of balance in reports produced by your organisation.

"This latest report continues your now well-established practice in that regard."

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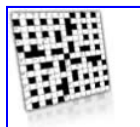
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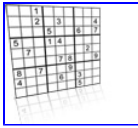
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