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## Police could not have stopped Nelson death - Flanagan

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Police could not have saved the life of murdered solicitor Rosemary Nelson given the determination of her killers, former Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) chief constable Sir Ronnie Flanagan said today.

Mr Flanagan was giving a third day of evidence at the public inquiry into allegations of security force wrongdoing over the lawyer's murder in a car bomb.

The 40-year-old solicitor died in a Loyalist Volunteer Force booby-trap car bomb attack in March 1999 in her home town of Lurgan, Co Armagh.

Sir Ronnie said Mrs Nelson had been murdered by thugs and cowards who were determined to kill and that in the absence of intelligence of a direct threat against the solicitor, police could not have saved the mother-of-three.

The former police chief recounted how the Troubles had seen more than 300 RUC officers murdered and 7,000 maimed and injured.

Sir Ronnie said: "Sadly, when a number of my friends died in the way that Rosemary Nelson died, and it was not possible to protect their lives, even if things were done differently, it is my sad conclusion it would not have saved Mrs Nelson's life."

Yesterday Sir Ronnie dismissed a human rights report complaining of an alleged police assault and death threats against Rosemary Nelson in the months before her death.

A Special Branch report of that time also referred to Mrs Nelson being close to the republican movement, supporting its aims and objectives, attending republican functions and rallies. While there was no specific threat against her, that report said, her views would have been known to loyalist paramilitaries in the area.

PA

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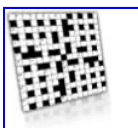
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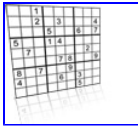
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