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IRA victims lose out in US deal on Libya

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By Maeve Sheehan
Sunday August 03 2008

AN IRA victim support group is furious at a new immunity deal that will result in [Libya](#) compensating [US](#) citizens killed or injured in terrorist attacks, but not those from other jurisdictions -- such as [Ireland](#).

The deal, passed by the US administration last week, effectively scuppers a \$10bn law suit taken by British and Northern Irish victims against Libya for supplying weapons and explosives to the

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IRA.

Some 179 victims of IRA violence joined the class action, hoping to reach a compensation settlement with Colonel Gaddafi along the lines of the [Lockerbie](#) air disaster in [Scotland](#).

The case was filed against Libya in America, where the law allows other nation states to be sued. But after two years going through the courts, the case hit a brick wall on Friday when the US agreed the draft immunity deal with Libya.

Under the deal, the US will lift the remaining sanctions against Libya in exchange for compensation settlements for US victims of Libyan-supported terrorist attacks.

Non-US citizens will not be able to pursue Libya, which will be immune from terror-related law suits once it settles its cases with US citizens.

[Willie Fraser](#), of the [Northern Ireland](#)-based Families Acting for Innocent Relatives (FAIR) said that families of IRA victims had been "screwed" as a result of the deal. "We have been at this about six years. We tracked down the American victims to allow us to take the case in the first place," he said.

Of the 179 people who joined the class action, most were from Northern Ireland and [Britain](#). They include [Michelle Williamson](#), whose parents were killed in the 1993 IRA Shankill bomb, and [Jim Dixon](#), who was injured in the IRA bombing in [Enniskillen](#) in [Co Fermanagh](#), which killed 11 people.

They also include two Americans and their families, who are now likely to be compensated. According to Mr Fraser, one is a US naval officer who was based in [Derry](#) during the Troubles and who was caught up in a number of IRA incidents. The second is an American citizen who was injured in the IRA bomb attack on [Harrods](#).

"They [the Americans] will now be entitled to get compensation. I don't begrudge it to them. We have been working on this for six years, to hold Colonel Gaddafi responsible. We thought at long last there was some justice in the world," he said.

[Ronald Motley](#), of US legal firm [Motley Rice](#), which is taking the class action, said the new act "selfishly settles some plaintiffs' claims and throws the rest of the plaintiffs to the wolves" -- seeking to bar these victims from proceeding further with legitimate litigation against Libya.

- *Maeve Sheehan*

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