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North must address 'terrible legacy'



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By Staff reporter

Former Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan has said that if the North is ever to recover from its "terrible legacy" then the past must be addressed.

Speaking at the annual Bloody Sunday lecture at the Calagh Centre on Friday evening, Ms O'Loan recalled where she was when she heard what had happened in Derry on January 30, 1972 and explained that if there is to be any form of truth and reconciliation then the relatives of the victims must play an important role.

"I was a student in London with my husband Declan when I first heard what had taken place in Derry that day [Bloody Sunday].

"Bloody Sunday is one of many atrocities that took place in Northern Ireland and I think that we have to move forward through truth and reconciliation.

"The relatives are especially important to the whole process. There have been so many victims of the Troubles and one common feature that I noticed during my time as Police Ombudsman was that each victim was either a mother, a father, a brother, a sister or a lover.

"We should never forget the details of living in the past as they help us not to make the same mistakes in the future. We need to understand what really did happen.

"People have said that the past should be left alone. I do not believe that. We have a duty to investigate all crimes. Even if they happened years ago, they are as compelling today as they are when they first took place."

Addressing crimes of the past, Ms. O

O'Loan expressed her views on how to move forward.

"I believe that an Independent Investigative Association should be set-up to look at crimes from the past.

“However, there must be a clear understanding that certain factors will inhibit prosecution. For example if the accused has Alzheimer's, or is terminally ill or if there is no unbroken chain of evidence.”

Ms. O'Loan concluded the lecture by saying that any form of truth or reconciliation will not be instantaneous and added that we must not let the mistakes of the past infect younger generations.

“How we deal with the past is up to us but there must be transparency and clarity.

“Any process will not be definitive and if even if the end product is imperfect I think that we should still strive to achieve it. Pain and all its dimensions must not pass from generation to generation if we are to stand any chance of progress.”

The full article contains 424 words and appears in Journal Sunday newspaper.

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