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MAGINNESS: ANY TRUTH PROCESS MUST BE VICTIM-CENTRED

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Any proposal for a truth commission must be victim-centred, SDLP Justice Spokesman and North Belfast candidate Alban Maginness has stated.

Mr Maginness said: “Nobody wants to relive the past. But nor should we cover it up. What we have to do is leave the past behind on a moral basis. That means designing a truth process that puts the rights and interests of all victims at its heart – be they victims of the state or paramilitaries.

All victims must have the right to record what happened to them – and how it impacted upon their lives. They must have the right to have their hurt recognised. They must have the right to have the truth uncovered. And, if they want, they must have the right to seek prosecutions.

Many victims in South Africa felt virtually excluded from the truth process that they established there. Too often they felt that it was all about excusing the perpetrators and not about recognising the loss of victims. We must not make the same mistake here.

Any process must also be independent and international. Nobody – especially victims of collusion - will have confidence in a process run by the British Government when it has a lot to answer for, as the McCord report proves.

Finally, we all have to be clear about one thing. There must be no dirty deal to cover up the truth like the one that the British Government did with Sinn Fein on On the Runs. If we see the like of that deal again, perpetrators will feel no pressure to tell the truth about anything. Because they would know that no matter what lies they tell, there would be no chance of them every being brought to book.”

ENDS

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