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Mark Durkan MP MLA

2nd February 2007

DURKAN BACKS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

SDLP Leader Mark Durkan MP has backed the criticisms of the Chair of the Human Rights Commission about the Justice and Security Bill. Mr Durkan stated:

“The NIO are making it out that this is to stop the Commission investigating the Troubles. But what they are doing prevents the Commission from investigating anything that occurred at any time in the past – from child abuse to the locking up of the mentally ill at Muckamore.

And the Bill wouldn't just block the Commission from uncovering the past. It will undermine their ability to protect human rights well into the future.

Around the world Human Rights Commissions have the power to protect the voiceless, the vulnerable and the marginalised. We all deserve the same too.”

Mr Durkan added:

“This Bill isn't just shabby in its treatment of the Human Rights Commission – other provisions also undermine basic human rights.

The Bill puts no jury courts on a permanent basis. It gives the British Army permanent policing powers. It even overrules the European Convention on Human Rights.

At a time when we are nearer a total peace than ever before, the Government should be dismantling these draconian provisions instead of putting them on a permanent footing. As we progress to being a normal society, people want normal laws and basic rights. It's time that Government played its part and realised that this law takes us back, not forward. The SDLP yesterday put down amendments to the Bill to right these wrongs. Our amendments secure a Commission with proper powers and a society with normal laws.”

ENDS

02/02/07