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TUESDAY
03/07/2007
09:45:52

MLA warns over victims' future

Recommendations for the future of victims could be lost when a commissioner for those affected is appointed later this year, an Assemblyman warned today.

Tom Elliott (UUP, Fermanagh, South Tyrone) said measures like extra money for UDR widows and other victims' groups could be sacrificed despite their inclusion in a report from Interim Victims' Commissioner Bertha McDougall in January.

He has tabled a motion on the matter to be debated in the Assembly later today ahead of the appointment of a permanent commissioner.

"We believe that a number of those recommendations should stand on their own and should be continued," he said.

"Our concern is that if these were not followed through at this stage you could be into another four years before another report and the whole current situation would be lost."

Ms McDougall, an RUC widow, said the Memorial Fund for victims should be phased out and replaced with a more flexible kitty to be allocated £8m in the first year.

She said a more consistent approach was needed and suggested provision

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for UDR families whose soldier husband had been killed in the line of duty, similar to the police fund.

The official also recommended more compensation for those bereaved before 1988 worth £2,000 a year.

Previous changes to the law made special allowance for those affected by the conflict after 1988.

She advocated establishing a victims` forum and a role for their representatives on bodies responsible for community planning when local government reforms come in by 2009.

She criticised the fragmented approach of helping those suffering from trauma and said methods of delivering services were too complex.

On Friday around 5,000 former RUC officers won a court case which could net them £100m.

They alleged in the High Court that they were suffering post-traumatic stress disorder following years of conflict.

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FILM: DANS PARIS

DIRECTOR: Christophe Honore.

STARRING: Romain Duris, Louis Garrel, Joanna Preiss, Guy Marchand.

DETAILS: France / 93mins (15)

RATING: ★★☆☆☆

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