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Catherine McCartney

MONDAY  
08/10/2007  
16:09:42

### SF criticised over McCartney death

Senior Sinn Fein figures were criticised in the Northern Ireland Assembly today over their attitude to police investigations into crimes

involving IRA members, including the murder of Belfast father-of-two Robert McCartney.

During questions to First Minister Ian Paisley, Ulster Unionist Assembly member David Burnside raised claims from the family of Mr McCartney that senior Sinn Fein figures were not engaging properly with the police investigation into his murder in January 2005.

With the Assembly currently considering whether responsibility for policing and criminal justice matters should be transferred to Stormont, Mr Burnside asked - in light of the family's concerns - how unionists could allow the powers to be devolved.

"The First Minister surely believes that before there is a transfer of policing and justice there needs to be confidence building measures in the transfer of policing and justice to this House and to this Executive." the South Antrim MLA said.

"Does he not find it amazing that over the weekend, the McCartney sisters - the relatives of Robert McCartney - were saying there is no evidence of senior republicans, Sinn Fein/IRA, taking part in historic crimes enquiries with the Police Service of Northern Ireland?"

"Does he not find it totally unacceptable that his Deputy First Minister (Martin McGuinness) will not personally or corporately - on behalf of Sinn Fein/IRA - take part in any historic crimes enquiries? How can any confidence be built in transferring police and justice when his Deputy First

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Minister and members of the Sinn Fein bench are involved in such activities?"

Mr McCartney was stabbed outside a Belfast city centre pub in January 2005 after he and a friend were attacked.

His family waged a high profile international campaign to persuade Sinn Fein to use its influence in bringing his killers to justice. However at the weekend, the family expressed disillusionment with the case.

Mr Paisley insisted the place to raise concerns about the devolution of policing and justice powers was a special committee set up in the Assembly.

The Democratic Unionist leader told Mr Burnside: "I would remind the Member that his party is part of this coalition.

"So he should get onto his own party leader and onto his own party instead of reading to me what he thinks should happen."

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