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Court in Strasbourg

TUESDAY  
27/11/2007  
16:02:58

**Strasbourg backs collusion families**

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg today ruled that allegations of security force collusion in the loyalist murders of

eight men in South Armagh in the 1970s had not properly been investigated.

The case was taken to Europe by the families of the eight men following what they considered to be a failure by the government to properly have investigated detailed allegations of collusion made by a former member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1999.

The court ruled unanimously that in all the cases there had been a violation of Article 2 [right to life] of the European Convention on Human Rights due to the lack of independence of the RUC which handled the initial stages of the investigation into the allegations.

The collusion claim was made by former RUC man John Weir in a television programme.

He stated he had been told by another former reserve constable in the RUC that a farmhouse owned by another officer was used as a base from which to carry out loyalist attacks.

Weir also alleged that a part-time member of the Ulster Defence Regiment was among those responsible for one of the attacks and that a getaway car was provided by another former police reservist.

The case related to the deaths of eight men from four families and the wounding of a ninth:

:: Colm McCartney, who was murdered at Altnamackin in August 1975.

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:: Trevor Brecknell, who was murdered at Donnelly`s Bar in Silverbridge in December 1975.  
 :: Brothers John, Brian and Anthony Reavey, murdered at Whitecross in January 1976.  
 :: Joseph, Barry and Declan O` Dowd, murdered on the same evening as the Reavey brothers.  
 :: The wounding of Michael McGrath in a gun attack on the Rock Bar in Keady in June 1976.

The court said an investigation into the allegations appeared to have been started by the RUC in 1999 and interviews with seven people central to Weir`s allegations - among those who could be traced or were still alive - were conducted in 2001, without obtaining any useful new or incriminating evidence.

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