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## Local & National

### Troubles amnesty 'sickens' Paisley

Tuesday, January 08, 2008

By Victoria O'Hara and Noel McAdam

Executive Junior Minister Ian Paisley jnr today condemned suggestions of a possible amnesty for former paramilitaries by the group examining how to deal with the past as "sickening and unacceptable".

As tempers flared at the first public meeting held by the Consultative Group on the Past, the DUP Justice spokesman rejected the argument that allowing the disclosure of information on unsolved murders without fear of prosecution was a way of reaching the truth.

The North Antrim MLA said the idea was an attempt to re-introduce the defeated amnesty for On-The-Runs "by the back door", which was "sickening". No one should be above the law and everyone should be equally subject to the law, he said.

"It is unacceptable that the Government could consider an amnesty for those who carried out some of the most heinous crimes in the Troubles. Where there is evidence to convict a conviction should be pursued," he said.

"Legislation of this kind flouts our liberty and the requirement of those who break the law to be made answerable to the law. It must be condemned and any attempt to force such legislation on Northern Ireland will not be tolerated."

His comments came after an argument broke out between unionist victims spokesman Willie Frazer and a member of the public at the first of seven public meetings held in Belfast.

Mr Frazer was heckled after he spoke of concerns that an amnesty for paramilitaries and criminals would be recommended by the group.

"We have heard an interim report has been done by yourselves and one of the main suggestions that an amnesty is one of the main things that has come out of it," he told the panel.

"If you are talking about an amnesty to the murders of our loved ones you can get out of them chairs and head home now, because you will solve nothing in this country."

After he spoke a man accused Mr Frazer of not representing victims of both sides.

Insults were hurled between the two men.

However, after an appeal from Lord Eames, co-chair of the group, for calm, members of the public intervened and the debate continued.

During the meeting Raymond McCord, whose son Raymond junior was murdered by loyalist paramilitaries, was among a number of people who questioned the appointment of the panel.

"I was very reluctant to come because as far as I am concerned it is like an NIO stunt," he said.

"Let's put people in the panel who are victims themselves."

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"They are talking about dealing with the past. How I want the past dealt with, we don't want people sitting across tables saying, 'I murdered your son, your brother, your father' then walking away and not prosecuted.

"We want to see justice.

"We want to see people in court."

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