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# 'I'd do anything to carry on my life like it was before the bomb'

By Victoria O'Hara  
*Friday, 15 August 2008*

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The name Michael Gallagher meant little to the world before August 15, 1998.

But after a 500lb Real IRA bomb ripped through Omagh at 3.10pm on that day, his world, along with many others, was turned upside down.

Suddenly he was not Michael Gallagher, husband, father or motor mechanic. He became known throughout the world as Michael Gallagher — the father of Aiden Gallagher who died in the Omagh bombing.

Aiden, who was 21, had gone into Omagh to buy a pair of jeans when he was fatally injured in the bomb.

During the ten years since the atrocity, Michael's life has been consumed with achieving justice for the victims' families.

But today Michael speaks about how the long and dogged public pursuit for justice has placed huge pressure on his family, his marriage and taken a “huge toll” on himself.

“I would do anything to be able to go back and carry on my life like it was on August 14, 1998,” he said.

“I wanted justice and to get some resolution. Here we are on the 10th anniversary and we are still as far away as ever.”

Mr Gallagher describes it as “a long, difficult road” and has experienced major set backs in the campaign. But this has not deterred him.

“I want to make Aiden’s life count,” he added. “None of the victims should ever be forgotten.”

He says while he tried not to embrace anger following the death of his son, he still finds it impossible to forgive those responsible.

In the aftermath of the tragedy Michael found himself in front of the cameras.

“I felt the best people to talk about those who lost loved ones were the families themselves,” he said. “Politicians use air time in order to promote their own brand of politics.”

Although never deliberately choosing a career in the public eye, Michael’s grief left him unable to cope with his day job.

“I think initially I did attempt to go back to work, but I found it too difficult,” he added.

Part of his tireless role was becoming chairman of the Omagh Support and Self Help Group. During the 10 years since the murders, a police probe has failed to convict one person for the bombing.

And a Police Ombudsman report led by Dame Nuala O’Loan heavily criticised the probe sparking further controversy surrounding the handling of the case.

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