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McGurk's inquiry needs to be truly independent

North Belfast News

by Ciarán Barnes

12/08/2006

The grandson of a man murdered in the 1971 McGurk's bombing has repeated calls for an independent inquiry into the killings.

Speaking at an event on Monday to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the UVF bomb attack on the New Lodge bar in which 15 people died, Robert McClenaghan said any renewed

investigation must be "independent from the British". The PSNI's Historical Enquiries Team (HET) is currently re-examining the murders. However, relatives of those murdered have little faith in the HET investigation as some of its staff are former members of RUC. The RUC has been accused of covering up the role of those involved in the slaughter.

"How can the HET be acceptable to the people of the New Lodge when their predecessors in the RUC were complicit in the McGurk's massacre and the subsequent cover-up," asked Mr McClenaghan.

"How could anyone think that the HET can meet the families' demands for independence in dealing with state and state-sponsored killings?"

"Any investigation into unsolved killings must be independent from the British who are a key protagonist to the conflict."

Sinn Féin MLA Kathy Stanton, a New Lodge native, said the anniversary of McGurk's was a time for memories and quiet reflection.

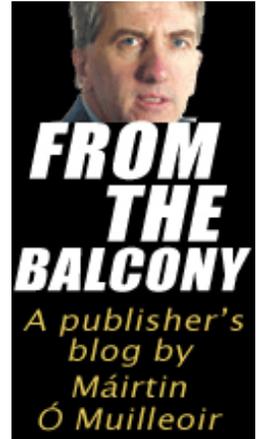
She said: "The McGurk's atrocity, the killing of Peter McBride and the New Lodge Six killings, like so many other deaths remain open wounds in this community.

"All these families' campaigns must be assisted in their efforts to place guilt on those who were behind this attack. Sinn Féin is firmly behind families as they push for truth and justice."

Those murdered in the McGurk's bombing were Philomena McGurk, Marie McGurk, James Cromie, John Colton, Thomas McLaughlin, David Milligan, James Smyth, Francis Bradley, Thomas Kane, Kathleen Irvine, Philip Garry, Edward Kane, Edward Keenan, Sarah Keenan and Robert Spotswood.

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Loyalist Robert Campbell was convicted in 1977 of blowing up McGurk's. He was given 15 life sentences. The other UVF gang members who planted the bomb have never been charged.

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