

Most PopularMost Emailed

BreakingSportBusinessWorldGossip



Issue Changer:



[HOME](#) | [EDITORIAL](#) >

## More apologies will aid healing

### Pro fide et patria

Editorial

16/07/08

Addressing the unresolved issues arising from almost four decades of violence is a uniquely difficult and complex process but the British government has managed to offer at least some comfort to a group of grieving families in recent days.

As The Irish News reported in advance of the announcement late on Monday night in the House of Commons, an unreserved official apology was finally offered to the relatives of victims of the atrocity at McGurk's bar in

The no-warning explosion, carried out by the UVF for purely sectarian reasons, killed 15 people, including two children, at the North Queen Street pub.

It needs to be accepted from the start that both loyalist and republican groups were not only responsible for many other outrages during the same period but routinely lied about the circumstances both at the time and for many years afterwards.

What sets the McGurk's case in a category of its own is that the misinformation that followed the dreadful event was circulated by both British army and government sources.

Entirely untrue claims, suggesting that an IRA bomb had detonated prematurely as it was being prepared inside the bar, were put forward to political and media outlets.

This was not only grossly offensive – and ignored the firm evidence of independent witnesses – but also cast a dark shadow over the reputations of many of the innocent people who died in the blast.

It was not until a UVF member admitted his role in the attack seven years later and was given a life sentence that the record could be set straight.

However, it remained essential, regardless of how long it took, that the false nature of the allegations that had circulated back in 1971 should be acknowledged in a formal way.

In this week's dignified parliamentary statement, the Northern Ireland security minister, Paul Goggins, said: "We are deeply sorry, not just for the appalling suffering and loss of life that occurred at McGurk's bar but also for the extraordinary additional pain caused to both the immediate families and the wider community by the erroneous suggestions made in the immediate aftermath of the explosion as to who was responsible."

This was a fully justified intervention, which leaves the way open for further initiatives on the part of republican and loyalist organisations.

They not only carried out the vast majority of the murders but also frequently went out of their way to distort the truth to justify their actions.

Even after all these years, a specific apology to the relatives of one or more paramilitary victims would help to heal the wounds of the past.



Email this story

[print advertising](#) | [media pack](#) | [online advertising](#) | [privacy statement](#) | [about us](#) | [contact us](#) | [subscribe](#) | [login](#) | [archives](#) | [sitemap](#) | [careers](#) | [home](#)