



British spooks helped shut down investigations of Troubles-era atrocities

Description

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Troubles Bloody Sunday

The director of national security for Britain, alongside others with links to MI5 and GCHQ, were part of a [secret policymaking group](#) that helped create the notorious Legacy Act. The 2023 Act was a concoction by the Tory government designed to shut down investigations into Troubles-era crimes, including those [carried out by the British state](#)

The revelations are [reported by the](#) *Detail* and stem from work by Daniel Holder of the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ). Holder spent:

eight months seeking the release of documents relating to the Senior Legacy Investigations Working Group, which met in mid-2020.

The documents Holder provided are marked "official secret". Their contents show outrageous plans to bulldoze through the deeply sensitive matter of investigating 3,500 deaths "within two years", an impossible deadline. The intention was to close:

down the vast majority of cases within six to twelve months, with an estimated 500 deaths requiring another year of investigation.

It formed part of an approach to:

shift away from the current criminal justice focus and towards greater reconciliation and information recovery.

Tory plan for army veterans to escape prosecution

This was one of the suggested talking points for the NIO chair of the secret group. It represented the [approach of the Conservative government](#) which wanted to avoid more cases of British army veterans being held to account in the courts for [murders they carried out in the north of Ireland](#). Tories have remained vocal as Labour has sought to reform the Legacy Act.

Shadow armed forces minister [Mark Francois claimed](#) that veterans would have a sword of Damocles hanging over them again. They ought to, if they carried out atrocities. Tory leader Kemi Badenoch recently effectively called for British troops to be immune for prosecution, as [she posted a video containing footage of Bloody Sunday](#).

The secretive group sabotaging work into historic injustices met on 19 June and 10 July 2020. It was:

composed of senior officials from the worlds of policing, counter-terrorism, and the law, including former PSNI chief constable George Hamilton.

Among those on the panel who were either members of security services, or linked to them, included:

Madeleine Alessandri formerly Britain's deputy national security advisor. She held a number of posts within the United Kingdom's national intelligence infrastructure, both before and after her time in the policy group. Later chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee

Chloe Squire director of national security at the Home Office while on the Legacy Senior Working Group

Shehzad Charania now works for GCHQ

This essentially amounts to the security services marking their own homework, as legacy cases would involve crimes carried out by said spooks, such as MI5 collusion with the likes of [Fred Stakeknife](#) Scappaticci.

Victims of the Troubles families left out of secretive process

Alessandri argued that:

addressing the past was vital for allowing Northern Ireland to move forward as a society and transition fully into a post-conflict society.

This is true, though the method for this ought to be constructed in concert with Troubles victims' families, rather than drawn up by secret policy groups full of security services personnel. Among those in the group who had no business speaking on behalf of these families was former Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) chief constable George Hamilton, who said to group members:

Even when you secure a criminal justice outcome, experience has shown that it doesn't bring the closure people hope for or bring family satisfaction.

Families will welcome information recovery. It is the small vocal minority that will present the legal challenges and we should be ready for that but they do not speak for the silent majority who just want to move on.

The Detail give the response of Mark Thompson of Relatives for Justice, who replied:

I wouldn't describe the 1,100 bereaved relatives of murder victims including victims of torture who want answers as "small and vocal minority".

Thompson added:

It is not lost on all the families that the very people who made these comments represent the very same state agencies that should be subject to robust independent investigations with full accountability if we were to have such a process.

In a Facebook post, Relatives for Justice said

MI5 and policing vested interests came together to deny justice to all families, from all backgrounds, affected by all actors, their rights to truth, justice and accountability. Families have since successfully led the challenges to these shameful efforts

Featured image via the Canary

By Robert Freeman

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