

TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

UNITED STATES CONGRESS

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STATEMENT OF GERALDINE FINUCANE

“Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, my fellow speakers, ladies and gentlemen:

My name is Geraldine Finucane. My husband was Patrick Finucane, the Belfast solicitor murdered by Loyalist paramilitaries in 1989. My family and I have campaigned since his murder for an independent public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the killing. We have done so because of compelling evidence that my husband’s murder was part of an approved British Government policy of widespread collusion between the State and Loyalist paramilitaries, which incorporated State complicity in all types of illegal activity, up to and including murder.

On 11th September 2024, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced in the House of Commons that an independent statutory public inquiry would be established into the murder of Patrick Finucane. After 35 years of campaigning for such an inquiry, this announcement represented a significant step forward for my family in our fight to uncover all of the circumstances behind Pat's murder.

It has been a long journey to get to the point where the establishment of a public inquiry has finally become a reality. I look forward to having the opportunity to participate in a statutory inquiry and expose publicly the whole truth behind the murder of my husband.

This has always been the objective of the campaign that my family and I have pursued for 35 years. We have only ever been concerned with uncovering the truth. It is this that has kept us going. It is the central element that has been missing all these years no matter how many small pieces of information were revealed along the way. Nothing less than a complete picture would suffice.

We did not believe that Pat's murder was simply the work of gunmen who killed him. It was and is clear that there were many other participants who helped to carry out and implement the scheme. Loyalist paramilitaries were not capable of devising and realising a plan to murder such a high profile target without significant help. The information that has come to light throughout the course of our campaign demonstrates clearly that they had such help, and that it came from British State sources, such as Army Intelligence, the Security Service (MI5), and RUC Special Branch.

When all of this is taken into consideration, it is not surprising that we had no confidence as a family that mere police investigations would ever bring those responsible to justice. We were also not satisfied with private, limited reviews established by the British Government from which we were excluded. We could not and did not accept the assurances of previous British governments that they were anxious to set the record straight because they were never prepared to do so *in public*.

An independent, statutory public inquiry is, and was, the only way to bring the whole truth behind the murder of Pat Finucane into the light of day. We look forward to this new chapter in our campaign, where we engage with an independent chairperson of an inquiry, discuss and agree terms of reference, and start to review the evidence that the inquiry will consider and the witnesses whose testimony will be heard.

The journey to this point is not one that my family and I have had to endure alone. Indeed, we would never have succeeded without the assistance and support and encouragement of so many people over the years. Pat's business partner, Peter Madden, the firm of Madden & Finucane, which they founded together, and the many lawyers who have represented us in countless court proceedings over the years were invaluable to our campaign. The time and effort they gave to our cases went far beyond the extent of representation that should be required of any advocate, and yet it was given, without complaint, time and again. I would like to express my gratitude to all of them, for the record.

Many human rights NGOs, at home and abroad, raised our case again and again in forums as diverse as the European Commission, the United Nations, and, of course, these Houses of Congress. They made sure that the seriousness of the case became, and remained, of concern internationally.

Organisations like British Irish Rights Watch, the Committee on the Administration of Justice, Relatives for Justice, Amnesty International, the Pat Finucane Centre, Human Rights First, the Brehon Law Society, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and many, many others, raised the importance of this case continuously and tirelessly, so that successive administrations and policymakers understood its importance and kept it on the agenda.

This was not easy but the commitment to our case by every organisation who helped us never wavered. I would like to record my gratitude and that of my family to each and every one of them, for the record.

As I sit here with my family before this Committee, I am reminded of the unwavering support we have received from the United States and its Congressional representatives, over many years. The first Congressional hearing on Human Rights in Northern Ireland took place here in Washington on 24 June 1997, before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights. A then unfamiliar congressman called Christopher Smith, from New Jersey, chaired that meeting, which was attended by my son, Michael, and others from Ireland and the United States. This was a year before the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and four years before the Weston Park negotiations. It would be another 27 years before a public inquiry into Pat's murder would be announced.

In that time, many other hearings were convened by Chris Smith and others, some of whom are, sadly, no longer with us. Not only does this include members of this House but also speakers at the hearings themselves. During the course of the journey towards a public inquiry for my husband Pat, another Irish solicitor, Rosemary Nelson, was murdered by Loyalists in 1999. Allegations of threats by police and collusion with paramilitaries were, yet again, continuing hallmarks of this murder, just as they are for Pat.

Rosemary herself testified about the threats and intimidation she faced in a hearing like this one, in this House, in late 1998. An inquiry into her murder has concluded and the establishment of that inquiry would not have been possible without the stalwart efforts of Chris Smith, his staff, his colleagues, and all those in this House who value justice and the rule of law. I thank you all for this.

The inquiry into the murder of Pat Finucane is the last remaining case of those promised at the Weston Park negotiations in 2001. Many have described it as potentially the most controversial of all the inquiries and the one that could cause the greatest embarrassment for the British Government. The UK Supreme Court, in 2019, began its judgment on this case with the words, **“This shocking and dreadful event still ranks, 30 years later, as one of the most notorious of what are euphemistically called “the Northern Ireland troubles”.**

Notwithstanding this, I believe the inquiry can be a watershed moment in the difficult subject of legacy on our island. If an inquiry into the murder of Pat Finucane can finally examine publicly all of the collusion that plagued our society for so many years, there is hope that the real process of healing can begin. The murder of Pat Finucane is the last remaining Weston Park case. It is high time it was properly investigated, publicly examined, and finally resolved.

I believe that my family deserve this after so many years. Pat Finucane deserves this after so many years. Irish society as a whole deserves this, after so many years.

After 35 years of cover-ups, it is time for truth.

I thank this Commission for its time today and the opportunity to speak and be heard.”