

There's no stopping 'Murph campaign

Massacre case goes up a notch after Stormont leaflet launch

BY GRAINNE MCWILLIAMS & DAMIEN BROWN

THE Ballymurphy Massacre families took their campaign for justice to Stormont this week where they launched a new leaflet detailing events surrounding the killings.

The families were joined in Parliament Buildings' Great Hall by West Belfast MP Gerry Adams and relatives of those killed on Bloody Sunday.

Members of the British army's Parachute Regiment murdered 11 people in the Ballymurphy Massacre, including a local priest and a mother of eight children. The massacre took place over a 36-hour period during the introduction of internment without trial in August 1971.

Six months later the same regiment murdered 14 people in Derry's Bogside area in what became known as Bloody Sunday. Six months after that they killed another five people in West Belfast's Springhill area, including a second Catholic priest.

Speaking at the launch of the leaflet, which is entitled 'Time for Our Truth', Briege Voyle of the Ballymurphy Massacre families said the leaflet was a chance to spread the word about their campaign further afield.

"This leaflet tells everyone the story that our loved ones were murdered over a three-day period and that we need answers now and we need the truth to be told," said Briege, whose mother Joan Connolly was shot four times and killed as she tried to administer aid and comfort to fatally wounded teenager Noel Phillips.

"This year alone we have got the support of the Catholic Church which was a great thing for us because really now we need to up our campaign. We have been campaigning for the last three years and we think with this new leaflet now's the chance to bring out the campaign even more.

"From here on in we are hoping to meet with Owen Patterson (Secretary of State) in October. We have asked for a meeting with David Cameron, and we're hoping to go Capitol Hill, Washington DC, in December."

Briege Voyle paid tribute to the members of the Bloody Sunday campaign who travelled to Belfast to help launch the leaflet.

"I would like to thank the Bloody Sunday families for coming on board," she said.

"They have got their apology and I think we deserve an apology as well."



SUPPORT: The Ballymurphy families are joined by West Belfast MP Gerry Adams and the Bloody Sunday families in Stormont

"After listening to their heartbreaking stories I was overcome"

John Kelly of the Bloody Sunday families, who officially launched the leaflet, spoke of how he got involved with the Ballymurphy families' campaign after speaking at a Féile an Phobail event in the summer.

"After listening to their heartbreaking stories I was completely overcome by what I heard - stories of blatant murder and terrible brutality conducted by the Parachute Regiment, the same regiment who were responsible for the same murderous brutality carried out in Derry on Bloody Sunday," said Mr Kelly, who lost his 17-year-old brother Michael in the Bloody Sunday atrocity.

"The Ballymurphy Massacre happened six months before Bloody Sunday. It and many other murders by the British army around that time, helped set the precedent that British soldiers were immune from prosecution and knew that they could, would and did get away with murder.

"We know that the agencies of the British state, from the government down through the prosecution services, helped to promote and encourage this culture of immunity."

Mr Kelly vowed that those responsible for both massacres would not get away with it.

"Ballymurphy and Bloody Sunday stand side by side in history as massacres carried out by the British army. I can tell you that after the Saville Report they will not get away with murdering our loved ones and they hopefully will be

brought to justice at long last," he said.

"We have achieved some justice with the publication of the Saville Report, and we hope that the families here can get the same. The Bloody Sunday families will always be there to support the Ballymurphy families, and all the other victims that cry out for truth and justice.

"Hopefully this leaflet will travel the world, educating and making people aware of the type of atrocities and war crimes carried out by the British army against innocent Irish people. Hopefully it will be part of these families getting the truth and justice they deserve."

Welcoming the Ballymurphy families to Stormont, Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams said: "The accounts of how the 11 died in Ballymurphy bears a striking similarity to the stories told by the Bloody Sunday families. The families have carried out substantial inquiries into the circumstances surrounding the deaths of their loved ones. They believe that not all of the facts pertaining to the shootings were made known or that the killings were properly investigated. They also have concerns about the inquiries that were carried out.

"In July the Catholic Church released archive documents surrounding the events in Ballymurphy in August 1971. This included new eyewitness accounts which lend support to the families' opinion that vital evidence was withheld.

"The demand of the families is very clear. They want truth. They are campaigning for an independent international investigation into the circumstances of the 11 deaths and a statement of innocence and apology from the British government."

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