

## Media in the spotlight

**At a time when two newspaper groups and individual journalists are under threat from paramilitary organisations and the murderers of Martin O'Hagan are still at large, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) used the Terrorism Act to carry out raids on a newspaper office and the home of two journalists.**

Liam Clarke is the Northern Ireland editor of the Sunday Times. He and his wife Kathryn Johnston are the co-authors of an unofficial biography of Sinn Féin leader Martin McGuinness MP, *From Guns to Government*. A new paperback edition of the book was published recently. There is evidence that the raid was not unconnected to the book's contents. It included transcripts of tape recordings of four telephone calls in 1999 and 2001 between Martin McGuinness and Jonathan Powell, chief of staff to Prime Minister Tony Blair MP; Mo Mowlam MP, at that time Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams MP; and a woman in the USA called Kathleen. The tape recordings were allegedly made by the PSNI at the request of MI5, in which case the decision to tap the telephone of Martin McGuinness, himself a MP, would have presumably been authorised at the highest political level.

On 30<sup>th</sup> April 2003 two newspapers, the Times and the Sun, published extracts from the transcripts, and the Irish News reproduced them in full.

At around 8:30 pm that evening, armed police arrived at Liam Clarke and Kathryn Johnston's home. The police searched the house and took away computers and large numbers of documents and other items, including a list of the journalists' contacts. The search took some five hours and police officers scrutinised all the documents before deciding what to seize. Many items were seized despite the fact that they had nothing to do with official secrets or national security. The PSNI also raided the Belfast office of the Sunday Times, apparently declining Liam Clarke's offer of a key and instead breaking down the door.

Liam Clarke and Kathryn Johnston were arrested under the Official Secrets Act at 2:00 am on 1<sup>st</sup> May. They were taken to Antrim and were each interviewed four or five times in the presence of their lawyers. Liam Clarke was not allowed to make any telephone calls. Kathryn Johnston was eventually allowed to make calls concerning the welfare of their eight-year-old daughter. Her calls were listened to by police

officers. Neither journalist answered any questions that would have revealed their sources. They were released on police bail after almost 24 hours in custody. The PSNI took fingerprints and DNA samples from both journalists, and photographed Liam Clarke.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April 2003 a retired Special Branch officer was arrested. On 2<sup>nd</sup> May he was charged under the Official Secrets Act and released on bail.

Two other journalists have also been contacted by the PSNI concerning leaked tapes. David Lister, a journalist with The Times, was questioned under caution on 1<sup>st</sup> May. He was interviewed at his solicitor's office by appointment. Henry McDonald, Ireland editor of the Observer, was questioned on 7<sup>th</sup> May at Castlereagh police station.

Martin McGuinness was Sinn Féin's chief negotiator in the peace process, Minister for Education, and is a Member of Parliament. It is very much a matter of public interest that such a person should be clandestinely bugged. Of even more direct concern to CAJ are the implications for journalists, given their right to freedom of expression under article 10 of the European Convention. Many will conclude that the journalists were arrested as a punishment for having made disclosures that caused embarrassment to the government.

In support of Liam Clarke and Kathryn Johnston, Séamus Dooley NUJ Irish Secretary said, "The raid on the home of Mr Clarke and his partner Kathryn Johnston and the Sunday Times office had grave implications for the operation of the media in Northern Ireland."

At a meeting on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May of the Northern Ireland sub-committee of the National Union of Journalists, Des Fagan expressed alarm about recent events, saying "I am concerned that at a time when journalists in Northern Ireland are under threat from paramilitaries, they would seem to be also under threat from the state."

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## Visions of Equality

**Equality is likely to be a central theme in two major law reform developments currently being mooted in Northern Ireland: the Bill of Rights and a Single Equality Bill. However it is clear that equality means different things to different people. It is important that a clear vision of equality underpins any reforms, and ideally underpins both of the proposed developments above.**

In her recent book on Discrimination Law the Oxford academic Sandra Fredman has indicated that a number of different concepts of equality are reflected in our current anti-discrimination law. The first and most familiar is the idea of equal treatment. This is the notion that likes should be treated alike and that people should not be treated differently because of 'arbitrary' characteristics such as their race, religion, or gender. This view sees discrimination as being rooted simply in bigotry and prejudice and suspects that once people are educated about these prejudices such discrimination will decrease. It is a powerful concept and speaks to a very simple idea of justice. However this understanding of equality only takes us so far for a number of reasons of which two are particularly significant.

Firstly even if you remove legal sanction for prejudice patterns of unequal distribution of resources may have grown up which systematically disadvantage certain groups. Ending slavery in 19<sup>th</sup> century USA did not immediately put African Americans on the same footing as whites. Many of them lacked even the basic education needed for many jobs or the capital to obtain decent accommodation.

The second flaw is that it is not clear all differences between us are arbitrary. Take the issue of pregnancy. Women do become pregnant, men do not and this does have consequences for their ability to turn up for work every day. Or take disability. Wheelchair users may have greater difficulty getting around workplaces than those who can walk. These are not entirely arbitrary differences which can be removed by education. Likes are not in all respect alike. However the question remains as to whether women or people with disabilities should be disadvantaged by this. If everyone could get pregnant, or everyone was in a wheelchair, would not rotas or workplaces be designed differently than they currently are?

As Fredman observes such thoughts, especially those relating to historical disadvantage, lead to a second conception of equality, that of equality of opportunity. This looks at seeking to eliminate the barriers which exclude certain groups from participation in the workplace or public office. One example would be the development of the legal concept of indirect discrimination, whereby apparently neutral criteria such as experience or educational

qualifications, are scrutinised to examine whether they actually have the effect of excluding people from certain groups.

However apart from the fact that it does not address the issue of irreducible differences, this approach already begins to raise some complaints among those who do not have access to such education or training, and who complain that equality has moved away from treating people as individuals and is now just advantaging certain groups.

Such concerns are even stronger when a third approach to equality is advanced, that of equality of results. This approach reflects deep suspicion about all claims for neutral justifications of patterns of inequality in society and calls instead for strictly equal allocation of resources on grounds of race, religion, gender etc. While it has the advantage of ensuring strictly equal distribution it can be criticized both for ignoring individual difference and ability and for in fact perpetuating stereotypes eg in the case of disability quotas where disabled people argued this prevented them from competing equally for jobs and segregated them into low status employment.

To counteract this and deal with the problem of irreducible difference, Fredman has developed a fourth and more complex concept of pluralist equality. This looks beyond simply preventing discrimination to actually promoting equality and has four elements. These are: a) breaking the cycle of disadvantage ; b) promoting respect for the equal dignity and worth of all; c) positive affirmation of identity within a community; and d) facilitating full participation in society. Fredman argues that these sorts of ideas can be seen in contemporary equality law, though with the consequence that it appears more complex and fragmented.

Depending on the vision of equality the law aims to pursue it can reach different conclusions on issues such as the grounds of discrimination prohibited in the law, the legal definition of discrimination, and the scope given to affirmative action. To consider just the issue of affirmative action. The first view of equality sees it as anathema and argues that it only perpetuates exactly the discrimination we are seeking to avoid. An equality of opportunity approach also holds difficulties but may be prepared to contemplate some limited measures where there is clear evidence of historic disadvantage. For an equality of results approach permanent affirmative action is required as the best means of ensuring substantive results are obtained. The complex equality approach sees affirmative action as valuable and regards it not as discrimination at all but rather as one means of advancing equality.

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Discrimination Law, published by Clarendon.  
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# New Criminal Justice Plan

The Government has this month published a revised version of the Criminal Justice Review Implementation Plan. The Plan commits both the government and the respective criminal justice agencies to a timetabled programme of action for implementing the majority of the 294 recommendations proposed by the Criminal Justice Review in March 2000. It has been a little over a year and a half since the first Implementation Plan was issued and many of the concerns that CAJ raised in relation to the original plan have now been addressed to some extent. The new plan is both more comprehensive and detailed and indicates an awareness of the need for a user-friendly approach. A full and detailed critique of the plan will shortly be available on our website.

## Substantive Revisions

The Plan heralds a number of new and important developments. Most notably it contains a Government commitment to introduce fresh legislation, via a second justice bill, in order to remedy the shortcomings, which CAJ and other groups identified, as existing in the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. The amendments will include the following provisions:

- the Judicial Appointments Commission will be established *prior to*, as opposed to after, the devolution of criminal justice and policing powers;
- there will be equal limits on the length of service for *all* members of the Commission (not just its lay members);
- the Commission as a *whole*, rather than just its lay members, will be required to be reflective of the community;
- it will be a key objective of the Commission to engage in a programme of action to secure a reflective judiciary in NI, consistent with the principle of merit;
- the Prime Minister will appoint the Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Justices of Appeal based on the recommendation of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (formerly the PM was merely requested to consult with the First and Deputy First Ministers);
- the Lord Chief Justice's consent for the establishment of a tribunal to remove or suspend a member of the judiciary will be removed;
- the power of the DPP to refer instances of police malpractice to the Police Ombudsman will be strengthened to place a *duty* on the Director to refer *all* such cases;
- a new offence, of seeking to influence the DPP without legitimate cause, will be created;
- there will be a duty on the criminal justice agencies to have due regard to relevant international and human rights standards in carrying out their functions.

It is envisaged that this Bill will go to Parliament in the Autumn and will receive Royal Assent in 2004.

## Timescales and Oversight

In relation to the first Implementation Plan, CAJ had two general concerns: the Plan's failure to provide clear and precise timescales for the implementation of the Review's recommendations; and the absence of any kind of independent oversight mechanism to monitor compliance.

On the matter of timescales, the revised Plan has made considerable progress and provides specific deadlines for the implementation of those elements of the Review which do not require devolution. For example: a timetable has been set for the roll-out of reforms to the New Prosecution Service; equity monitoring will operate within a more structured timeframe; and the Criminal Justice Inspectorate, headed by the recently appointed Christopher (Kit) Chivers, will be operational from Autumn 2004. Indeed, while we are concerned about the seemingly unreasonable delay in introducing certain recommendations – such as that of the Law Commission which will operate only after devolution, and the new duty on the DPP to refer police malpractice to the Ombudsman which will have effect from 2005, we nonetheless welcome the fact that greater effort has been taken to make the timetable for the reform process more transparent and publicly accessible.

Many of the most significant of the Review's recommendations were however formulated on the contingency of devolution and the new Plan can give little information on when these will come into effect. The plan adopts the language of the Joint Declaration in stressing that before justice and policing can be transferred there must be acts of completion of the Good Friday Agreement, a functioning and stable Assembly and cross-party agreement on devolution of justice and policing powers, including agreement on the potential institutional arrangements.

## Oversight Commissioner

To coincide with the publication of the latest Plan, the government announced the appointment of Lord Clyde, the former Scottish Law Lord, to the newly created post of Criminal Justice Oversight Commissioner. CAJ had lobbied hard for the creation of this post and we see it as having an extremely important function in ensuring the full and proper implementation of the revised Plan. As with the Oversight Commissioner for Policing, the post will be for three years initially. As yet the post is not statutory but CAJ will encourage the Government to make it so.

The government issued a major consultation paper entitled "A Shared Future" earlier this year, and CAJ is currently finalising its response. The consultation has been extended until late September, so there is still time for groups and individuals to contribute. We hope that people will use this opportunity to contribute to a vision of Northern Ireland that is pluralist, respectful of difference, a society that treats all people equally, and one that promotes a culture of respect for everyone's human rights.

Unfortunately the government has said little in its consultation paper about the contribution that human rights and equality could make to a better future for all. In particular it says little about how fairness must be at the heart of any shared future. The document also fails to acknowledge that it has been the lack of fairness and of relationships based on equality and respect for everyone's inalienable rights, that has fed and fuelled the conflict and the divisions.

### Unanswered questions

In reading the paper, and more importantly the background research that Jeremy Harbison carried out into the work of community relations to date, we realised that there remain a lot of unanswered questions. CAJ believes that it would be worth investing time and energy in research into a number of areas. For example, it would be helpful if there was greater clarity as to why community relations have apparently got worse in recent years; if there was a better understanding of the causes and consequences of sectarianism; and if there was some study of the lessons that could be learnt from other societies coming out of conflict. There is, for example, evidence that South Africa is experiencing dramatic increases in criminal violence. Research here could usefully examine how is this related to the changed political environment, and what lessons (if any) does this hold for societies like Northern Ireland also attempting to cope with the legacy of political violence.

But, a call for more research is not a call for delay. There is much that needs to be done, and much that could be done with immediate effect. Indeed, many of the proposals figuring in CAJ's submission will amount to little more than a reiteration of the very many recommendations we have made in response to other government consultation documents. We believe that our many recommendations aimed at promoting human rights, delivering on equality, tackling social need, and addressing social exclusion, are of direct relevance to any vision of a shared future for Northern Ireland, and

## A Shared

we will be urging government to simply move these issues further up their agenda.

### A human rights culture

Some of our recommendations are of a fairly general nature and urge on government the importance of promoting a culture of respect for human rights. We argue that a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland could make a major contribution to a better future for all and a more pluralist society. We argue that even the process of debate will allow people to focus on the importance of right relationships, and the need to discuss differences and transcend them while respecting and celebrating those differences.

In the same vein, CAJ urges government to move more urgently on the need for a single piece of comprehensive equality legislation. A draft Single Equality Bill was debated by the devolved administration but seems to have run into the sand. Legislation which ensured that there was no hierarchy in equality, that defined and outlawed direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and legislation which secured greater protection for equality for all, would be an important building block for the future. This change in law would also allow a re-visiting of the many excellent recommendations arising from the 1997 review into religious and political discrimination - many of which still await follow up.



### Institutionalised sectarianism

A range of additional measures to attack institutionalised sectarianism, racism and homophobia are also needed. Such measures are particularly important in bringing about change in the criminal justice system, but they are not peculiar to this domain.

Institutionalised discrimination needs to be undermined in a systematic way, and efforts to tackle the under-representation of different social groups need to be undertaken to ensure that the public sector better reflects the community served. Basic record-keeping tasks, such as the monitoring of sectarian crime - long

# and Future?

called for by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary – need to be instituted. But it is not enough to record and legislate against hate crime; active enforcement of penalties for such crimes is required, but has been inadequate in the past. This in turn begs questions about the need for changes to the training and organisational culture of our criminal justice system.

Important changes are underway in policing already, but it is clear that the new District Policing Partnerships, especially in their work with any local Community Safety Partnerships, could perform a very important function in challenging sectarian divisions locally. By overseeing local policing, and encouraging effective community policing, policing could become part of the solution and not part of the problem at interface areas.

## Section 75

As indicated already, however, the issue is not one peculiar to criminal justice. Government has available to it an important tool for change, but has yet to show the necessary political commitment to ensuring its effective operationalisation. The "section 75 duty" (thanks to the Northern Ireland Act) places a legal duty on all public authorities to promote equality of opportunity. It moreover sets down a series of steps that are to be taken to ensure

this happens, and this requires government working closely with those most directly affected by the policy concerned.

Giving people a stake in the decision making process is clearly a very powerful way of challenging alienation and exclusion. It also places those who suffer directly from sectarianism in the driving seat when determining how best to respond to it. Unfortunately, some within the public service are finding that section 75 is untidy, difficult, and messy. A roll-back is underway and must be countered.

## A shared future

CAJ's response will reiterate its recommendations on a whole range of economic questions: what better way to promote good community relations than to move ahead on projects like Springvale and the Greater Shankill/West Belfast Task Force, which brought communities and politicians together from across the

political divide and from some of the most disadvantaged wards in Northern Ireland? When will we get rid of the 11+ selection test which divides our society into "successes" and "failures" at a young age, and maintains the inter-generational cycle of poverty?

When are we going to see language and cultural diversity as a richness to be cherished and promoted and not an obstacle (often a political obstacle) to be overcome? When will we recognise that the "chill factor" is as much or more to do with unimaginative public transport and/or investment policies which leave people genuinely fearful of travelling to "the other's" area, and not due to some intrinsic hatred of the 'other' community? When will we accept that youthwork needs to be adequately funded? When will government policy be tailored to support those who choose to live in integrated public housing, or attend integrated schools, without ostracising those who, for a variety of reasons, choose not to?

And the list continues on.....

One of the key issues that government will presumably want to have answered is which public body should formally be responsible for promoting good relations? Is there a strengthened role to be performed by the Community Relations Council, with or without the support of local District Councils? Or should the Equality Commission be given this duty? CAJ is still considering its position on this question.

We are clear that a lot of work needs to be done, and we think that it is vital that everyone come to some shared vision of what the programme of work involves. Our series of recommended actions goes much wider than appears to be envisaged by the government paper, and we want to be assured that the vision of what is needed to create a shared future is in fact an agreed one. We will also be arguing for an opportunity to study evaluations of the work of both the Equality Commission and the Community Relations Council, before recommending any major overhaul in their functions. We believe form should follow substance, not the other way around!

### In the Headlines

CAJ holds newspaper clippings on more than 50 civil liberties and justice issues (from mid 1987- December 2000). Copies of these can be purchased from CAJ office.

The clippings are also available for consultation in the office. Anyone interested in this service, should phone (028) 9096 1122.

## Human Rights and the

**The Joint Committee on Human Rights is a unique institution in the Westminster parliament, and it is engaged in a unique endeavour. Firstly it is a parliamentary committee consisting of members of both Houses in equal numbers, it has no automatic government majority, and it focuses on human rights. More importantly, for the first time ever it is this committee which is ensuring that government is being regularly held to account by its parliamentary peers regarding the UK's international human rights' commitments.**

The introduction of the Human Rights Act in 2000 means that all government ministers have to proof their draft legislation and policy proposals against the human rights commitments the UK entered into by signing and ratifying the European Convention on Human Rights in the early 1950s. But in the '80s and '90s, the UK signed and ratified a whole array of other international human rights standards, and these are subject to no such domestic or parliamentary scrutiny. This lack of domestic accountability is changing with the advent of the Joint Committee.

### Specialist seminar

The most recent example of the work of the Committee can be found in their decision to host a small specialist seminar in June, to which CAJ was invited. Other NGOs such as Justice, Oxfam, & Inter-Rights were invited as well as some statutory organisations – the NI Human Rights Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality. The seminar is intended to be part of a much larger inquiry launched by the Committee to look at the government's compliance with the concluding observations and recommendations of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Readers of Just News will be aware that the UN Committee examined the UK's compliance with the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in May 2002, and issued a number of important recommendations.

Several of the UN recommendations were particularly relevant in Northern Ireland – urging that any eventual Bill of Rights should include economic, social and cultural rights; that more refuges be provided for those suffering domestic violence; and that poverty be tackled more energetically than has been the case to date. Normally, recommendations made by UN Committees like this get little or no attention domestically, or at least not until the next time the UK is examined - some four or five years later.

Active and energetic non-governmental groups may well try to get some publicity for the recommendations when made in Geneva or New York, but it is at best a 24-hour wonder! Frequently the appropriate government department does not even seem to have been made explicitly aware of the rulings, still less instructed to develop a programme of action intended to address the concerns enunciated by the specialist UN body.

### Scrutiny

So, for the first time, a parliamentary committee in Westminster is inquiring into the follow-up accorded (or not accorded) to the UN's findings. As with their work on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (report to be issued at the end of June) the Committee is currently inquiring into the government's response to the UN Treaty body looking at economic and socio and cultural rights.

The Committee will be asking the government what their reaction is to the UN's advice that the UK should somehow incorporate the provisions of the UN Covenant into domestic law (as has been done with the European Convention). The Joint Committee will want to ask government what it has done to build effective protection of economic, social and cultural rights into policy formulation as required by the UN. They will be asking what follow up, if any, government is giving to specific recommendations on housing, poverty, and domestic violence?

In CAJ's earlier submission to the Joint Committee, we urged them to ask government what involvement the devolved administration had in the preparation of the report and in the follow up to the recommendations. We had written to the two Junior Ministers soon after the UN issued its recommendations, but were far from satisfied with the responses received, and now will have to await political developments before pursuing this further. We will also be hoping that the Joint Committee explores with the Westminster government, and the devolved administrations as appropriate, how they intend to develop a programme of action aimed at advancing economic, social and cultural rights.

The Covenant talks of 'progressively realising' the rights outlined; if the UK government is to do that – and not merely hide behind this as an excuse to do nothing – then it must have a specific plan indicating to what extent the Covenant is being complied with now, and how and in what timescale it intends to progressively implement those rights not currently effectively guaranteed.

## parliamentary process

### Reticence on socio-economic rights

The afternoon seminar was fascinating, with presentations by a variety of experts in the field. In particular there was a short discussion about the attitude of the public service, and elected politicians, to the debate around socio-economic rights. The Joint Committee asked its invited experts – why is there such a reticence in British political culture to addressing socio-economic rights? The answers varied: some put it down to ignorance of what was involved – some people assume that a right to housing means that everyone can get a three bedded mansion on the Malone Road at public expense, and understandably baulk at such a strange ‘right’! Other people do not realise that the term “socio-economic rights” covers a whole range of issues that are already legislated for, and protected in some way or other, because of social welfare legislation around accommodation, health provision, social security etc. By using this umbrella term, we mistakenly imbue socio-economic rights with a cohesion and a status quite different from that given to civil and political rights. After all, the right to association, to freedom from torture, to family life etc. are rarely spoken of as one single package of rights, but as naturally distinct and valid each in their own right.

Yet others, however, thought that it was a lack of ignorance that was to blame for the reticence (no-one by the way argued that the supposition was wrong, and the political elite warmly embrace socio-economic rights!). This argument ran that effective protection of socio-economic rights will in fact require a re-distribution of resources from the richer to the poorer in society, and that this is not acceptable to many currently in positions of power. Even where there may be a commitment to redistribution for ideological reasons, many politicians will want to ensure that their decision making process is in no way ‘hampered’ by a rights framework, or any judicial oversight mechanism. Those campaigning for greater socio-economic rights’ protection tend to agree that the hard political choices about resources need to be made by the normal democratic political process, but they see no conflict – and in fact a great benefit – in placing this process within a legal framework that asserts minimal protections for all within society. The electoral process, by definition, looks after the interests of the majorities within society – a legal framework guarantees that the democratic will cannot be mis-used against individuals or vulnerable minorities.

The seminar, and the inquiry it forms a part of, are however merely one element in the Joint Committee’s agenda. At a recent conference organised by the NI Council for Ethnic Minorities, the Joint Committee’s Legal Adviser explained how a form of incorporation by the back door is underway in Westminster. While some of us tried, totally

unsuccessfully, to include on the face of the Police Act 2000 reference to international human rights standards (arguing that this was what Patten had called for), the Joint Committee is working much more subtly. They do not challenge the fact that the government has not yet incorporated standards such as the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law. They do, however, insist that the government has agreed to abide by these international standards, and that therefore ministers when bringing forward draft legislation must give consideration to these international standards and consider how best to ensure compliance.

As of now, there is some cynicism about the extent to which legislation is being drafted, re-drafted, or amended with a view to fully respecting the European Convention - still less the other international and regional standards the UK government has accepted. But the very fact that departments and ministers are being asked about, and are engaging in debates, around their compliance with these international human rights commitments is a very important way to “bring home” and indirectly incorporate these standards.

For more info see the Committee’s website on [www.parliament.uk/parliamentary\\_committees/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_human\\_rights](http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/joint_committee_on_human_rights)

#### **Amnesty International - Dutch Section are looking for a part-time:**

##### **Police and Human Rights Programme Officer 32 hours per week for 4 years**

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- facilitates the production of printed and audio visual material for training;
- builds and maintains a network of international experts on policing;
- represents Amnesty in the Council of Europe platform on European Policing and Human Rights; and
- maintains contacts with other relevant NGOs and IGOs.

For details of qualifications required and conditions of work contact CAJ office or email [directpersona@amnesty.nl](mailto:directpersona@amnesty.nl)

## Civil Liberties Diary

**May 1** PSNI open fire on a car which was under police surveillance at the time killing one of the occupants. Police officers said that the car failed to stop at a checkpoint injuring one officer.

**May 2** The Chairman of the Bar Council of England and Wales supports calls for an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Pat Finucane.

**May 6** The Police Oversight Commissioner releases his latest report into progress in implementing policing reform. The report welcomed "excellent progress on balance" overall, however several areas of concern were also highlighted. The Commission emphasised the need not to "cherry pick" recommendations. The report said that the team had identified certain recommendations which were not progressing and which there was no reasonable explanation for the lack of progress. These recommendations include the registration of interests, the creation of a new Policing College, and the reform of the Special Branch.

**May 11** Several Sunday Newspapers name a man they allege was the British Army's most senior agent inside the IRA. It was also reported that the agent was involved in many killings as part of his role within the IRA and that these killings included that of other informers. The man who was named in the allegations has vehemently denied the allegations.

**May 13** The Equality Commission launches its first report into how effectively public authorities have carried out their equality and good relations duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

**May 17** Concerns were expressed at the fact that Belfast's District Policing Partnership is one of the least representative in terms of Catholic participation throughout Northern Ireland.

**May 21** A former British paratrooper told the Bloody Sunday inquiry he found neither weapons nor explosives on the bodies of men shot dead by members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Parachute Regiment in the Bogside area of Derry in January 1972. He also remembered "the army's firing as being very controlled."

**May 22** Legal action is being taken against the Policing Board amid claims that unionists were discriminated against during appointments to the District Policing Partnership. The disgruntled applicants believe they were rejected as independent members because they are from the unionist community.

**May 23** In response to a report issued by the Police Ombudsman surveying solicitors' experiences of police harassment, the Policing Board chair was reported in the media to have written to the Ombudsman. He apparently criticised her report as unfair but a spokesman for the Police Ombudsman's office defended the accuracy and impartiality of the report, saying he could not see how anybody could interpret this as part of an anti-policing agenda.

**May 26** Human rights education must be given to children from as early an age as possible, a former Chinese labour camp prisoner said at the Irish launch of a new music video, which features John Lennon's "Imagine" being sung by children from Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Croatia, Kenya, South Africa and the US. The song ends with one child asking, "Imagine if there are human rights for everyone. Imagine."

**May 27** West Tyrone Voice victims' group is urging Chief Constable Hugh Orde to re-open police files on all unsolved murders. Their director, Dr Hazlett Lynch, said that 229 deaths of innocent people had occurred, but fewer than 10 percent had been solved.

**May 27** The government is planning a "domestic violence register" to monitor

men who have convictions for abusing their partners. The register would hold the details of anyone sentenced to six months or more for assaulting their partners.

**May 29** Northern Ireland Human Rights Commissioner Brice Dickson said that incidents at Cabin Hill Preparatory School in Co Down were not reported to the authorities should be fully investigated. The allegations of sexual abuse at the leading fee-paying primary school should be investigated by an inquiry.

**May 30** Jailed loyalist Johnny Adair's appeal against his return to prison was delayed until September.

**May 30** Ken Barrett, 40, has been charged with the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane and also with a number of other offences including the attempted murder of Thomas McCreery and Elizabeth McEvoy on January 17, 1991. He is accused of membership of the UDA and AFF on or before May 29, 2003 contrary to Section 21 of the NI Emergency Provisions Act 1978. The Stevens team arrested Barrett in England.

*Compiled by Conor McCarthy and Tobias Becker from various newspapers.*



**Just News** welcomes readers' news, views and comments.

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