

Oral Testimony of John Teggart
Helsinki Commission Hearing
“Northern Ireland: Why Justice in Individual Cases Matters”
United States Congress
Wednesday, March 16, 2011.

Chairman Smith, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored and profoundly grateful for the opportunity to appear before this Committee.

I am a member of the Ballymurphy Massacre Committee – the committee that seeks justice about the British Army massacre of eleven of our loved ones in Ballymurphy, Belfast, on August 9, 10 and 11, 1971.

One of the persons murdered was my father, Danny, age 44. He was shot fourteen times as he lay defenseless on the ground. He left behind 13 children. Next day at the barracks where my sister, Alice, went looking for our missing father, the British Parachute soldiers jeered and mocked her, cruelly singing a popular song at the time, “Where’s your Papa Gone”. Other bereaved families were shown similar disrespect by soldiers and the judicial authorities.

My mother, Bella, has since died. Her only wish was justice for her husband. She would be so pleased that this Hearing is taking place.

Another of the victims was Joan Connolly, age 45, and a mother of eight children. Mrs. Connolly was shot and initially blinded as she went to the aid of a wounded teenager, Noel Philips. She was then repeatedly shot and left to bleed out where she fell. Her daughter Briege Foyle is here with me today.

Another one of the victims was the local parish priest, Fr. Hugh Mullan. He was gunned down – while waving a white handkerchief-- going to administer the Last Rights to a wounded man.

The Massacre left a total of 57 children without a parent. I record with honor and respect the names of all the other victims in my written testimony, which also provides more evidence of the justice of our cause.

Nobody has ever been held accountable for this massacre. And it is most important to stress here that no British soldier was killed or wounded in the area where our families were slaughtered during those three terrible days. There has never been a proper investigation into the circumstances of the Ballymurphy Massacre. The police and the British Army covered-up and lied.

The existence of an agreement at that time between the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and Royal Military Police (RMP) meant that in any investigation into the use of lethal force by the British Army, the interviewing of soldiers would not be carried out by the

legally constituted police force, but by the RMP, another branch of the British Army 'family' tree.

The inquests into the death of our loved ones were also flawed.

The Coroner was denied access to evidential material that would have enabled him to conduct an effective inquest. No eyewitness testimony was taken. Nor were military witnesses interrogated. Their evidence was merely passed to the judge in a brown envelope

And to make the situation even worse, the Parachute Regiment that committed the Massacre went on to commit the Bloody Sunday Massacre in Derry on January 30, 1972. Had due concern been shown about the Ballymurphy Massacre – had the Parachute Regiment been called to account – then maybe that Regiment may have been stopped from repeating its brutality in Derry.

Today – as part of a long tradition – I turn to the U.S. Congress and to this Committee for support and help. Time and time again in Ireland's long struggle for justice, Irish people have turned to America for support because they knew British establishment would never willingly grant justice. The Finucane family, Raymond Mc Cord, and the late, noble Rosemary Nelson have previously come before this committee in the pursuit of justice.

Indeed, without the support of the United States there would not be a peace-process in Ireland today. So it is with gratitude and hope that I appear before you today... because the truth about what happened in Ballymurphy has yet to be set free.

I respectfully ask the U. S. Congress to put pressure on the British Government to grant our reasonable demands.

We will not accept a "desktop review" by the Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI) Historical Enquiries Team (HET).

The Ballymurphy Massacre families demand from the British Government an 'International Independent Investigation' into the death of our loved ones:

- Properly resourced;
- Independent of the PSNI or British Army;
- Have powers of compelling documents, soldiers and witnesses;
- Have access to all RUC and military intelligence;
- Provide findings and recommendations.

Please refer to our document, "What is an International Independent Investigation" for more details.

Again, Mr. Chairman and Members of this Committee, thank you for your concern. I am profoundly grateful. END.