

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2025

The Right Honorable Hilary Benn MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Erskine House
20-32 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 4GF

Dear Secretary of State,

We write concerning the case of Patrick Finucane, the human rights attorney murdered in his home in Belfast in front of his wife and children on February 12, 1989, and your announcement on September 11, 2024 of the establishment of an independent public inquiry into the murder.

We commend the decision of the United Kingdom Government as an important and courageous step that is in keeping with commitments to promote the peace process in Northern Ireland. Since the late 1990s, the U.S. Congress has been consistent and clear in support of a full, independent and public judicial inquiry into the murder of Patrick Finucane, culminating in legislation in favor of a public inquiry authored by Rep. Chris Smith passing the House of Representatives on four separate occasions.

Two of these legislative vehicles addressed the need for an independent inquiry even before the historic Weston Park Agreement and the consequent 2004 report and recommendation of retired Canadian Supreme Court Justice Peter Cory (Section 701 of Public Law 107-228; H.Res. 128 – 106th Cong.). After Judge Cory's report and recommendation, Congress adopted additional legislation, supporting the full implementation of the Weston Park Agreement and urging the government of the United Kingdom to establish a full, independent, and public judicial inquiry which would enjoy the full cooperation and support of the Finucane family, the people of Northern Ireland and the international community (H.Con.Res. 20 – 110th Cong.; H.Res. 740 – 109th Cong.).

We are confident that you will agree that the inquiry in the case of Pat Finucane should be resourced fully and able to carry out its investigations without restriction. The widespread public concern that has arisen from the circumstances surrounding the murder of Pat Finucane require that any public inquiry into the case be capable of pursuing the evidence wherever it may lead and to be capable of scrutinizing that evidence in the most transparent way possible.

At a congressional hearing on November 19, the widow and three adult children of Patrick Finucane shared their expectations for the announced inquiry with members of Congress – this was the 11th congressional hearing featuring testimony from a member of the Finucane family. Members of Congress maintain a keen interest in the Finucane inquiry and have reassured the Finucane family on many occasions of our unwavering support for their efforts to secure a fully effective, independent inquiry that is capable of uncovering the truth and, where appropriate, holding those responsible to account.

In order to achieve this aim, the family of Pat Finucane has advocated for an inquiry panel of multiple judges, as well as for a fully independent counsel to the inquiry, and a secretariat. All of these responsibilities should be held by people whose reputation commands public respect for their integrity and principled commitment to the rule of law and human rights, as well as being fully conversant with the legal issues involved in the Finucane case. We firmly agree with the Finucane family that the inquiry should meet these standards, if it is to bear the weight of public concern that accompanies the case. We also urge the United Kingdom Government to establish direct contact with the Finucane family before it takes public action to establish the inquiry.

Throughout the Northern Ireland peace process, Congress has sought to support peace and reconciliation throughout the island of Ireland. Some issues have been easier to promote than others. We believe that no matter how painful and difficult an examination of the past can be, this is an exercise that must be fulfilled comprehensively and effectively if any positive effect is to be gained. The murder of Pat Finucane exemplifies this dynamic perhaps more than any other from the period of conflict. Indeed, the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom described the murder of Patrick Finucane as a “*shocking and dreadful event that still ranks, 30 years later, as one of the most notorious of what are euphemistically called ‘the Northern Ireland troubles’.*”

While the horror and tragedy of a forty-year conflict in Northern Ireland cannot be undone by an inquiry into one case, we believe that the Finucane case has the potential to have a wider, cathartic effect. A fully independent, public inquiry into all of the circumstances of government collusion in this murder can be transformative for both communities in Northern Ireland, and indeed for the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Many years of delay and obfuscation have created an understandable skepticism that the truth would ever be allowed to emerge. Your government has an opportunity to undo the effects of that distrust in the institutions of the state and demonstrate that a new way of dealing with the legacy of conflict has truly dawned.

We urge you not to waste this opportunity and we remain committed to ensuring that Congress of the United States plays a positive role alongside your government in delivering a credible public inquiry.

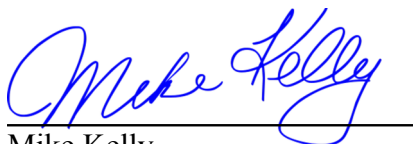
Sincerely,



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



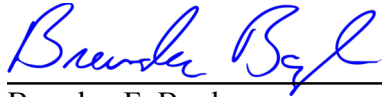
Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



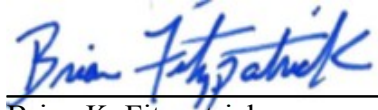
Mike Kelly
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



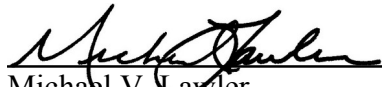
Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



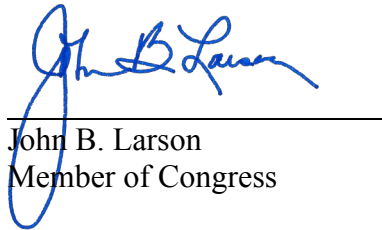
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



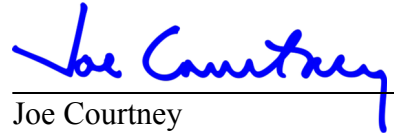
Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress



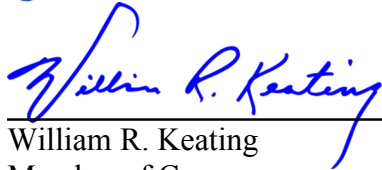
James P. McGovern
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John B. Larson
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Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
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Laura A. Gillen
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Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



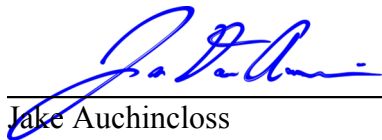
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



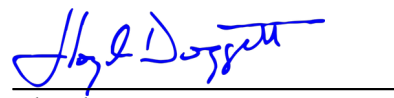
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



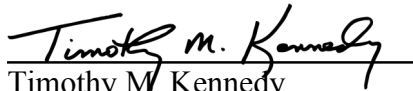
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress





Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress




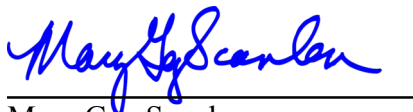
Lloyd Doggett
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Mary Gay Scanlon
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