



Advocacy for Innocent Victims Newsletter



AfIV Office (C/O SEFF), 1 Manderwood Park,
1 Nutfield Road, Lisnaskea
Co Fermanagh BT92 0FP

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Dear Member,

I make no apologies for making reference again to the Stormont House Agreement Consultation, and the importance that everyone responds to the NIO. We have conducted nine informative events, reaching out to approximately 650 people. Peter has written a piece in this Newsletter also reiterating the importance of our responses.

The Advocates will be conducting the following 'surgeries' to assist those who need help in completing their returns. If there is further demand, we will be amenable and will assist as required. If you need further advice, please ring any of the advocates whose details are on this Newsletter.

Wednesday 1st August MUVE 10am - 4.30pm

Thursday 2nd August County Armagh Phoenix Group 10am - 4.30pm

Monday 6th August - SEFF 10am - 5pm

Tuesday 7th August Out of the Shadows 10am - 4.30 pm

Wednesday 8th August - Colaghty Church Hall 7pm - 9pm

Thursday 9th August - SEFF 10am - 5pm

Monday 13th August SETWS Moygashel 10am - 4.30 pm

Wednesday 22nd August - SEFF 10am - 5pm

Our London based advocate, Yasmin, has unfortunately but understandably decided to resign from her position, as she is relocating with her boyfriend to Amsterdam. We wish her all the best for her future and commend her for her efforts in a difficult role working as the sole advocate in GB; she will be missed by both the team and the organisation. This Friday, Kenny and I will be conducting interviews in London, when we hope to find a suitable replacement for Yasmin.

Kind Regards,

Ken

For general Advocacy queries please contact the SEFF Office on (028) 6772 2242 or email advocacy@seff.org.uk

To contact Ken Funston by email ken.funston@seff.org.uk or mobile 07834488635

To contact Ann Travers by email ann.travers.afiv@seff.org.uk or mobile 07860 850003

To contact Pete Murtagh by email peter.murtagh.afiv@seff.org.uk or mobile 07860 850004

To contact Wendy Stewart by email wendy.stewart.afiv@seff.org.uk or mobile 07860 850008

To contact Yasmin Wright by email yasmin.wright.afiv@seff.org.uk or mobile 07860 850 017



Stormont House Agreement - "Is it a done deal?" and "Why we have to respond!"

On Monday 18th June at the first Consultation event at the Killyhevlin Hotel, the NIO put great emphasis that the Stormont House Agreement had widespread support across the main political parties. There has been little said by any of the political parties publicly on these issues although Tom Elliot did challenge the NIO suggestion at the Killyhevlin Hotel, that the UUP were supportive of The Stormont house proposals.

The NIO are adamant that this is a consultation period, our responses will be listened to and may influence the setting up and running of the different institutions, many of us will be cynical about this and will fear the worst but we have got to test the NIO's bona fides on this statement.

The legacy proposals which emanated from Stormont House are 3 ½ years old, this time has been wasted, not only is this unacceptable that it is has taken this long for the fine details to filter down to grass roots Victims and Survivors, no effort has been made to optimise this stagnant period and get a more detailed view on what Victims want and need; instead we have a rushed consultation process over 3 months and the Summer period at that. There has been little in the way of NIO media advertising campaign to highlight the process and promote participation.



**Some of the attendees at the recent Legacy Consultation event held in the Cohannon Inn
(one of eight Consultation events held by SEFF in collaboration with IVU partner groups)**

Once again rights to justice of the innocent injured victims been overlooked, SEFF finds this completely incomprehensible, as though their disabilities are meaningless. The NIO clearly states one overall aim is to remove all Legacy issues from the Police. We as Advocacy Support workers will continue to represent and seek justice for innocent injured Victims along with the bereaved. Generally the only option to pursue justice for the injured has been through the PSNI Serious Crime Branch. Under the current proposals we will have to continue contacting the PSNI to assist the injured, therefore legacy issues for the PSNI are not going away.

We now return to our old 'foe'; the 2006 definition of a victim. The irony is that within the current definition, the very terrorists that carried out such murderous acts are recognised as victims and therefore given a so-called credible say in how Troubles related incidents should be addressed. We all know we would not be in this position if it had not been for the existence of these very victim creators who within their terrorist organisations carried out campaigns of sustained violence for over 30 years; and laid the foundation and mind-set for this to continue through to the current 'dissident' campaign.

On Monday night last at Stormont, families who have already gone through the HET process made clear their dissatisfaction with the current HIU proposals which effectively sideline them, we are clear that there must be equality of access for all. Other areas of concern expressed on the night were; the absence of victim/survivor involvement within some of the proposed structures will also feature and the inequalities faced by victims/survivors from Republic of Ireland and Great Britain will also be represented and a general sense from those gathered that the current structures require structural change, not tinkering if they are to deliver for innocent victims/survivors of terrorism.

The current proposals fall far short of satisfying the needs of the Victims and Survivors, we are 20 years on from the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The facts are clear that terrorist attacks carried out in the name of Northern Ireland terrorist groupings in pursuance of idealistic 'political' aspirations are treated on a much lower level than those based on an international terrorist campaign of violence; proved by a simple comparison of recent Northern Ireland terrorist sentencing relating to dissident activity in NI, when compared with that of those convicted of Islamic terrorist acts in the rest of the UK. This portrays a message that NI based terrorism is almost a domestic form of terrorism that is acceptable up to a certain level, stemming from nothing being done to learn from past injustices, not properly dealing with the perpetrators and therefore preventing the constant reoccurring cycle.

The bottom line is we cannot afford to dismiss this process; we have to engage and put across a measured and rational response, not purely dismissing it out of hand; we need to put across workable and realistic alternatives.

Maybe, just maybe, if enough of us say and put across the same right messages in our own ways, then there is a glimmer of hope that we will be listened to; that the process can make a difference and some of the proposals will be changed. The last thing we want is in the future highlighting the inadequacies of the institutions once they are in place, to be told well you were all given the opportunity, "but, said nothing!".

Please, please respond to the consultation process.

Peter

A Tribute to Zaoui Berezag

The Bombing

The London Docklands bombing or the Canary Wharf bombing occurred on the 9th February 1996, when the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) detonated a powerful truck bomb in South Quay, outside of Canary Wharf. The terror attack marked an end to the IRA's seventeen-month ceasefire. Police officers arrived at the scene and, at about 6pm, they began evacuating the area around South Quay station. At 6:48pm the officers found the blue truck at South Quay Plaza, parked between two office blocks.

The bomb detonated at 7:01pm, devastating the surrounding office blocks and showering the area with broken glass. The blast was heard and felt across London, and shook the Canary Wharf Tower. Two people were killed and more than one hundred people were hurt, mainly by broken glass, thirty nine of whom needed hospital treatment. Zaoui Berezag was with his eldest son and daughter sitting in their car near the newsagents when the bomb went off, they were parked close to where the two fatalities occurred. The car was wrecked by the blast and Zaoui Berezag suffered severe head injuries. He spent two weeks in a coma and woke up with permanent brain damage, which left him disabled ever since.

Life for the Berezag family after the bombing

After this tragedy Gemma Berezag, Zaoui Berezag's wife was left to provide 24 hour personal care and received very limited social care support for herself or her husband. Gemma spoke out publicly about the emotional and financial burden the bomb had inflicted on her family, although her pleas were not acknowledged and Gemma's family did not receive the support they needed.

Following the bombing, Zaoui was only expected to live for another ten years, but he outlived this prediction by medical professionals and lived for twenty two years.

Gemma was extremely dedicated to her husband and cared for him for twenty of those years. In May 2016, Gemma tragically took her own life. Family members advised this was caused by physical and mental exhaustion from the relentlessness of being a 24 hour carer for her husband, only receiving help from other family members. Unfortunately, life's challenges triggered a deep depression in Gemma that she could no longer bear.

zaoui lived in the family home on the Isle of Dogs near to Canary Wharf, until Gemma passed away. Zaoui then moved into Petershore Care Home in Tower Hamlets, which was close to where his daughter Rajaa Berezag resides. Rajaa was his primary carer and deputy after her mother Gemma passed away.



Just two years after Gemma's death, on Tuesday 10th July 2018 at 2.30am Zaoui Berezag passed away at the age of 77, from natural causes.

Zaoui Berezag will be remembered as an energetic, cheeky and loving man who thrived when centre of attention – especially when this involved attention from women.

Zaoui's daughter Rajaa used her skills as a community dance instructor to encourage her father's physical and spiritual strength, by running movement sessions at Petershore Care Home, for Zaoui and other residents. Zaoui thoroughly enjoyed these classes and it was an opportunity for him to show off his endearing character and his zest for life. Zaoui also loved colouring, drawing, playing cards and ball games to name a few of his hobbies. Rajaa advised that on his penultimate day on this planet, despite being in his final hours, he engaged fully in one of her sessions, he was "glowing and full of life". As Zaoui's family, friends and those involved in his care always say – it was almost supernatural how many times he overcame complications he was never expected to. During my time supporting the family Rajaa would describe her father as a "magical" being.

Zaoui's life was changed forever because of the Canary Wharf bombing, but despite this he still touched the hearts of many, including his family and friends who knew him before and after that devastating day.

It is our mission at SEFF to remember all victims and survivors whose lives have been torn apart and/or are no longer with us as a result of the 'Troubles'. Rajaa Berezag shares our mission and says she has now made it hers to keep her father's legacy alive.

Rajaa has kindly written a statement for this tribute piece:

"I really don't know where to start. My father and I only knew each other after the bomb, so our connection was built on the man he became and not the man he was. I don't really have any memories of him, before the age of 9. I learned how to be a carer before a daughter, but I am just happy to have spent so much quality time with him. As my father's icon Mohammed Ali would say "Don't count the days, make the days count".

I wish I could have done more to protect him from all the pain and suffering, but I feel he protected me instead. My father was a fighter and a man who had tremendous inner strength to keep going, this is why I kept going and battling all the obstacles in my way. My father had many amazing qualities and through me his memory will live on.

I am deeply saddened that I have lost both my parents in the space of two years, but I believe their suffering has ended and they are now both at peace".



Dear SEFF members,

I am sadly writing to inform you that I will be resigning from my post as Advocacy Support Worker with SEFF Great Britain and my last day of work will be **Thursday 23rd August 2018**.

I am going on to do a master's degree at the University of Amsterdam in Conflict Resolution and Governance, which commences on Monday 27th August 2018. My long-term boyfriend Oli is also moving to Amsterdam to start a new job in the Tech world as a Software Developer, so we are very excited to start this new adventure together!

I would like to thank you all for sharing your stories with me, I will treasure these and they will stay with me wherever I go. Despite the fact that SEFF members are a group of people who have suffered so much, your resilience, morality and wicked sense of humour never ceases to amaze me. I am proud to have worked for SEFF and I appreciate the time and patience you have all shown in teaching me about the impact Troubles-related violence has had on each of you in a personal way. It has been a steep learning curve, but I have learnt a huge amount and I'm sure these skills will serve me well in my career and life.

Whoever will take over my post is extremely lucky to have such an important opportunity and meet such inspirational people. I have been fortunate to have been a part of SEFF and I wish the whole SEFF family continued strength and success.

I hope to stay in touch and maybe one day we will meet again....

If you are ever in Amsterdam - get in touch.

Take care and keep up the fight!

Yasmin Wright

Yasmin xx



On Monday 30th July, the IVU Network held a Legacy Consultation event in the Long Gallery, Stormont. An audience of 115 victims and survivors from all over Northern Ireland, were addressed by above, L-R, Dolores Kelly, SDLP, Jim Allister, TUV, Emma Pengelly, DUP, Mike Nesbitt, UUP, Paula Bradshaw, Alliance, and on the right, Dr. Cillian McGrattan, Ulster University (Chairperson for the event)