



**Aitor Martinez— New Advocate, GB**

My name is Aitor Martinez. I am 29 years old and I have been living in London for two years. I am originally from a small city called San Sebastian, located in the Basque Country, Spain. My hometown is also well known for its delicious gastronomy.

I have studied a degree in Social Work (2011) and a degree in Criminology (2016). I studied both degrees in my hometown, but in 2015 I had the opportunity to study as an exchange student in the KU Leuven, Belgium.

My professional experience is varied. I have worked with homeless people in a shelter. I have supported a community of 120 Romanian Roma who were living irregularly under a bridge. I had the opportunity to research the living conditions of this community, settled irregularly in the region of Gipuzkoa, and implemented a social intervention project as a response to the alarming results found on that research. Therefore, I advocated for them, and supported them in accessing social support. I have also worked with victims of historic sexual victimisation, and have researched such a situation in Spain. In 2015 I worked very closely with people affected by the Basque terrorism and listening to their stories helped me to understand the “Basque conflict” from another point of view.

In my most recent experience, I have worked with children and young people delivering a domestic abuse, sexual violence and hate crime preventative project in the Londoner borough of Croydon.

I am very excited about moving forward and becoming a part of the SEFF team. Coming from the Basque Country, I have experienced what it feels like growing up in a hostile environment, and even though now officially “the war is over”, I know there are still many wounds that need to be recognised and healed. Therefore, I am very keen to make a contribution to this reality.

**Aitor**

**Rachel Glover is Back**

Hello everyone it’s nice to be back. Some of you may know me from a previous introduction. I am Rachel, originally from the Netherlands. I used to live, work and study in Amsterdam.

I met my husband David while he was in Amsterdam. After 2 years I moved over to Fermanagh. We currently live in a small bungalow in Ballinamallard. We have recently been blessed with a beautiful baby girl named Lilly. Before I moved over I used to work as a duty manager in a huge hostel in Amsterdam. I also worked as a lawyer at a law firm specialised in Family Law.

On Sundays, I help out in my church as a Sunday school teacher and singer.. Last year I did an internship at SEFF writing a dissertation on the definition of victim in the Victims and Survivors Order 2006. With the internship and dissertation I finished my bachelor of Law. I was sad to leave SEFF after I finished my internship. But I am happy to be back and looking forward to start my research and administration placement for the Advocacy for Innocent Victims (AfIV). Looking forward to seeing the members of SEFF again!

**Rachel**



# Advocacy for Innocent Victims Newsletter



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**Dear Member,**

There is a change to the contact details on the right, as there will be a new advocate in place in London, starting 10th September. You will be aware from last month’s Newsletter, that Yasmin is moving to Amsterdam. Kenny and I conducted a number of interviews in London and the successful applicant was Aitor Martinez Gonzalez. Aitor applied for the role last year and was placed first reserve. We are very pleased that he applied again, and he presented an impressive CV and application, and conducted a quality interview. As Yasmin finishes next Friday, 24th, there will be a short gap of two weeks prior to Aitor starting his role. If you require advocacy assistance in that period, please contact me—Ken—or make contact with the H&WB worker in London, Rufia, who can be reached on **07718 488383**, [rufia.valiff@seff.org.uk](mailto:rufia.valiff@seff.org.uk)

Rachel Glover starts work with the AfIV team as Research and Admin Officer from Monday 20th August. Rachel previously did voluntary work with SEFF whilst she was completing her dissertation for her law degree. I remarked on her research prowess at that time, and the quality of her dissertation on the Definition of a Victim established her credentials and this document and her views met the ethos of this organisation.

The chairperson of the AfIV Steering Committee, Rev Alan Irwin, has written a very personal piece this month on the subject of forgiveness that resonates in a number of ways.

The Advocates continue to assist those who are responding to the NIO Consultation, please remember that it closes on 10th September, and it is critically important you make your views known to the NIO. You may send your responses in the following ways:-

**Online at:**  
[www.gov.uk/nio](http://www.gov.uk/nio)

**OR**  
**Email to:**  
[legacyconsultation@nio.gov.uk](mailto:legacyconsultation@nio.gov.uk)

**Write to:**  
Legacy Policy Team,  
Northern Ireland Office,  
Stormont House, Stormont Estate,  
Belfast, BT4 3SH

Ken



## **Forgiveness by Rev. Alan Irwin, Chairperson of AfIV Steering Committee**

Should I or shouldn't I is a question often pondered when it comes to forgiveness. Many people still cringe at the very mention of the word forgiveness, for it conjures up a mix of emotions that for the most part are still very distressing and difficult to comprehend. Even for those who speak from a Christian perspective, the journey of forgiveness isn't an easy one to take as they understand Christ's words, 'forgive lest ye be not forgiven'.

There is an unhelpfulness from some within the institution of the church, in political and in the wider sphere who compound the concept of forgiveness even further by placing an additional burden of guilt on the innocent party. That burden of guilt can be magnified for those who are innocent victims of terrorism or terrorist violence either directly or indirectly through the murder or injury of a loved one.

This call for the innocent victim to forgive the unrepentant terrorist has and continues to cause hurt when little is asked of the perpetrator to be remorseful and seek forgiveness for their actions. The question has to be asked why this additional pressure is placed on innocent victims and not the victim makers. Is there an attempt by them that if the innocent victims forgive, well it was okay for them to have let the terrorist off without repentance or recognition of wrongdoing? Should we not be wary of demeaning the concept of forgiveness by adding man's conditions to placate or appease the wider populace because with regard to terrorism on these isles, peace was the absence of justice?

Asking for forgiveness without repentance is akin to asking God to love us and ignore our sinfulness. Is there selective amnesia that chooses to overlook the righteous justice of God? God is both a God of love and of justice for "...he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality". Col. 3: 25 for God will judge the righteous and the unrighteous in the last days. Those who have willingly declared evil good, the guilty innocent and the innocent guilty, those who have given the murderer in all but name a general amnesty. "He who says to the wicked, "You *are* righteous," Him the people will curse; Nations will abhor him. But those who rebuke *the wicked* will have delight, And a good blessing will come upon them." Prov. 24: 24 - 25

Where are the calls for repentance, remorse, restitution and recognition for past unjust actions of the terrorist/perpetrator, surely the basic requirement, and the fundamental starting point of any supposed "peace process". There are those, within political, church and community who have an empathy with the innocent victim. While the apparent empathy of others is nothing more than to use the innocent victims' plight for political gain and self-preservation.

When it comes to forgiveness, numerous questions exist, for the majority of innocent victims, who do I forgive, if I don't know who carried out the murder. Have I the right to forgive when the violent act wasn't against me but a family member. Isn't forgiveness a two way process, between the victim and the perpetrator?

As someone who has been on the receiving end of terrorism with the murders of my father Thomas and my uncle Frederick, both part time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, there must be genuine repentance before the offer of forgiveness could even be a consideration. The provisional Irish republican army (PIRA) claimed responsibility for both murders and as of yet no one has been brought to justice for these heinous crimes. Let me be clear, it is not my intention in using PIRA here, to give them some degree of credibility, a terrorist is a terrorist and deserves no perceived title in which to further glory in their wickedness.

I never felt that I had to forgive the terrorist for murdering my father or my uncle, it wasn't within my remit to do so, the violent acts were between my father and uncle and the perpetrators. Even to this day, we are not aware of those who carried out the murderous acts, other than that collective admission by the PIRA. Most if not all terrorists and their apologists, still refuse to acknowledge that there was no justification for their actions, murder was wrong then and now. For even today, the terrorists and the apologists of terrorism still glorify and justify their violent actions. It saddens me that in many ways society have allowed them to do that with language that helps the rewriting of Northern Ireland's terrorist past. The use of conflict, de-commissioning, the provision of on the run letters, Royal prerogatives of mercy, the freedoms to castigate the forces of law and order, all paved the way towards justifying murder as witnessed as terrorist rewriting continues.

**(Cont.)**

I am mindful of a report on sectarianism, which concurred that "We can never forgive someone on behalf of someone else."<sup>1</sup> The following story in relation to forgiveness, was then told, "I do not want a mother to embrace the torturer who had her child torn to pieces by his dogs! She has no right to forgive him! If she likes, she can forgive him for herself, she can forgive the torturer for the immeasurable suffering he has inflicted on her as a mother; but she has no right to forgive him for the sufferings of her child."<sup>2</sup>

If I am to forgive, then the question still exists, whom I forgive for the hurt and pain I have received through their violent murderous actions towards my father and my uncle. As I have said, I do not know who they are. I have yet to receive the answers; truth and justice were sacrificed on the altar of peace in an agreement that led to terrorists being equated with their innocent victims. Terrorism is still terrorism and murder is still murder.

In all of this, I have learned to give all my burdens, concerns over to my Heavenly Father to allow Him to deal with me as He would of those whose actions have caused me so much grief and pain. And of the many promises and assurances found in scripture, of the love, mercy and justice of God.

None more poignant than the example of Christ on the cross in His response to the two thieves who were crucified with Him. To the one who acknowledged his wrong, accepted his rightful punishment, and asked of Jesus if He would remember him when He came into His kingdom.

And of the response to the thief who scoffed at Jesus, there was no offer of forgiveness given to the unrepentant as there was none to the many in the crowd delighting in His crucifixion and death, only the words "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" Luke 23: 34. Jesus knew the difficulties we would face with forgiveness, and I believe His example offers us hope, a way in which we can hand it over to God, always mindful that His grace is sufficient for all our needs. Forgiveness is a process, whether many are on that journey, is known unto God, as are those for whom the words and actions of others have hindered that journey from beginning.

### **References**

1 Sectarianism, A Discussion Document, the Report of the Working Party on Sectarianism, July 1993, page 42

2 Dostoyevsky F., *The Brothers Karamazov*, Book four, Chapter five as cited in Sectarianism, A Discussion Document, the Report of the Working Party on Sectarianism, July 1993, page 42

### **Should I or Shouldn't I? - Alan Irwin 2018**

**1. Should I or shouldn't I?  
Is the question troubling me?  
This offer of forgiveness,  
To those who've caused me grief**

**2. Whose vile acts of terrorism  
They've yet to show remorse  
This prospect of forgiveness  
When the glory's not the cross**

**3. The terrorist gets the accolade  
Their actions, sadly justified  
Whilst truth and justice sacrificed  
The victims left, re-traumatized**

**4. God' command 'Do not murder'  
For the terrorist holds no truth  
With an imputed - self-righteousness  
God' justice, they fear not**

**5. His final judgement they ignore  
Such foolishness will be their peril  
As with those whose paths are similar  
Their destiny, an eternal fire**

**6. But what of I, my troubled heart  
The battle there within,  
To follow the Saviours leading  
To forgive, lest I'm not forgiven**

**7. Yes, I hear the grandiose voices speak  
Their platitudes are deafening  
How can the learned, be so inclined  
To ignore the turmoil that's within**

**8. To understand, to learn, to love  
And not with empty platitudes  
But with words of mercy, love and grace  
In the example, Jesus taught us**

**9. For true forgiveness, repentance is required  
How then can it be offered?  
When there's no acknowledgement of wrong  
As still, the terrorists revel in their scoffing song**

**10. So when it comes to forgiveness,  
Should I or shouldn't I  
Like Christ's example upon the cross  
"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."**