

Contd from Overleaf

To provide our membership and supporters with the very best opportunities to engage with the Consultation process we are hosting 8 Public seminar events which we would strongly encourage you to attend.

Present at these seminar events will be NIO representatives who for the first hour of the session will present the case for what is proposed, as well as field questions, our own internal discussions will then follow. The Department of Foreign Affairs will join with the NIO for the event being held in Dublin.

SEFF will be submitting a response, so too will IVU on behalf of its' broader membership (23 groups) and we will also then assist you in making an individual response.

Details of the Consultation can be found on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/addressing-the-legacy-of-northern-irelands-past>

Or contact the office should you wish us to print off documents for you.

Please contact the Advocacy service team or Kenny Donaldson (SEFF's Director of Services) if you have any queries in respect of this Consultation process.

Date and Venues for **Consultation of Stormont House Agreement**

- ◇ Monday 18th June 2018 - Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen (N.I West)
- ◇ Thursday 21st June 2018 - Magherabuoy Inn, Coleraine (N.I North)
- ◇ Monday 25th June 2018 - Cohannon Inn, Dungannon (N.I South)
- ◇ Wednesday 27th June 2018 - Decorum N.I, Bangor (N.I East)
- ◇ Tuesday 3rd, Wednesday 4th or Thursday 5th July 2018 - Farmleigh House, Dublin - Date TBC by next Newsletter (Republic of Ireland)
- ◇ Monday 9th July 2018 - Leeds Town Hall, Albert Room
- ◇ Tuesday 10th July 2018 - The Peace Centre, Warrington
- ◇ Wednesday 11th July 2018 - Palace of Westminster (London)

(All meetings will commence at 7pm, with refreshments provided from 6.30pm onwards)



Advocacy for Innocent Victims Newsletter



AfIV Office (c/o SEFF), 1 Manderwood Park,
1 Nutfield Road, Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh, BT92 0FP

May 18, Issue 12

Dear Member,

This month we have a contribution from one of our advocates, Ann, an update from Parliament from Aileen Quinton (a Project volunteer) and also a piece from Mitch Bresland, the senior staff officer in Decorum NI based in Bangor. I very much appreciate that one of our partner groups has chosen to highlight how having an advocate, Pete Murtagh, working periodically in their offices has been an asset to their group.

I encourage you, as a member or as a representative of your organisation, to offer your views on the advocacy work of AfIV, and we continue to appreciate your support.

As you are probably now aware, the Consultation Process on the Stormont House Agreement (SHA) has now opened and will close on 10th September. We encourage you to take an active part in the process. We do not consider that the SHA in its' present format is a structure that meets our needs. I attended a recent conference where I constantly heard that anything must be better than what we have presently. We must strive to get something better than that.

It is our intention to hold a number of meetings during the months of June and July, that will be attended by an official from the NI Office and advocates from AfIV. This will be well publicised in the near future.

Ken

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

To contact AfIV Service Manager Ken Funston by email ken.funston@seff.org.uk or mobile 0783 4488635

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



ADVOCACY SUPPORT WORKER

Working mainly in the Co Down area, but with members throughout NI and beyond, Decorum NI find resources scarce in some specific areas due to the organisation having one member of staff, 500 members, a short list of volunteers and limited funding. This has meant that the recent addition of a fulltime Health & Wellbeing Caseworker and the attachment of an Advocacy Support Worker from the South East Fermanagh Foundation has been crucial to the service offered to members.

The Advocacy Worker has become an essential part of the organisation in that it is a specialist area where little expertise within Decorum would be present on the complicated issue of legacy. It is often said that, within Co Down, there is not as much 'need' as perhaps in border areas for example where much of the terrorist campaign was focused. Demand within the organisation however would show that many members from those areas most affected often came and settled in Co Down, either on retirement or as a result of threats. Also, there are many members who, during their service, witnessed many atrocities and were involved in incidents that they now find affecting them.

Pete Murtagh, the attached Advocacy Support Worker, said that he was finding that, although there were not the same numbers involved at present requiring assistance, a lot of it is down to members not knowing about the service and what it offers. During presentations to members and like-minded groups with Decorum representatives, Pete says that he is finding more and more people suffering from mental issues rather than bereavement as would be the case with South Down or other rural areas. He says he is finding that many of these issues are coming from incidents in the past and this is where he can help by trying to identify the particular incident and advise and correspond on the individual's behalf to ascertain information from the police and other sources.

Another issue amongst members of Decorum is that of former members who served in the security forces are now being called to provide information on incidents that they have been involved in up to 40 years ago. Decorum NI are now planning to extend this advocacy work to its members who are outside of the immediate catchment area by having the Advocacy Support Worker, along with the Health and Wellbeing Caseworker, rolling out a programme of Outreach starting in August 2018. This will help ensure that, as well as the members' needs of the present being looked after, issues dealing with the past are equally dealt with, as these are expected to become greater if and when the Stormont House Agreement is implemented. Decorum NI therefore sees the role of the Advocacy Support Worker as essential to providing a holistic approach to Member's needs going forward into the future.

Mitch Bresland - Senior Staff Officer. Decorum NI

Consultation Paper: Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past

As you will have heard, the Northern Ireland Office have finally released a Public Consultation on Legacy arising out of the Stormont House 'Agreement'.

Summary

A consultation that gives everyone a chance to have their say on the best way to address the legacy of Northern Ireland's troubled past.

This consultation closes at
5pm on 10th September 2018

Consultation description

More than 3,500 people were killed as a result of the Troubles. The hurt and suffering caused is still felt by people across Northern Ireland and beyond.

The Troubles affected lots of different people, including victims and survivors. People have been affected in different ways.

The Government is trying to find the best way to meet the needs of victims and survivors and to help people address the impact of the Troubles in the areas of information, justice and acknowledgement and help Northern Ireland transition to long term-term peace and stability. We need to do this in order to support true reconciliation and healing at a societal level.

SEFF and The Innocent Victims United organisation has campaigned for effective legacy structures to be implemented for many years which would respond to the needs of innocent victims/survivors of terrorism.

We are disappointed that the UK Government failed to frontload this process with a number of confidence building measures as we had insisted were needed but we are where we are.

SEFF and IVU are determined that the constituency of victims/survivors whom we serve will be heard over the Consultation period. Early analysis from our Advocacy team and Management would suggest that are deep flaws within the Consultation document particularly around; failures to recognise 'the Injured' and their legitimate rights of engagement with Truth and Justice issue, there are also equality of access breaches within the current proposals and there are other governance and implementation areas of concern.

However we feel there are also areas of opportunity within the proposed Bill which could be of some use/benefit to victims/survivors.

ETA , the Provisional IRA and the Empowerment of Terrorists

Kenny Donaldson (SEFF's Director of Services) and I recently attended a press conference organised by the Spanish victims' group COVITE in San Sebastian, northern Spain. The purpose of this visit was to support the victims of ETA terrorism and highlight the failings of the Belfast Agreement.

The general perception is that the 1998 Agreement was a total success. It was our role to explain to the assembled world press and media the limitations of the Agreement and how it has empowered the terrorist organisations. If they were unaware before how it failed innocent victims, we made it clear how badly we have been let down.



As I mentioned in last month's Newsletter, ETA and their political arm are advised by Sinn Fein. Every move of ETA has mirrored the strategy of the Provo movement. On Friday 4th May ETA held a press conference to announce their dissolution in

Cambo-les-Bains, a town in the Basque region of France. Attending that conference was Gerry Adams, Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair's chief adviser at the time of the 98 Agreement, Jonathan Powell. It is remarkable that the two latter figures were there to support ETA but did not see fit to support the victims of that terror organisation. There is no doubt that those 'three amigos' were there to heap added pressure on the Spanish government to accede to ETAs demands. The Spanish government continue to insist they will not be rewarding ETA, we hope they hold firm.

ETA feel they deserve to be rewarded in the same way we have empowered terrorists in NI, and these organisations continue to push for more. We recently heard that the UDA have made demands that they should receive monetary reward for dissolving whilst the Provos continue to push the boundaries.

The new MP for West Tyrone, Orlaigh Begley insists she will be the MP for all her constituents and then gives an oration in memory of Bobby Sands. When she was criticised, she then tries to act as the victim, believing what she did was an honourable act. Miss Begley, we do not honour Billy Wright, he was no hero and neither was Bobby Sands.

Unfortunately it has got to the stage that it has been accepted by a percentage of the population that involvement in terrorism in both parts of Ireland was an 'honourable' thing. This mind-set has been created by the British and Irish governments from 1998 onwards, and it is now impossible to redress.

The ROI state broadcaster RTE actually felt it was ethical to interview the murderer of Constable Stephen Carroll by telephone call in prison, did they not think for one minute the effect this would have on his widow Kate and the wider family?

Victims of terrorism should be treated ethically in the same way as other victims of crime, and not as collateral in a grubby sectarian murder campaign. The Victims Charter must refer to us too, and it is time we receive the respect we deserve.

Ken Funston

The Forgotten Innocent Victims

Enter "The Troubles" into google and the first entries on the page will focus on the lives lost and the bereaved. You will then come across some newspaper articles which quote that approximately 50,000 people were injured.

CAIN Archive gets a bit more specific with the figures claiming that 3,720 lost their lives, approximately 47,541 were injured. They go on to state "that there were 36,923 shootings" and "16,209 bombings were conducted". Sadly, it would be my experience that these figures are way out. They don't appear to take into consideration psychological injury, including PTSD, complicated grief, depression, stress and other anxiety disorders and those who consequently developed a dependency on alcohol or illegal and prescription drugs.

Author David Bolton, (Conflict, Peace and Mental Health) had a similar point of view when he gave an interview to the Irish Times in August 2017. He stated "Traumatic experiences have afflicted the lives of more than 200,000 people in Northern Ireland". He also believes that it is reasonable to say that these 200,000 people have been "bereaved" in the "conflict".

Mr Bolton is quoted in the article as saying "Most people. Including those who have directly witnessed the years of violence, suffered no, or minimal, long term mental health disorders. Many, in fact, responded with a high level of resilience. But, he adds, there is "robust international comparable data~ to suggest that about 213,000 adults have experienced mental health difficulties related to the Troubles".

Citing another study, he says that Northern Ireland had the highest levels of PTSD among a number of countries that experienced conflict, including Israel, South Africa and Lebanon.

So just what is being done to support these huge numbers of people in need? Just at the time of writing this article the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Karen Bradley announced the proposed consultation period, of four months before drafting the bill for The Stormont House Agreement. This is an extremely important time for all innocent victims. Now is our chance to put forward our questions and concerns.

One of which is why have those whom were injured or involved in "incidents" not been included in the HIU (Historical Investigations Unit) remit? Many innocent victims that we support simply want to know, was the case investigated, what statements were taken and is there any chance of a prosecution, in other words, Truth, Justice and Acknowledgment of what they went through and consequently what they and their families have had to live with.

Proper mental health facilities where practitioners are experts in "Conflict trauma". Individual, group, family therapy and 24 hr support via a help line or drop in service, would, in this writer's opinion be worthwhile.

All innocent victims deserve to be part of whatever legacy process, so it's important we take this opportunity to advocate for them all.

Ann

Westminster Parliamentary Debate

Westminster Parliamentary debate on requesting that HMG seek authority to use some of the Gadaffi assets frozen in the UK to compensate victims of Gadaffi sponsored IRA terrorism.

The issue of compensation for victims of Gadaffi/PIRA has been rumbling on for years with successive governments failing to act. Or at least failing to act on our behalf. We have reason to believe that Tony Blair was acting against us.

My mother Alberta was murdered in the Poppy Day Massacre in Enniskillen in 1987.

The Provisional IRA has of course murdered nationalists and those with no strong constitutional identity. However, a key thrust of their atrocities has been at Britishness in Northern Ireland. My mother was murdered for doing a very British thing, namely standing at a war memorial, wearing her medals earned in the RAF in WWII, when we stood against another tyrant. She faced the ultimate disadvantage for being British in terms of losing her life at the hands of terrorists. Disadvantage for being British is a theme.

German, French and US governments acted for their victims of Gadaffi and secured compensation.

Governments of all hues seem to be complacent about that disadvantage and say that compensation is a private matter. How can we be expected to redress the damage done by international agreements without government help?

A key spur for Gadaffi in providing weapons and Semtex to the Provisional IRA was HMG support for US action in Libya. It is for others to judge if HMG was right or wrong but it wasn't our private matter. We took the hit for it nonetheless.

Laurence Robertson, who has been in the corner of innocent victims for many years secured this debate in the Commons. The speeches were salves to the soul. It was also heartening that it came from so many different Parties (Tory, Labour, SNP, DUP and Lady Herman - Independent)

I was in the gallery with other victims for the debate and we spent much of it nodding and clapping noiselessly (to avoid being asked to leave). There was also a lot of us catching each other's eyes when another killer point was made and smiling. This was a combination of seeing how well our case was being made and that even though it was the MPs speaking, our voices were being heard.

Rufia Valiff (SEFF's GB Health and Wellbeing Caseworker) was with me in the gallery. In another section was Lord Empey who has been championing this cause in The Lords.

It was brought out by many speakers that victims are dying off. Two of my brothers died unexpectedly within a few months of each other in 2014. Whatever happens it is too late for them. However, I am glad to know that at least it was by natural causes.

Kate Hoey spoke about Gemma Berezag and her submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee. Gemma's husband Zaoui sustained terrible injuries in the Docklands Bomb. That was bad enough but she could never understand the government's attitude that it was down to her to get compensation. In-between changing her husband's nappies she did her best. She spoke Arabic and went to the Libyan embassy to try and advance her cause.

When the news broke of her death in 2016 many of us did suspect that it was by her own hand and indeed that had turned out to be the case. Shock waves went through those groups who knew Gemma and what she was dealing with, including those in SEFF who had been supporting her.

Kate read out Gemma words from an interview given to The News Letter just months before her death.

"We never had a nice day in our lives since. My husband was a hard worker, nice to his children and nice to me. Now I change his nappy 10 times a day. Can your friends do this? I need financial help for my husband. I cannot even afford the nappies he needs. The Government forgot about me. I am 57 but I feel like I am 80. This is still killing me, 20 years after the bomb"

Kate's voice was betraying her emotions as she gave Gemma her voice.

It was a powerful session, with the weakest contribution, as expected, coming from the Government minister. As for the motion being debated - basically calling on HMG to get its finger out, well, "The Ayes have it". Time will tell what will actually come of it in terms of action by HMG. However I am very glad it happened.

Every time the issue of Libyan compensation is raised, my mind goes back unbidden to Gemma and her anguish. It was so important that her plight registered at the heart of our democracy. It doesn't bring her back or retrospectively lessen her suffering. However when I call her to mind in the future, the distress I feel will be mitigated by the memory of what she went through, being put on record, in the way it has, in Parliament. I am sufficiently selfish to be glad of that mitigation.

SEFF strived to support Gemma whilst she devoted her life to the care of her husband Zaoui, but ultimately the organisation and all others were unable to prevent the dark cloud of despair and weariness from engulfing her life and there is a deep sadness in this. SEFF continues to try to support the Berezag family as best it can forever mindful of the heavy price paid by that family as a result of terrorism and Government neglect.



Aileen Quinton