

My name is John Teggart, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak here today about the Ballymurphy Massacre.

On Monday 9th of August 1971 at 4am Internment Without Trial was introduced by the British Government in the North of Ireland. The British Army directed the campaign against the predominately Catholic community with the stated aim to “shock and stun the civilian population”.

Between 9th and 11th of August 1971, over 600 British soldiers entered the Ballymurphy area of West Belfast, raiding homes and rounding up men. Many were brutalised as they were dragged from their homes without reason.

In the aftermath of Internment 11 people, including my father, were brutally murdered in Ballymurphy.

All 11 unarmed civilians were murdered by the British Army's Parachute Regiment. One of the victims was a well-known parish priest and another was a 44-year-old mother of eight children.

All left a place of safety to go to the aid of others, almost all were shot in the back.

No police investigations were carried out and no member of the British Army was held to account.

Evidence suggests that some of the soldiers involved in Ballymurphy went on to Derry some months later and murdered 14 innocent civilians.

Had those involved in Ballymurphy been held to account, the events of Bloody Sunday may not have happened.

Original inquests were held into each of the deaths in 1972 resulting in open Verdicts. We always maintained that they were sham inquest as all eyewitnesses were not called to give evidence and RUC did not carry out any investigation into the 11 deaths.

In 1998 families began a campaign to have their loved one's names cleared and declared innocent. As part of that campaign families started to source eyewitnesses, collect evidence and witness's statements which would later be submitted to the Attorney General by our solicitor Padraig O'Muirigh with a request for new inquests.

Subsequently the Attorney General exercised his powers pursuant to Section 14 of the Coroner's Act (Northern Ireland) 1959 and having considered the submissions made to him, he directed in 2011 that new inquests should be held into the deaths of ten of the victims.

The first preliminary hearing took place on 3rd March 2014 and the oral hearings began in Laganside Court 12 on 12th November 2018 with an opening statement from counsel for the coroner followed by family pen portraits in respect of our loved ones.

The inquest heard 100 days of evidence finishing on 3rd March 2020.

Each day of the inquests we relived the horror of what happened to our loved ones in August 1971. It wasn't easy, in fact it was awful, but what gave us the strength to get through it was the knowledge that every day of evidence was another blow to the MOD's web of lies created 50 years ago.

We remained determined and united as the truth was finally recognised by the court. And the lies of the British Government were laid bare for the world to see.

Last Tuesday 11th May, Justice Keegan delivered her long awaited verdict. It was an historic day for families as they gathered to hear Justice Keegan say that all our loved ones were entirely innocent.

Joan Connolly	-	Innocent
Joseph Corr	-	Innocent
Eddie Doherty	-	Innocent
John Laverty	-	Innocent
John McKerr	-	Innocent
Fr Hugh Mullan	-	Innocent
Joseph Murphy	-	Innocent
Noel Phillips	-	Innocent
Frank Quinn	-	Innocent
Danny Teggart	-	Innocent

We were overjoyed at the verdict.

We corrected history

We corrected the lies that our loved ones were gunmen and a gunwoman.

We always knew our loved ones were innocent, now the world knows it.

Our joy was interrupted when the British PM Boris Johnston issued feeble and insincere apology's.

We never asked for an apology, what we did ask for was a police investigation. The police have never investigated the deaths of our loved ones.

We shouldn't need to ask for this, a proper police investigation is normal practice when citizens are murdered.

The British Government now wants to deny us and others any chance for justice by introducing an amnesty for these murderers.

The MOD spin doctors, just like they did 50 years ago, are circulating lies. Describing these investigations as vexatious or unfair prosecutions.

No-one should be above the law!

Amnesty's are for people who are afraid of the truth. If the British government are so proud of their legal system, why don't they trust it. Instead they chose to ignore internationally recognised agreements and make up their own laws when it suits

Every victim should have a right to pursue justice!

We will not accept an amnesty for these murderers and will challenge any attempts to do so.

I would like to ask this committee to use its influence on the British Government to implement the Stormont House agreement so that other victims don't have to endure many years of campaigning as we did.