

Raymond McCord Opening Statement

Subject: Statement to GFA Committee 11/4/24

The Legacy Bill is nothing more than the British government ensuring the truth of their own involvement and its agents in both loyalist and republican paramilitary murder gangs is never revealed in a court of families seeking truth and justice. The religion or politics of victims is totally irrelevant as the security forces and its agents murdered at will, whether it be Protestants or Catholics in their own community or from the "other" community. Loyalty to the crown or fighting for a united Ireland meant nothing to the murderers or those who sent them and paid them. There were many state agents who would never face the courts for the countless murders they were involved in. We must stand together in challenging the British government in the British and European courts. Division amongst victims and politicians on the island of Ireland is what the British government and its security agencies are hoping and pushing for. Defeat for this Bill will happen with unity of the people and political parties particularly on both sides of the border. Forget about orange and green politics, forget about political aspirations, forget about point scoring for or against any political party here. As a person from the unionist community who has welcomed and participated in cross community and cross border events I ask the Irish government to take my murdered son's case to the European court. I remind the GFA committee that young Raymond's case was the first case of collusion proven by the Police Ombudsman's report in 2007 and accepted by the British government and its Prime Minister, SOS for NI and the then Chief Constable that there was collusion in his murder by the Special Branch and its UVF agents who murdered young Raymond. The Special Branch were warned by an agent (in court papers) that my son was going to be murdered. Special Branch allowed it to happen Twenty-two years old and murdered by state agents. One particular UVF state agent got weekend parole from prison to murder young Raymond. Released on Friday, he murdered my son on Saturday with the knowledge and permission of Special Branch. Thanks to Nuala O'Loan's report(Operation Ballast) young Raymond's case and the strength of his case needs to go to the European court. An Irish government taking a unionist victim's case with collusion proven and the papers that come with it is something that both some unionist politicians and the British government and its security agencies would never believe would happen can happen. The credibility in the European Parliament and the European court of such an action by Dublin adds so much more to the case. The Irish government supporting a unionist victim from a community that rejects unifying the island takes courage according to many, for me its not just courage, its a clear indication that the Dublin government have a ace in their hands that such a strong case comes from an unusual background to support, its a unionist victims case. The community that is supposed to support the British government yet the murdered young man's father, (myself) rejects the British government and its immoral justice denying Legacy Bill and has led a campaign against it. I now ask the GFA Implementation Committee to support me with my son's case being taken by the Irish government to the European court. I hold an Irish passport along with my British passport. Has Dublin the courage to support my call. I have spoken in the Irish Senate as has my solicitor Paul Farrell thanks to the support and the kindness of several Senators in particular Mark Daly and Emer Currie who also have supported victims by helping me bring our cross community Victims Stories film to Leinster House which was well received by the politicians who watched. I have a historical document which I drafted and signed in Belfast City Hall by every major party on the Island of Ireland rejecting the Legacy Bill, the only document in the history of Ireland with all the major parties signed, something even the GFA failed to do. The then leader of the Irish Labour party Pat Rabbitte raised my son's case many years ago in the Dail and Irish America continues to support me. The late Congressman Bill Delahunt gave me a Congressional Hearing into young Raymond's brutal murder and I will be forever grateful to him. It was the first Congressional hearing into a unionist victim of the Troubles and collusion. Father Sean McManus of the Irish National declares his support for" this Belfast Protestant father" as he describes me. Richie Neal and many others in Washington who

are great friends of Ireland continues to support my battle for truth and justice and my opposition to this Bill. I hope to come away today with this committee supporting my call for the Irish government to give this father from the unionist community the opportunity to have his son's case taken to the European court as part or along with the Irish government's challenge. I thank you all for inviting me and giving me this opportunity to put young Raymond's case to you. We will always be friends.

Finally this is an opportunity for the Irish government to make a statement of intent that all victims of the "Troubles" can and will be represented by the Irish government. Each community in Northern Ireland still have the bigots who practice sectarianism and in my own community politicians and self promoting campaigners with their own agendas still regard the Irish government as anti unionist and anti unionism. No one can deny the Irish government has questions to answer relating to the Troubles and have said so but so has Stormont and Westminster, however when will the religious and political divide allow governments to show support with those with different political aspirations in making decisions that the British government believed would never happen. That's reconciliation, that's equality, that's anti sectarianism, that's unity, that's strength in a court in Europe but most importantly it clearly states and shows that unionist victims are as equal as nationalist victims and the Irish government will prove that, not just talk about it but in an action that proves it in the European court. Coming and standing together is our strength. Thank you.

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<p>Sent via BT Email App