

Initial Statement

Introduction

Billy Wright was murdered at the Maze prison, Northern Ireland, on 27th December 1997. A report of The Honourable Justice Peter Cory, a retired Canadian Judge, published in April 2004 recommended that an independent Public Inquiry be established to inquire into the circumstances of Billy Wright's death and, on 16th November 2004, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Hon Mr Paul Murphy MP, announced that a Public Inquiry would be established to look into Billy Wright's death. The Inquiry is established under section 7 of the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953.

The Terms of Reference of the Inquiry can be found on the Inquiry Homepage.

The Inquiry's draft List of Issues can found on the List of Issues page.

The Inquiry

The Chairman of the Inquiry is Lord MacLean, a retired Appellate judge from Scotland. The other members of the Inquiry panel are The Right Reverend John Oliver, who was the Bishop of Hereford until 2003 and Professor Andrew Coyle, Director of the International Centre for Prison Studies at King's College, University of London.

The Inquiry's Approach

The Inquiry is wholly independent from Government and will carry out its work with thoroughness and fairness. As an Inquiry the proceedings will not be adversarial in any way and the Inquiry's sole aim will be to search out the truth.

It is expected that the Inquiry will receive full and complete co-operation from all persons it has contact with, including all agencies of Government. However should that co-operation not be forthcoming, the Inquiry will not hesitate to use its compulsory powers in relation to the production of documents, and the attendance of witnesses to give evidence.

Evidence

The Inquiry has already recovered an amount of documentation relevant to its work and this process continues. Any person who has possession or knows of documents that may be relevant to the Inquiry's work, or who thinks they may be able to provide relevant information or evidence to the Inquiry is requested to make contact with the Inquiry Offices in Edinburgh (contact us) as soon as possible.

Procedures

In this section there will be Protocols in relation to representation and public funding, witnesses and the handling of documents and evidence, which will set out the way in which the Inquiry proposes to deal with these matters.

List of Issues

The Inquiry has prepared a draft List of Issues of the matters that will be considered within the Terms of Reference and comments on this document are welcomed from interested parties

Preliminary Hearing

The Inquiry will be holding a Preliminary Hearing at the Europa Hotel, Great Victoria Street, Belfast, on 22nd June 2005 at 11:00 am. This will be a public hearing and anyone is welcome to attend. At this hearing the Inquiry Chairman will make a statement in relation to the future conduct of the Inquiry's work and the public hearings, and will invite applications for representation from appropriate persons. Applications will also be received on this day in relation to funding.