

Mike Ritchie,
Casework Manager,
Relatives for Justice,
39 Glen Road,
BELFAST,
BT11 8BB.

Our Ref: 18/01/20/006

Date: 12 February 2021

BY E-MAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Ritchie

Re. James McCann, James Sloan, Anthony Campbell, Brendan Maguire, John Loughran and Ambrose Hardy (All Deceased)

I refer to the above matter in which you have been acting on behalf of the relatives of the deceased in relation to a request made to the Attorney General to exercise the power under section 14(1) of the Coroners Act (Northern Ireland) 1959 to direct a coroner to hold an inquest into these deaths.

The former Attorney General declined to direct an inquest and was of the opinion that the deaths should be the subject of a properly focussed criminal justice investigation as they arose from the deliberate killing of multiple persons. He therefore asked the Director of Public Prosecutions (“DPP”) to consider exercising his power under section 35(5) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 to direct the Chief Constable to investigate. The DPP subsequently declined to make such a request as the cases were sitting within the work queue of the Legacy Investigation Branch (“LIB”). On 23 March 2020 you asked the former Attorney to reconsider his decision and

on 1 May 2020 you provided further materials (by email). On 30 June 2020 you were advised that the former Attorney had formed the view that an inquest was still not advisable and that, in forming this view, the former Attorney had proceeded on the basis that the Article 2 ECHR investigative duty had been revived in what appeared to him to be a case of deliberate killing.

I have since been advised by the DPP and the PSNI that while the deaths of Anthony Campbell, Brendan Maguire, John Loughran and Ambrose Hardy will be reviewed by the LIB, the deaths of James Joseph Sloan and James McCann will not. The DPP further advised that, as regards the four cases that are in the LIB work queue, he did not consider that it would be appropriate for him to make a section 35(5) referral in respect of these cases.

As the deaths of Mr McCann and Mr Sloan are not going to be the subject of any further PSNI investigation, I have decided to exercise my power to direct an inquest into these deaths.

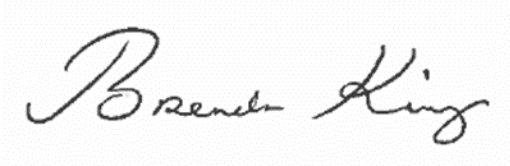
Although the deaths of Mr Campbell, Mr Maguire, Mr Loughran and Mr Hardy are in the LIB work queue, I am mindful that it may be some time before those investigations are completed and any evidential leads investigated. While it would have been open to me to either refuse or defer making a decision in their cases, I believe it is preferable that all of the killings in the New Lodge area on 3/4 February 1973 be the subject of a fresh inquest. In the event that the PSNI investigations result in further evidential leads being discovered these should, of course, be pursued by the PSNI and the Coroner should be informed of any significant developments.

In reaching these conclusions I have also taken into account the materials furnished by you together with previous requests, submissions and correspondence from the two firms of solicitors instructed.

I should be grateful if you would consent to all of the material that you provided being made available to the Presiding Coroner.

A copy of my direction to the Presiding Coroner is attached to this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda King". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and 'K'.

Brenda King
Attorney General for Northern Ireland