

“I never met Pat Finucane, but his name has been with me through the last twenty years of work in human rights, with prisoners and ex-prisoners. It has been a privilege to get to know – and work with – members of his family.

“The biggest disgrace in this society is the imputation of guilt by association. Because you’re killed by loyalists, your activities must be pro-republican. But Pat Finucane’s activities benefitted everyone:

- “He challenged the state and its agencies without fear or favour;
- “He won cases against ill-treatment by the RUC;
- “He defended relatives of those killed by the state;
- “He used the law to defend people’s rights; he didn’t care what their background was;
- “He understood that the law tended to support the status quo; but he sought to use the law to challenge it too.
- “He understood that, for there to be hope for this society, we had to find ways of resolving our problems through peaceful means; And this means that the law has to be able to vindicate people’s rights against an overweening state.
- “He persuaded those most targeted by the state to use the law to fight cases at trial, or through judicial review.

“And for all this he was targeted for assassination. This is the proof of his effectiveness.

“It is for this reason that the United Nations and the international human rights community have such concern for lawyers and see their treatment as an important touchstone of a democracy’s health.

“And it is for this reason that there must be accountability.

“Resistance by the British government and the Northern Ireland Office to the holding of an independent judicial Public Inquiry into the murder of Patrick Finucane only makes this inquiry more necessary.

“It is not true that an inquiry will promote division and dredge up the past in unhelpful ways. Rather, without a proper accounting, the secrets will fester and pollute the future.

“Let us re-dedicate ourselves to the demand for an inquiry; this is the proper tribute to Pat’s legacy and his search for human rights.”