

FUTURE BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATIONS

Later this month, the families of the men and boys killed on Bloody Sunday, as well as some of those wounded that day, will take part in the annual commemoration of the massacre. This month's march will be unlike any of the previous 38 commemorations; for the first time in almost 40 years, participants will take to the streets in the knowledge that their loved ones have been officially exonerated and that the victims' innocence has been established for all the world to see.

The Saville Inquiry's findings - revealed to an almost disbelieving Derry public on June 15 last year - finally exposed the Widgery Tribunal as the travesty we, the people of Derry, always knew it to be.

For the Bloody Sunday families this has been a long, difficult but successful journey. The murder of our loved ones, and the wounding of more than a dozen of our fellow citizens, was compounded by the lies told about the victims and by the on-going cover-up of the Parachute Regiment's crimes. It has taken almost 40 years, but the truth about Bloody Sunday has finally been set free.

This would not have happened had we not received the wholehearted support of our own community and of campaigners from further afield, who have rallied tirelessly to the call for truth and justice. We owe these supporters a huge debt of gratitude.

However, we, the families, must now decide how best to mark future anniversaries of Bloody Sunday. For some, the exoneration of our loved ones means that the time for protest has passed; they would prefer to grieve privately in future for the fathers, sons and brothers they have lost. We are all fully aware of the very serious shortcomings of the Saville Report, and many of us believe that more must be done to hold the perpetrators to account for their crimes.

The majority of families and wounded are in accord with the following statement:

"We invite the people of Derry and supporters from further afield to join us for one last time, on Sunday 30th January this year, in following the planned

route of the original civil rights march, from Creggan Shops to Guildhall Square.

“We believe that this year’s march should highlight similar quests for truth and justice by victims of state violence in the North (including in Ballymurphy and on the Shankill Road) and elsewhere in the world, and encourage those who have supported us over the years to now give their active support to these campaigns.

“We believe that this last act of solidarity will be an appropriate way of marking the 39th anniversary of the Bloody Sunday massacre, and of celebrating our success in setting the truth about Bloody Sunday free.

“We have asked the Bloody Sunday Trust to organise and consider other ways of marking future anniversaries, including:

- A major annual Gathering of Remembrance at the Bloody Sunday monument (on the Sunday closest to 30th January), for all the people of Derry coinciding with the timing of the original march. The Gathering of Remembrance will be dedicated to the ongoing quest to establish the complete innocence of Gerald Donaghey, as well as remembering the deceased and the sacrifice of the wounded;
- a Remembrance Mass;
- a Human Rights Weekend;
- the annual Bloody Sunday Memorial Lecture.

“Furthermore, we are confident that the excellent Museum of Free Derry will continue to be developed and expanded as the main legacy project for remembering Bloody Sunday and the Civil Rights struggle.

“We again salute all those who have stood shoulder to shoulder with us, over the last 40 years, in our campaign for truth and justice and ask you to join us on the streets on 30th January to finally complete our journey.

“Our victory is your victory. Go raibh míle maith agaibh.”