**What the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill Says About Truth and Reconciliation**

The proposed British amnesty bill is deeply problematic despite its proclamation of undergirding reconciliation regarding the Northern Ireland Troubles. While amnesty has its merits with regards to a holistic and long-term approach towards peace, it is predicated upon forthright acknowledgement of that which has transpired and an earnest attempt at justice. Mechanisms of restorative justice can be employed, such as a truth and reconciliation commission; however, this stratagem cannot be undermined by sanctioned constraints that disingenuously prohibit robust fact-finding, stymie necessary mechanisms of justice, and hinder both the victims and citizenry affected with the appropriate avenues of psychological remuneration. Criticism of this bill has been diffuse, in fact, it is not limited to the Northern Ireland Assembly, but has had a vocal outcry from diverse organizations ranging from the Queen’s University Belfast’s School of Law to the Council of Europe and the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for its flagrant disregard towards both precedents of international law and human rights protections. The outsized impact of this proposed bill is that it communicates a breach of the Good Friday Agreement, shows impunity for legitimate human rights investigations, let alone bifurcates the British justice system, and essentially blocks access to justice or legal action on behalf of the victims. This conveys a concomitant desire to ignore reality and deflect justice for an expose of truth in these matters are no doubt damning with respect to complicity and public ignominy. Yet the very foundation of healing is in the admission of truth because there is the impetus of nascent trust. Trust is desperately needed to instate robust avenues of justice and reconciliation that can and will build a better path forward.

**Summary of the Amnesty Bill Harmful Actions**

Although this Bill aims to promote reconciliation through the establishment of an Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery to address the legacy of the Northern Ireland Troubles, evidence demonstrates that the Bill would further inhibit victims from received the due justice that they deserve through several channels, including “ criminal investigations, legal proceedings, inquests and police complaints” (*Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill* 2022). Political figures and activist communities have shared concerns regarding discordant policies within the Amnesty Bill that would block victims from accessing justice via the legal system, act directly against the existing UK and Irish Government agreements, violate the Good Friday Agreement, and fail to administer fledged investigations into human rights complaints (*Northern Ireland Troubles Bill* 2022). As a result, the clear violations of human rights that this bill would allow and overlook acts as a model for other States to ignore their human rights obligations; this creates a dangerous precedence at the UK remains as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and G7 and is expected to uphold domestic and international human rights obligations (*Northern Ireland Troubles Bill* 2022). Some sources go as far as to state that this possibly immunity that would be available for the Troubles offenders would instead promote an atmosphere of facilitating amnesty for security forces instead of victims (The British News, 2022).

Some of thedeep-rooted issues that would come with implementing the proposed British Amnesty Bill revolve around the hindering of numerous ongoing cases and would perpetuate lack of justice for victims’ families as inquests are closed or prevented (Committee on the Administration of Justice, 2022). Particular to the Stormont House Agreement bill actions, over 450 outstanding complaints remain actively under investigation, but with the debarring of the Police Ombudsman the transitioning provisions in place to complete these cases or transferring them would be impeded. This extends further to obstruct the over 22 inquests into 34 deaths that are currently under Northern Ireland’s judiciary planned inquests, which will hinder the victims family’s years worth of waiting for judicial action as the Bill would contrasts from the Stormont House Agreement bill’s policy in allowing inquests to occur simultaneously and separately (Committee on the Administration of Justice, 2022). In addition to the limitations on inquests, the Amnesty Bill further prevents the reinforcement of external offices to oversee fair and just operations as it would prevent “call in” investigations, specifically lacking the Article 2 process for complaint investigation into cases.

The omission of crucial investigations and oversight on police and military forces will thus be exacerbated as the Amnesty Bill would debar all new civil claims that are related to the conflicted, which would negate over 500 current claims against the military; these claims are largely being settled financially with reparation settlements, and the civil cases remain to be proven legit while civil litigation continuously has discovered sham investigations and falsified information (Committee on the Administration of Justice, 2022). In reference to these cases, the victim group WAVE Trauma Centre observed the overwhelming amount of SHA cases that were “unilaterally and without reference to any victims and survivors stakeholder groups set aside” in favor of assisting military veterans to quickly close open cases (Committee on the Administration of Justice, 2022). Through the largest community of survivors and victim support group in Northern Ireland, WAVE, it was discovered through observing in the Written Ministerial Statement that the unresolved cases were completed through a “speedy desktop review”, which leads towards the questioning of future cases and whether they will also receive similar de facto amnesty treatment (Committee on the Administration of Justice, 2022).

**Voices of Concern Against the Amnesty Bill**

The proposed Bill has gained international attention as judicial members across the UK and USA have demonstrated growing concern for the outcomes of the Bill. As the UK Government’s Troubles Bill was introduced in 2021, it was met with unanimous opposition by the Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Bill was met with criticism from the Republic of Ireland to condemn it as a method of excusing Troubles-related crime and avoiding proper justice for victims (*Northern Ireland Troubles Bill* 2022). Numerous groups, including the Queen's University Belfast's School of Law, the Committee on the Administration of Justice and the United Nations Special Rapporteurs have notioned that the Bill is a reprehensible violation of international obligations to protect human rights and expressed concern over the impingement breach of international law and Belfast Agreement that this would cause. Extending into international territory, US Congress members have also voiced concerns over the potential undermining of human rights and backtracking on progress made by the Good Friday Agreement that would possibly accompany the implementation of the Bill. The European Court of Human Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Council continue to urge the dangers of enacting this Amnesty Bill, (The Irish Echo, 2022).

Although numerous groups have called for the detailed evaluation and reconsideration of this Bill, the UK Government as accelerated the passage of this bill to bypass the usual process of Parliamentary examination and scrutiny from the House of Commons; this ultimately allowed the Bill to speed through the process without being scrutinized in the detailed bill committee that would have analyzed stakeholders and expert witnesses (Committee on the Administration of Justice, 2022). As a result, the Bill bypassed steps to pass through the House of Commons by July 4, 2022 and in effect altered the speed of current inquests and police ombudsman inquires. The process of accelerated passages of bills generally is implemented when there is an emergency or urgent need, but the bypassing of balancing protocols implies the avoidance of parliamentary scrutiny and attempt to reduce ongoing inquests and investigations.

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