



Advocacy Service

The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
NIO Legacy Policy
Northern Ireland Office
Stormont House
Belfast BT4 3SH

Royal Mail Signed For 1st Class

10 December 2018

Dear Mrs Bradley,

Re: Temporary Suspension of Information Act Requests – Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

We are writing to you following the decision made by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) to suspend the requests for access to Inquest and Court files that we have made on behalf of our clients under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

PRONI was notified by the Information Commissioner's Office that the Department for Communities does not have the authority to complete the necessary consultation process with the Responsible Authorities for requests for transferred public records in the absence of a Minister, as required under section 15(5) and section 66(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. PRONI indicated that they will temporarily suspend FOIA requests until a new Minister has been appointed.

The inquest and court files that have been requested by the Ulster Human Rights Watch are for the purpose of pursuing murder investigations in compliance with the procedural obligation of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The suspension of requests for access to these files is therefore in breach of this obligation.

We respectfully submit that it is the duty of the United Kingdom Government to ensure that effective investigations into deaths are carried out in Northern Ireland. To that end the UK Government must make the necessary arrangements for a Minister to be appointed or for alternative arrangements to be made so that the fundamental rights of the people of Northern Ireland are upheld.

We would kindly ask you to deal with the appointment of a Minister or alternatively either to authorise access to Inquest and Court files or delegate a Minister to do so on your behalf as a matter of priority.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Campbell
Managing Director

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Advocacy Support Manager

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