

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Yasmine Ahmed, director of Rights Watch (UK), has said in response to Theresa Villiers' refusal to hold an independent review panel to review the 1971 Ballymurphy shootings:

'The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers, has failed to acknowledge the extreme delays in the Inquest system when refusing an independent review panel on the basis of the ongoing Coroner's inquest. The Government has an obligation to hold independent, transparent and timely investigations into the death of citizens. This obligation is all the more important when the state is involved in the deaths.

The families of the 10 people shot dead by British soldiers in Ballymurphy following the introduction of internment without trial, have been waiting 43 years to receive the truth and justice they deserve. It has been over two years since the beginning of the second Coronial Inquests and the proceedings are still at a very preliminary stage. The inquest system in Northern Ireland is stretched beyond breaking point with 75 of Northern Ireland's most controversial deaths still outstanding including cases that date back more than four decades. This means that there is no real chance of the Ballymurphy families accessing the truth at any point in the near future.

The families of those killed in Ballymurphy deserve effective, prompt, thorough and independent investigations into the deaths of their relatives and if this cannot be achieved through the coronial process, then the Government is obliged to consider other avenues including an independent review panel. It is the government's duty to take measures to ensure that the families have access to the truth at the earliest possible opportunity.'

**-Ends-**

### **Editor's Note**

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### **Rights Watch (UK)**

Since 1990, Rights Watch (UK) (formerly British Irish Rights Watch) has held the UK Government and non-state actors to account for human rights abuses in conflict settings. We work with victims and communities to expose human rights abuses, to obtain redress and to hold those responsible for such abuses to account. We have received wide recognition, as the first winner of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Human Rights Prize in 2009 alongside other honours.